

1/30/98

## **Wag the Buffalo**

A smokin' Super Bowl

A man is made in defeat. Brett Favre has to learn to take losses with only half doses of drugs.

### **By: Christopher Brown and Casey Shearer**

January 25, 1998. Mark the date down in stone and remember, or get stoned and forget. Ladies and gentlemen, the impossible has happened.

What, did Chris pick up a girl? Are all of Casey's teeth real? No my friends, the AFC has won a Super Bowl. In a matchup that was anything but a par performance, the Broncos proved that one should never bet against a team in the Super Bowl with a running back from San Diego's Lincoln High Schol. Terrel Davis joined Marcus Allen of the '84/'85 Raiders (the last AFL team to win the game) to become the second Lincoln grad to win the Super Bowl MVP. Sense a pattern here? Lincoln has been beset by scouts from AFC teams hoping to find the secret ingredient in the winning Super Bowl soup. Believe it or not, Ripley, the Broncos finally won the Super Bowl, 31-24, and it was all about Terrell Davis and not Gerald Wilhyte and Sammy Winder. And for that reason the majority of this Super Bowl analysis will focus not on real sports news, but instead on...

### **Who Cut the Cheese?**

"John" . . . "Way" . . . "John" . . . "John" . . . "El" . . . "John" . . . "El" . . . "Way." Ribbit. No way ferret. You can't beat these frogs. No hired collection of green and yellow, drug snortin' thugs is going to do in the unconquerable. Denver knew from the beginning that this was their year when they changed their uniforms from those oldschool eighties playground rags (not that the new duds aren't butt ugly as well and lack the Orange tradition). They also knew they would win because they had Terrel Davis. (We were actually considering for this article a full page montage of Terrel Davis, consisting of a close up of his smiling face, followed immediately by a few excerpts of love poetry from the Illiad, but we decided against this in place of the new creative word . . . aren't you happy?) The cheese has finally been spoiled, along with that overplayed hype of the Wisconsin football heart. From now on, Green Bay, the land of cheeseheads, is now the official fromagerie. If you've ever been to France you would understand that this is an enormous insult. Walking into a room full of old, moldy, thuggish, ruggish, uncovered, played-out cheese, one must quickly cover his nostrils and make a mad dash for fresh air. This is the way in which even an experienced Frenchman would react in the land of upset cheese in Wisconsin. And that's fine. There is no doubt that Denver fans deserved this Super Bowl as much as the cheeseheads.

You gotta love Elway. And you gotta dig the Broncos, if for no other reason than out of pity. If they had lost, they would have become the proud owners of the worst Super Bowl record of any team in the NFL. Who's that pathetic team that holds that record now, you might ask?

Well, let us explain&mdash;the majestic Bills. The red, white and blue of America and the emblem of the charging Bill (whatever that is). The Bills lost four Super Bowls in a row. This is a fact that no one can deny. Jim Kelly deserved it as much as Elway, and was as good a quarterback (Uh Chris.... what were you snorting when you wrote that?) Productivity shmproductivity. A player should be judged on his ability

to perform and succeed within the framework of his team, and furthermore, on his ability to create the team's framework around him. Kelly got his team to four Super Bowls in four years &mdash;wasn't he, then, one of the most productive quaterbacks, in terms of success in the post-season, of all time?

Well for the same reason Kelly is great, so is Elway. . .even though Elway has more hair. Elway, Marino and Kelly all came into the NFL in the same year and they all were revolutionary characters and players, yet, until last Sunday, none of them had won a Super Bowl. Kelly tried, failed, and then retired with his head up, knowing that he had given it what he could. Marino will never win because Bryan Cox was on his team once, so Elway was the last hope of his generation of quarterbacks. The Vicatin fiend, Brett Favre, was no match for the wiley veteran. (Or at least Dorsey Levens was no match for Terrel Davis, and something ate Gilbert Brown.) True men like Kelly and Elway take failure and deal with it face to face. A man is made in defeat. Favre has to learn to take losses with only half doses of drugs.

## ***There's no Way in El***

Ever the ground-breaking investigative reports, we caught up with Elway where you'd expected to find him after winning the Super Bowl: at Disneyland. It happened that we got to sit next to him on the log ride, and for all those that have never been to Disneyland (Disneyworld don't count. The real shiznit is in LA...Anaheim...whatever), this is the ride in which you sit on a plexiglass log in an artificial river and float through a lame-ass maze of children's scenes that leads up to a big fall at the end. Anyway, as the facades of robotic toys went by us, we got a chance to talk to him. "Man, there's nothing like winning the Super Bowl," he told us. "It's better than the feeling of burning our old uniforms. Now if we could only get rid of the racing stripe..." We asked him if he thought he could die a happy man now that his life long goal had been fulfilled, especially after so many failed attempts. He replied by saying something about Wheaties cereal, but we couldn't hear it all because of the roaring water. He let us in on a top-secret scandal that had taken place preceding the Super Bowl, the size of which has never been seen before in the modern sports world.

He told us that the team we thought we were watching as the Broncos was actually the Buffalo Bills!

"Yeah," he told us, "I didn't even play in the game. Every player you thought you were seeing, was actually a Buffalo Bill. Didn't you find it even a little suspicious that the ageless Marv Levy retired only moments before Denver started winning in the post-season? The Bills figured that this was their only way that they could win the Super Bowl. The only way they could avoid choking was by not being the Bills. It wasn't even them, to us, so how could they defeat themselves? I thought it was ingenious."

"But we saw you playing on T.V. We saw all you guys." (Or maybe we just saw Gilbert Brown's ass)

He profoundly paused and thought and then replied, "I know, I'm a little-miss-broad-n-croach. But television. . .HA! What a scam. Didn't you see Wag the Dog Baby. . .!" His voice trailed off just as our log was about to tumble over the huge fall at the end and splash into a conveniently placed lake of water, and yelled out, "Time to get wet like punani!"

Thank God for Terrel.

CHRIS BROWN B'00 and CASEY SHEARER B'00 swear they've never inhaled.

2/28/98

Weed slows you down mentally and physically, and has the acute capacity to give you a pot belly.

## **Puff Daddies**

### **Sports' new high expectations**

## **By Christopher Brown and Casey Shearer**

Roll it up. Light it up. Inhale?exhale. The sports world has been hit by the munchies in the past few weeks, and it's a case so serious that it can't be saved by chicken fingers and pizza bites from Josiah's. The craze is so bad that it has even hit the Olympics, long the paramount of sporting virtue.

But by no means is that the worst of it. No, ladies and gentlemen, marijuana's run-ins with the sporting world have taken the luster off the country's most storied college basketball program. The UCLA Bruins, perennial powers and winners of a record eleven national championships, have had their chances for a twelfth title severely hampered by junior center Jelani McCoy's rolling in the grass. Due to alleged weed-related problems, McCoy resigned from the team last week, leaving a not very deep team even thinner and robbing the three-time defending PAC-10 champs of their only true center.

## **The Deal McCoy**

McCoy was an outstanding player for the Bruins in his first two seasons. As a freshman he set a single season Pac-10 record for blocks. In his sophomore campaign, Jelani set a UCLA record for field goal percentage by shooting an unheard-of 68% from the floor. He leaves the team as the school's all-time leader in both blocked shots (they didn't keep the statistic when Kareem and Walton played) and field goal shooting.

This season McCoy played a limited role due to the controversial allegations surrounding his supposed drug use. Prior to the start of the season McCoy and senior swingman Kris Johnson were suspended indefinitely for reportedly failing multiple drug tests. UCLA basketball?. it was smokin'! Both were reinstated-Johnson missing only four games, McCoy eleven-and outsiders thought all was well. Then in late January rumors that McCoy would be dismissed from the team began to circulate. UCLA coaching staff and officials gave ambiguous responses, only saying Jelani was on the team, but not denying or confirming anything either way. The speculation continued until last week when McCoy resigned from the team due to what he called "intense media scrutiny."

What happened? Theories abound. Did Jelani spill bong water in Coach Lavin's car? What else could it have been? What did Jelani do that was wrong? Was he taking performance-enhancing drugs? To our knowledge Pauley Pavilion and all PAC-10 facilities ban all George Clinton originals, remixes and reproductions to be played on sound systems, and therefore the answer is no.

Another theory states that McCoy left the team because of a failed business venture. The idea is that McCoy entered into a "joint" venture with Coach John Wooden to sell authentic hemp UCLA apparel. Coach Lavin learned of the venture and wanted his cut. But then he tried on the official sweat suits (they keep you warm and create cotton mouth) and his face broke out in a rash. Apparently, having attended the L'Oreal VO5 institute and years of gel overuse had made Lavin allergic to hemp clothing. The rash was particularly irritating when Lavin assumed "The Stance." According to the theory, Lavin nixed the deal and McCoy retaliated by stealing Lavin's hair care products and his brownie stash. Eyewitnesses identified McCoy as the culprit and he had to quit the team to avoid criminal charges.

On the serious tip, it appears what really happened is that when McCoy and Johnson were suspended it was for testing positive to marijuana a third time. Under UCLA's lenient drug policy, the first two positive tests result in warnings and mandatory counseling sessions. (Stanford, whose fans chanted Mari-Juana every time McCoy touched the ball in the Bruins' game at Stanford, doesn't even test for weed) The third failure equals a suspension. Nevertheless, Johnson and McCoy were reinstated. McCoy then seems to have failed a fourth time. (Yo Jelani! How stupid can you be? You know the rules. You can't fail four times. That's

ridiculous.) Under UCLA's policy the fourth failure results in immediate dismissal from the team and the possible invalidation of the scholarship at the end of the term. So why wasn't McCoy dismissed as soon as he failed the fourth time? The answer is simple?lawyers. Ah, you have to love the American legal system where anybody can sue anybody no matter how ludicrous their argument. Although, Casey hasn't found anyone to sue for his false teeth yet.

## High standards

McCoy's lawyers said that if Jelani was thrown off the team, he could sue for potential losses in the amount of money made in his NBA career. The UCLA administration was therefore left flailing in the wind, unable to dismiss McCoy for fear of a multi-million dollar lawsuit. Eventually, UCLA's lawyers found a loophole such that McCoy could be kicked off the team without threat of a suit. When McCoy and his lawyers found out about this, McCoy was given the option to resign, which he took.

The unfortunate ones are McCoy's former teammates, who had to play through the season with Jelani's situation in limbo and who now have to go at it as a small, not very deep team in the NCAA tournament. But the story makes one wonder about our society and its obsession with pot. McCoy is obviously at fault. You have to have problems to fail a test four times when you know exactly what the consequences will be. Jelani should have said he was trying to imitate President Clinton. Whoops, he didn't inhale. Or maybe, it was only second hand smoke like the Canadian snowboarder. The question remains, should anybody care?

Marijuana is illegal in this country, and most others, but you wouldn't know it from walking around Brown and RISD (nor Nagano for that matter). Smoking pot is as acceptable in many circles as drinking alcohol. Sometimes one gets the feeling the American public views it as morally worse to smoke cigarettes than

marijuana. Perhaps that is why athletes testing positive or being caught with weed is being downplayed all across this country, and even around the world.

Canadian snowboarder Ross Rebagliati was stripped of his gold-medal in the Olympics for testing positive for marijuana. (This brings new meaning to the word half-pipe, eh Ross.) He then was given his medal back when the International Olympic Committee determined that marijuana wasn't performance enhancing. One wonders what happens if he had tested positive for cocaine or heroin. The IOC, in fear of legal backlash (there are those pesky lawyers again), disregarded the fact that smoking grass is illegal in Japan and Canada even if it is not performance enhancing.

## Waiting to inhale

Countless other athletes have been given relative slaps on the wrist for marijuana-related incidents. Portland Trailblazer guard Isiah Rider was found smoking out of a Coke can (now that's creativity for you). Philadelphia 76er Allen Iverson was found with a blunt in his car. The only punishment was a couple of extra days, in the form of a suspension, to play golf, or in their case, smoke dope. Tampa Bay Buccaneer defensive tackle Warren Sapp failed drug tests at the University of Miami and was not suspended although school policy mandated suspension. In the granddaddy of them all, former Steelers and Ravens running back Bam Morris was pulled over for speeding with five pounds of marijuana in his trunk and was only put on probation. Five pounds! Do you have any idea how much green leaf that is? Grass is usually sold in eighths of an ounce. There are sixteen ounces in a pound. That means Morris had 640 eighths in his car, and he said it was for his own personal use, not for dealing. You go Bam. Now those are some varsity lungs and that's some serious intellect deciding to speed while carrying all that weed. All that grass and no jail time.

Weed is certainly not performance enhancing. It slows you down mentally and physically, and has the acute capacity to give you a pot belly. It's not used with athletics in mind as steroids are, unless you fancy playing "wild weed games," so why should we care that some random athlete is smoking phillies on the side? No one seems to mind if they go out for a few brews. And anyway, history professors don't test their students for marijuana before an exam, and poetry students aren't tested for opium use.?What is it about these drugs tests, and is it all really worth enforcing such dramatic punishments for such a seemingly benign crime as smoking the mj? Indeed-this is how it should be.

Athletes are not the same as students of other activities. They know getting into it that it's this way, and you can tell by the way many of them revel in the spotlight and excitement, that they wouldn't want it any

other way. The coaches and administrators are obligated, for the fans if not for the athletes themselves, to keep their players as healthy and focused as possible, just as they need to keep them in school with concern for their grades.

Some people feel that these players shouldn't have been punished at all. We're not sure what this says about our society, whether marijuana is more acceptable to the younger generation or that athletes are simply treated better due to their fame and fortune. The answer is probably a combination of both, plus other factors. We do know that reefer madness isn't around any more and California has legalized "mary jane" for her medical purposes. We don't know what all this says about the sporting world and it's relationship with marijuana. We only know that our favorite college hoops squad has lost any significant shot at advancing deep into the NCAA tournament, and that sucks.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 has a brother who contributed to this story.

CHRIS BROWN B'00 once said that if you look up pimp-dog in the dictionary, you'll see a picture of Casey's brother.

3/12/98

Don't only pick the teams you think are going to win, pick those you want to win. Only use your brain sparingly because, as Homer Simpson says, it gets in the way.

## **Off the Deep End**

### **The Way to Avoid March Sadness**

### **By Christopher Brown and Casey Shearer**

Well, it's that time of? Wait a minute. We're not going to start like that again. It doesn't really matter how we start things off, because everybody already knows that it's March, and to sports junkies that means one thing and one thing ONLY: tournament time. Into the pool, everybody.

The brackets are set, the teams are psyched, the fans are ready, and Dickie V. is screaming "Yeah Bay-bee!" From the time the first game tips-off until CBS goes off the air on March 30 playing "One Shining Moment," people all around the globe will eat, sleep and breathe college basketball.

The National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Tournament is without a doubt, the single best two and half weeks in the sporting world. Where else can you find college students playing their hearts out, knowing that if they lose they go home to mamma (or at least to that psychology midterm)? Fans, players and coaches alike push each game's importance to Biblical proportions. Where else can you find blood, sweat, tears, cheerleaders, mascot squabbling and of course, more cheerleaders?

### **And then there were 64**

The excitement of the tournament is unparalleled. Every game counts, and, as such, many of them are excruciatingly close. Little schools like Tennessee-Chatanooga can shock the world by winning two games when they weren't even supposed to make a contest of the first one. Dreams come true or are crushed in a matter of moments.

We cannot truly explain the greatness and brilliance that is the NCAA Tournament, so we won't even try. Just go and see for yourself. Find a TV, tune in to CBS and watch the drama unfold.

But for those of you who don't trust us and don't want to watch, we have a solution-we will tell you what's going to happen, beforehand. Please take note of what we are saying and feel free to send letters to the editors complimenting us on our fine prognostication skills.

First, we must discuss the initial field of 64. Like all the other college hoops fans out there, we have poured over the bracket, looked at potential match-ups, picked winners and losers, griped about seedings and been amazed at schools that got in and those that did not.

The first thing that jumped out at us was the inclusion of Western Michigan. Casey, the budding commentator that he is, was screaming at Clark Kellog and Jim Nantz during the selection show to ask selection committee Chairman CM Newton how he could put Western Michigan in the tournament ahead of Ball State and star forward Bonzi Wells, whose team should be in the tourney for his name, if for nothing else.

Western Michigan and Ball State are both members of the MidAmerican Conference (MAC). Ball State won the regular season conference title and beat Western Michigan twice. Neither team won the conference tourney. Eastern Michigan and Earl Boykins did that, after beating Ball State in overtime in the semi-finals. Yet, somehow Western Michigan is in and Ball State is not, depriving us of the chance to see one of the nation's premiere seniors, Wells, on college hoops' premiere stage.

Other senior stars who will not be playing in the tournament are Pat Garrity of Notre Dame, Charles Jones of Long Island, Pacific's Michael Olowokandi and Georgia Tech's Matt Harpring. A warm welcome to Felipe Lopez and the St. John's Red Storm who finally made the tournament, three and a half years after Sports Illustrated put Lopez on their cover and declared him the savior of St. John's hoops. How come it took it so long?

Also welcome to Prairie View A&M, a school known for its record football losing streaks. (The last time they won a football game was 1989.) They are the lowest ranked team in the Ratings Percentage Index rankings in tournament history. USA Today listed them as having a "5 gazillion to one" chance at the championship. We're not lying; the paper actually said gazillion. Hey, a team that Brown could beat made the tourney.

A team that Brown did beat, in their season opener, Army, isn't in the tournament. But Navy is, and let's face it-Army, Navy, they're all the same. Hey, Coach Dobbs, why don't we switch to the Patriot League? Neither Navy nor Prairie View will be around long. Our Ivy compatriots, Princeton, received a five seed, the highest ever for an Ivy school. They drew an athletic UNLV team that is peaking at the right time, having won the WAC tournament-that could give the Tigers some trouble.

## **Bears are pretty tough?**

Now, that's just some of the 411 about this here tournament. We could go on for pages, but now it's time to turn to the juicy part. Who's going to win? This is the part to which those of you who have already filled out brackets and put money into pools will want to pay attention.

There are all kinds of strategies involved in picking winners in a tournament. Some people say you pick the teams with experience, the teams with chemistry, the teams with defense, the teams that can score, teams with great guard play, teams that can shoot the three, and teams with good coaching. We even saw an article once that declared a guy had picked two out of three national champions using a system in which all he compared was the competing schools' mascots. In his system, the more ferocious animal has the advantage. So a wildcat beats a gamecock, for instance. Acts of nature (Storm, etc.) have high rankings as does any team whose name is preceded by "Golden." This supposedly enabled this guy to predict the Tulsa Golden Hurricane's reaching the sweet sixteen in '94. The strongest mascots are supernatural beings, such as Devils or Demons. Hence, the guy picked Duke to win it all. And he was right in '92 and '93. (I smell a fish.)

Our system is a little more conventional-go with your gut and your heart. Only use your brain sparingly because, as Homer Simpson says, it gets in the way. Don't only pick the teams you think are going to win, pick those you want to win. Also, trust your dreams. In '95 Casey had a dream that Arizona would lose in the first round and it came true. (In '98 Casey had a dream that he didn't have false teeth, but that one hasn't come true yet.) Trust your instincts, baby!

With all that said, if your only goal is to win the money in the pool, the sure fire way to do that is to pick the higher seeds in every game. This basically assures you of picking two of the final four teams correctly, and is generally better than gambling on risky upsets that may not happen. When the upsets happen, only a few people have them picked so it doesn't matter that much. Trust us.

Last year, we ran a pool (Is that illegal? Whoops!) and the guy that won was your typical, know-nothing-about-hoops guy who picked the higher seed in every game except the 7-10 and 8-9 games in the first round, and one second round game. In fact, he filled out the bracket in 15 minutes in the Ratty at lunch one day.

The moral of all this is that all the analysis and talk is a bunch of crap. But it sure is fun, because hey, what if you're right? Anything can happen. Fairfield can hang with North Carolina until the final moments. College of Charleston can beat Maryland. It could happen to you.

So, without further ado, let us step out onto the line and, paraphrasing Howard Cosell, tell it how it's going to be.

Chris' Picks:

I have Prairie View A&M in the great eight losing to Stanford, because, what are the chances of a team with one to 5 gazillion odds?! Certainly this chance is not as great as them getting to the great eight. The University of New Mexico will barely lose to UCLA in the regional Southern finals. And you gotta love UNM because my father went there. You gotta love UCLA like you love the warm sun. Navy will make it to the final four also, because hey, they deserve it, they're protecting us in the gulf. My final words are put your money on Maryland, and never on Cincinnati.

Final Four: Stanford, UCLA, Navy and Maryland. UCLA to win.

Casey's Picks:

First Round Upsets: Eastern Michigan and 5-5 Earl Boykins over Michigan State. Also look for South Alabama to give some trouble to Illinois. USA almost beat Arizona in the first round last year, and the big ten is overrated. Some other potential head turners-Florida State and College of Charleston.

Second Round Upset: Temple and that annoying match-up zone, which finally is accompanied by some shooters, beating Cincinnati.

Final Four: North Carolina, Kansas, Utah and UCLA. If you're going to dive in the pool, you might as well jump off the deep end. UCLA has Baron Davis who went to our high school, so they have to go by virtue of being associated with me. Utah has Hanno Mottola from Finland who was in my rotisserie basketball league for the two years I lived in Finland. In short, I go with my boys.

UCLA over Utah in the finals. I can dream can't I? Maybe it'll come true.

To the rest of you hoping to win pools out there, good luck. You'll need it. We do.

Casey Shearer B'00 will have his ass glued to the couch watching the Tourney for the next three weekends.

Chris Brown B'00 doesn't have to watch because he already knows what will happen.



3/19/1998

A weekend to remember

# Marching through the Madness

## By Christopher Brown and Casey Shearer

Welcome to our world.

As we think back on last weekend, a few things become clear (starting with our heads). First, one word sums up last Thursday through Sunday: Madness.

March madness was in full effect and we're not just talking about basketball. Let's recall the events of last weekend. Thirty-six hours of college basketball on television plus a few more on the radio, a party called Starfuck with men dressed in diapers and chains with bones in their mouths and topless women painted silver, three Brown men's hockey playoff games, two women's hockey playoff games, a lingerie party at Machado, three more Brown baseball losses, latenight, lots of beer, and this article. Madness.

## The time of our lives

The second thing we realized while immersing ourselves in the memories of this weekend was that from the standpoint of a sports fan, it doesn't get any better than this. We all know about the endless hours of college basketball on TV. Thirty-six hours of live coverage of the 48 first and second round games have college hoops fans leaving indelible ass marks on the edge of their seats. As we said in this space last week, there is nothing better than the NCAA Tournament. March madness by itself is enough to make a sports weekend great. Yet the tourney was only the beginning.

There was the women's NCAA tournament, replete with last second shots, clock controversies and a number 16 seed from the Ivy League beating a number one seed. There was a full schedule of NBA and NHL games and a full docket of Brown sports including the baseball team returning to its losing ways and the track team participating in the national indoor championships.

For hockey fans on campus, it was possible to pull a viewing marathon almost equal to the die-hard hoops fans. The Brown men's and women's ice hockey teams played five exciting playoff games this weekend of which four were of the one and done variety that makes the NCAA basketball tournament so exciting.

The male Bears started things off on Friday night at Meehan Auditorium losing in the first of their games against the Princeton Tigers. On Saturday afternoon the lady Bears took on Dartmouth in an ECAC (East Coast Athletic Conference) semi-final match-up, skating away with a three to one victory. From there, fans sprinted back to Meehan to catch the men's hockey team stave off elimination with a convincing 6-0 victory. On Sunday afternoon, the women won the ECAC championship for the first time, breaking the three-year-long jinx. After having won the regular season title the last three years and failing to win in the playoffs, the Bears finished third in the regular season this year, but got it done in the post-season. Finally, in a hard-checking, penalty-filled game the men's miracle run was ended by Princeton, five to three.

It was an action-packed weekend indeed. "I've watched so much hockey this weekend. I don't want [the weekend] to end," said sophomore Ben Bonine B'00, who managed to watch all five Brown play-off games.

Seeing that at one point on Sunday we had one NCAA tournament game on our television, another on the radio over the internet, the men's hockey game on local radio, and all the other Brown scores over the phone via Brown Sportsline, our reply to Bonine is-our sentiments exactly. But, alas the weekend did end, only to be replaced by looming midterms and papers. So as we head off into the oblivion that is spring break, we recount our favorite memories of the best sporting weekend in recent memory.

Chris's favorite moments:

1. U?C?L?A??UCLA Fight! Fight! Fight! The traditional eight clap was certainly in effect this weekend to celebrate two brilliant UCLA victories. Even without the big fella', Jelani McCoy, UCLA-led by freshman Baron Davis-was able to advance two exciting rounds to the sweet sixteen. Reminder:

always listen to us when we display our prescience regarding the tourney outcome?or if you don't like us, just bet on UCLA. In 1995 it got so hot and heavy in Westwood, the hip village that UCLA calls home, that I remember one of my friends telling me that a mob of UCLA fanatics, after UCLA won, bum-rushed the streets and took over the village in celebration. In fact, he told me he was hanging from a lamppost. Warning: When UCLA wins, watch your heads for failing Chris and Caseys.

2. The glory of extreme procrastination-I never thought it could reach this level. Happily, however, the means of my procrastination, and also the celebration of it, was the New Mexico vs. Syracuse match-up. Obviously, the formula of the man who we discussed in the last article (the formula that predicts the winner in every match-up according to the attributes of its mascot; specifically that the more dangerous, destructive mascot has the advantage) is entirely, against any doubt, proven false. Otherwise, the orange wouldn't have eaten the lobo.

Casey's favorite moments: (In no particular order)

1. UCLA shutting up all the critics and showing some serious flava and big time heart by beating a bigger, stronger and deeper Michigan team. Picture this: I'm sitting in my room, watching URI beat Kansas, while listening to the Bruins on the radio over the net. Every five seconds I'm screaming at the radio when UCLA scores or cheering at the TV when Cutino Mobely drops another three-pointer on Kansas' head. March Madness in a nutshell baby. Go Bruins.
2. The Brown women's ice hockey team finally winning the ECAC championship. After losing three Olympians and two other stars from last season's dominant squad, the lady Bears shrugged off a slow start to the season to peak at the right time and break the three year jinx. Imagine the feeling for senior captain Jodi McKenna as after three years of frustration she finally got to hoist the trophy over her head. Good luck to the Women's hockey team this weekend as they skate for the school's first ever national championship. Go Bears.
3. The Ivy League has two teams win NCAA first round games. Harvard's women's hoops team shocks the world by becoming the first number 16 seed to beat a number one in NCAA history, women or men. Previously, the number ones had been 75-0. Alison Feaster leads the nation in scoring and led the Ivies in scoring, rebounding, field-goal shooting, steals and three-point accuracy and was second in free-throw shooting. She got game. Isn't it comforting to know that no one is safe any more. When it's one and done, it's so much fun.
4. West Virginia's Jarrod West's bank shot three pointer off glass to beat number two seed Cincinnati, who had gone ahead with seven seconds to play on a three by D'Juan Baker, who had sunk a game winning trifecta with three seconds to go from the exact same spot, two days earlier against Northern Arizona in the first round. Next time call glass Jarrod.
5. Valparaiso's Bryce Drew's game-winning three to stun Mississippi in the first round of the tourney. Bryce's dad Homer drew up the amazing hook and ladder play to perfection. Valpo (Isn't that some kind of dog food) goes to the sweet sixteen.
6. Scott Sterling's B'00 miraculous, sprawling one-armed save in the third period on Sunday against Princeton. The Bears' sophomore net-minder was beat badly and Princeton had a sure goal, only to be denied by one of the finest saves I have ever seen at any level. Sterling showed the form that got the Bears men's hockey team to the playoffs for the first time since 1994-95.

**CHRIS BROWN B'00 and CASEY SHEARER B'00  
have invested in UCLA lingerie**

4/9/1998

Martial arts do not provide superstars or champions the way other sports do. Americans love winners. In martial arts there is no title to win.

## **Down with Kobra Karate**

**Breathe in? Breathe out. Wax on? Wax off.**

**By Christopher Brown and Casey Shearer**

“I thought karate came from Buddhist temples and stuff like that.”?Ralph Macchio as Daniel Larusso in The Karate Kid.

To a lot of Americans, karate, and martial arts in general, still seems to come from obscure and oriental settings in the misty mountains of Tibet, and seems to be practiced by bald-headed and bad-assed Asian men. Martial arts are marked by loud and flagrant yells, long drawn-out sounds coming from nasal falsettos, deep abstract breathing and meditation. Daniel Larusso, the model of juvenile strength and adult dignity, purveyor of boyish spirit (remember, he dated Elizabeth Shue) and fulfiller of the American dream of success, will act as the epic hero of this article, as he roams the fallacious grounds of America's misinterpretations and ends up finally at a clear presentation of the facts and the veritable magic of martial arts.

### **“Chop! Chop! Daniel San!”**

To those of you who are excited by the high flying acts that you imagine martial arts to have, don't be disheartened! Formal organizations and rules within the dojo (the designated work-out setting) do not preclude board-breaking, broken knuckles, jumping kicks, jumping double kicks or Chris jumping and kicking Casey's false teeth out.

### **Sweep the Leg**

In our newly spiritually-aware world, meditation and spiritual training often accompany the physical training of martial arts. “There is no pain in this dojo!” It is not that the art is connected to religion, but rather that it explores the boundaries of the human body's limitations, advancing beautiful movements that are not seen in any other human art form within the context of a disciplined practice. But the question remains? why are so many people confused about what the martial arts are about? Firstly, martial arts as a genre of physical activity is quite varied, and the origins of the various arts that came about in the Orient in some cases originated on their own, and at other times were influenced by each other. Some of the well-known arts are Karate, originating in Japan; Tang Soo Do and Tae Kwon Do, both Korean forms; and Kung Fu, a Chinese form. Although these arts have important differences, they all possess the same fundamental precept of using various movements with the hands and feet for self-defense. But what is so mystical about these practices?

Daniel, a relatively backward and ignorant New Jerseyan young lad, is someone we could all relate to (except for the New Jersey part). Initially, Daniel finds himself extremely skeptical of karate, particularly Mr. Miyagi's training methodology. His interest in karate begins after he is beaten up a number of times by the local bullies and degenerates, led by the nouveau James Dean, Johnny (played by the long-forgotten and underrated William Zabka). He enters the enterprise of karate so that he can return the favor and “lay out some fools.” All of us who have read our fairy tales and not forgotten our “moral-of-the-stories,” or those who have visited the local Zen center, would know that this is not the intention with which to successfully complete any task or assignment. Nevertheless, when Daniel encounters the more natural, spiritual, loving, whole-hearted training he is shocked and disbelieving.

At first glance this “oriental” training methodology that Mr. Miyagi uses might seem typically obscure and foreign. Mr. Miyagi’s father was a fisherman from Okinawa who taught all his sons the art of karate, the art of the empty hand, as Mr. Miyagi calls it. He has Daniel carry out the same chores that his father made

him carry out, which look to Daniel as if they have no direct relation to his initial goal of being able to “lay out fools.” And in a dramatic scene in which Daniel exclaims, “this is bullshit man, I’m goin’ home!,” Mr. Miyagi calls him back in the famous “wax on, wax off” scene and shows him that, indeed, all the movements that Daniel applied in his chores are actually the same movements of the fundamental blocking techniques. “Show me paint the fence.” This key moment provides Daniel with faith in his teacher’s naturalistic training. Daniel accepted the Miyagi way, can we?

Daniel’s training is the polar opposite of that of the local bad-asses that beat him up. These kids belong to a dojo called Kobra Kai Dojo, led by a corrupt, blood-thirsty, merciless ex-marine. In this dojo, the students are trained to fight, hurt and beat their opponents at all costs. “There is no fear in this dojo!” Upon

entering the dojo Daniel hears the students chanting: “Strike First! Strike Hard! No Mercy Sir!”

This dojo, at least for the purposes of this article, might more accurately be called the Misinterpretation Kai Dojo. That is to say that Americans have tended to change the martial arts according to their desire for superficial trophies and flashy competition. This tendency leads to a general perversion or misinterpretation of the martial arts’ original function.

## **Cut-throats beware**

Like Daniel, Americans are skeptical of the foreign practices of martial arts. Perhaps this skepticism is based on the fact that the martial arts are inherently foreign and different, and that there is nothing within the material and content of the arts that makes them compatible with American ideology and culture. Upon second look, though, this is not the case.

The American fighter is a combination of Rocky?the homemade bare-knucklefighter who was born a street-fighter?and Muhammad Ali?the pretty, flamboyant trash-talking showman. American ideology props up those who work hard against all odds to win like Rocky and those who put on a show like Ali. Although both boxing and karate call upon sophisticated levels of fitness, strength, discipline and balance, there are revealing differences. Boxing contains little in the way of spiritual training. Meditation and other thought processes connected with karate training that are used to help focus, aid patience, and reach peacefulness, necessarily have spiritual impact in terms of the practitioner’s understanding of himself within the context of his breath, his body, and the universe.

Secondly, karate is a form of self-defense, whereas boxing is an art that has as its goal to knock an opponent down and out (Or in the case of Peter McNeely to be knocked down within 30 seconds and collect a multi-million dollar payday). The Kobra Kai doesn’t hesitate to sweep the leg, while a boxer has no qualms about bloodying an opponents eye and knocking his teeth out.

Thirdly, boxing is a sport, modeled only for competition. Competitions are a part of every martial art but are in few cases the basis for training (although some specialized forms of Tae Kwon Do have reduced themselves to a sport and train only to prepare for competition. For a sport to be successful in this country it must have a championship. The American public has a need to crown champions and heroes. Even such mundane sports as figure skating and chess (if it can be called a sport) have competitions and world champions. Martial arts do not provide superstars or champions the way other sports do. Americans love winners. To true martial artists there is no title to win.

Finally, karate, and all the martial arts, requires the development of your inner self in the abstract. They require often delicate and disciplined breath control, patience of mind, openness of vision and calmness of heart. (We have never witnessed a form of martial art that involved ear-biting). In industrial America, in which life is essentially fast-paced, aggressive, and progressive, in which the dominant medium is television and the most popular program is MTV, there is no time to cook meals, let alone focus on your breathing. Mainstream popular America, as in the Misinterpretation Kai Dojo, tends to appropriate the parts of the martial arts that fit into pre-existing cultural expectations: this is the source of the misunderstanding (as well as the fact that not enough people watch *The Karate Kid*).

This is not to say that all practices of martial arts in this country are diluted and obscured. Far from it; there are many schools of very respectable, traditional and well-rounded training. The problem of misinterpretation comes most often, not from those who practice the martial arts, but from those who watch cartoons. Some of these schools can be found on our very own Brown campus in the form of clubs. There is an excellent Tang Soo Do club, an exuberant Tae Kwon Do club and a Hapkido faction.

## **Check it out?they're kickin'!**

CHRIS BROWN B'00 is a certified karate master.  
CASEY SHEARER B'00 can still kick his ass.

4/16/1998

On the court the bonding is physical; on the baseline, conversational.

## **We Got Next Picking up at the AC**

### **By Casey Shearer**

It's a rainy afternoon at the Olney-Margolies Athletic Center (OMAC) basketball courts. A six-foot player who we'll call John jumps high in the air to grab a rebound, comes down and screams. Others shout, "Nice board, baby! Way to get up!" He passes the ball and jogs up court, half swaggering as his shoulders sway back and forth. The team swings the ball around the perimeter until it's in his hands. "What's the count?" someone waiting to play on the baseline asks. "Point-Eight," comes the reply. John dribbles right, spins left, feels the defender with his back and then jumps, spinning right to shoot a turn-around jumper off the backboard and in. He lets out another primal yell while bumping chests with a teammate and then says, "Game," as he stares down the defender who had been guarding him. The losing team swears and walks off the court dejectedly, quickly asking those under the hoop, in hope of being picked up, "Who's got last game?" A smiling teammate of John's says loudly, "Next!"

### **Ballers, shot-callers, brawlers**

It's the joy of victory and the agony of defeat, plus a whole lot more. It's pickup basketball on weekday afternoons at Brown. Five days a week, small dramas play out in games to eleven at the OMAC as undergraduates, grad students, alumni and members of the surrounding community take part in one of Brown's most popular recreational activities. The games are more than just basketball. They are a culture, a community and a microcosm of life.

True ballers and scrubs alike, whites, blacks, Asians, young and old, mostly guys with the occasional female—the game draws them all to the OMAC every afternoon starting around 2:30 and sometimes keeps them there until after 7:00pm. Some forsake classes to get into the first game, which is first team to fifteen; the rest are first to eleven. "I can't go to Engin. 90 on Fridays because I have to ball, and I have to make it to first game-fifteen," said Young Yu B'99, an OMAC pick-up regular. The games mean something different to each person. Some pretend they are Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson or Larry Bird for a few hours. "It's a way to live out your childhood 'basketball superstar' fantasies even if you are only an average player. There are always those days when you just feel it, and that's why you play," said Jason Steuerwalt B'00. Others used to play organized ball and pick-up hoops is a way to recapture the good old days. "I like playing with my friends," explained Jordan Davidson B'00. "Throughout high school I was on the basketball team. I miss the camaraderie of a team? Basketball allows me to become closer with my friends." For some metaphysical reason, sports create bonds. "It's fun to play with my boys. It's also fun to start up competitions and trash-talking with friends on other teams. Perhaps we're just a bunch of fun-loving college kids trying to create or relive old glories on the basketball court," Davidson said.

Some play for exercise or just for the fun. "[I play] to stay in shape. I just like playing basketball. It's a distraction from the everyday worries of life," said Charlie Platt B'00. Like Platt, Davidson uses basketball as an escape. "When my girlfriend dumped me last semester, I played basketball. It helped me take my mind off things. I felt good playing. I simply have fun." Yu said pick-up ball allows him to vent frustrations and do things that the normal constraints of society do not allow. "In daily life, anger is generally a frowned upon emotion. Not so on the hard wood," Yu explained. "As a baller, I get to release and manifest my anger in an artistic as well as accepted form: a blocked shot and a scream in the face of my opponent; a ferocious rebound and a hard stare at he who attempted to take the rebound that is mine; and the

epitome, a crossover and a faint laugh as I split my defender like Moses spreads the Red Sea. Basketball is about arousing humiliation, defeat, taking away pride, all of which is motivated by anger. This is why I ball.”

These conflicting ideologies and personalities come together on the court. Sometimes the result is everlasting friendships. “Pick-up keeps me and my boys smiling,” said Davidson. Basketball can be the great equalizer, making friends of people who otherwise would not speak to each other. Poetically, basketball can also be the great divider.

## He got game

A player with dreadlocks who we’ll call James sinks a shot over the six-foot Asian and trash-talk spews from his lips. “Where you at John! What you got!” The next time down, a teammate of James’s drains a shot to win the game and James continues to yap at John. “Why are you on his nuts? You didn’t do shit.” says John. “Who’s still on the court?” replies James as he turns, his dreadlocks snapping with sweat. John walks off the court and sits down. After a few minutes of ranting to his friends, he says, “I’m going to make it my everlasting mission to bitch him every time we play.”

Basketball can even make foes out of friends. Yu once yelled at a friend of his who missed a number of easy lay-ups. A few days later the friend almost started a fight with Yu, asking Yu in the middle of the argument if he remembered yelling at him on the court. Tempers can flare on the court. Even the most reserved of characters can become animated while playing pickup.

A player misses a shot. “Shit!” A hard foul results in a player throwing the ball at a defender. The defender questions the player’s manhood, and a shoving match ensues. These conflicts can escalate into fights but most of the time more level heads prevail or people take out their grudges while playing. A scramble results in two players tugging away at the ball. One wins the battle and wrenches the ball free, elbows flying. “What are you doing punk?!” says the other as he takes a step forward. The first player just turns and walks away. “I wouldn’t tangle with that guy,” chimes in a member of the peanut gallery, waiting to play.

The peanut gallery is an integral part of the OMAC atmosphere. Only ten players can play at a time. The rest wait their turn on the sidelines in groups of five. The winning team stays on to face the next group of challengers. “Who’s got next??You got five?” is heard constantly on the baseline as newcomers try to get picked up onto a team. The waiting is part of the scene. If you lose, you wait. Sometimes those who wait make calls from the sideline. “That was out.” They taunt and talk trash: “Third Grader!” “No Cross!” “Somebody call the cops, we have a thief.” “Walter owns you.”

## No Title IX here

Players waiting converse and build friendships. Typical baseline banter includes all and any of the following: “Did you see the Celtics lose last night?” “Kobe is for real.” “Did you see that? Marlon can get up. I wish I could dunk.” “What was your lottery number? “How’d the blind date go?” “Where are the parties at tonight?” On the court the bonding is physical; on the baseline, conversational. The conversation is guy talk. Pick-up at Brown is, for the most part, a male phenomenon.

Women are not excluded and do play with the guys on occasion. Members of the Brown softball team play a coed game with members of the Brown football team every Thursday at noon. However, during the peak afternoon hours, the players are almost all male. “Not as many girls play pickup as there are girls who like to play basketball,” says Wendy Eberhart B’00. “It’s kind of an intimidation thing, I think. I like playing with girls because there’s less attitude involved.” This male attitude often turns the games into tests of manhood. Those who pass earn the respect of their peers. “You got to play strong. You can’t let people just take the ball from you. I hate it when people play like pussies,” says junior Zach Burns B’99.

Reputations and respect are not the only things picked up during pick-up games. Sometimes, people pick up new names. Players branded two students, both named Dave, with nicknames that stuck, and now most people do not even know their real names. Regulars call one "Big Red" because of his bright red hair and wide

shoulders. Players dubbed the other "Gumby" because of his gangly arms and legs which, while playing, seem to stretch into positions only plausible for green rubber dolls. "I don't even know Big Red's name," said Yu. "Everybody just calls him Big Red."

People play year round, but only when students are on campus. None of the locals play during Winter break, because there are not enough people. Most people do not play on weekends because students are partying, recovering or studying. "I came down here on a Saturday once," said Larry, a Providence local in his forties. "It stunk, there wasn't anybody here." Friday is the busiest day. The best players all come to play

and the quality of the games rises. All the regulars are there, except in the fall when the football players have practice. Before he moved to Kansas in January, Providence resident Jerry Viera said, "You have to play on Fridays."

## **Jerry's kids**

Before taking a guard job at a federal prison in Kansas, Viera tended bar in Rhode Island at night and

played at the OMAC every day. The recognizable six foot five inch Korean player with the big smile, who shot the lights out from three point range, was devastating in the paint and passed extremely well, was the one player seen at the OMAC day in and day out for over seven years. Everybody knew Jerry, and he was usually the best player on the court. Now that he's gone, some say the level of play has gone down, but all agree that with Jerry gone it's different. "The whole complexion of the games has changed since Jerry's not here," said Danny, a Brown computer science graduate student. "It was the end of an era," said Bob Wyatt, a Providence resident who continues to play pick-up ball at Brown as he has for decades.

At the OMAC court, Jerry Viera was the king. Bob Wyatt is the court jester. Wyatt is a short, round man, in his forties at least, who wears glasses and runs a country club in Massachusetts for a living. He enters the OMAC in a suit and tie, looking more like a professor than a pick-up regular. He waves to and slaps hands with over half the players as he walks onto the court and converses with athletic department administrators and coaches. Everyone knows Bob.

Even on the court, Bob does not look like a baller. "His glasses have that schoolmaster feeling," remarked Cliff Su B'99. Wyatt wears old ripped tanktops, the schoolmaster glasses, a kneepad out of the 1950s and a bright yellow mouthpiece. "My favorite thing is when Bob takes out his mouthguard and there's a line of saliva trailing from his mouth to the mouthguard. It's beautiful," said Viera.

Bob is by no means a great player, and he knows it. Bob is a documented hack, often fouling with reckless abandon to compensate for the disparity in skill and speed levels. Viera and Bobby Baker, a recent Brown graduate living in the Providence area, used to joke about having a "Bob's Hack of the Week" feature on Sportscenter. Bob amuses all and takes his basketball very seriously. He comes out almost every day to play a younger man's game with kids his daughter's age. He plays for the love of the game and to forever be one of the boys. "He just commands respect," said Su. "People respect him because he's in his fifties and he's out there every day running with guys who are nineteen and twenty." Bob Wyatt epitomizes what pick-up games are all about.

Young has been sitting on the sideline for two games, frothing at the mouth, angry that his team lost. The game on the court ends. The winner's ask, "Who's got next." "We do!" says Young as his frown turns into a wide grin, and he struts onto the court. Game time.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 can't jump.



4/23/1998

In return for their athletic services, the athletes receive the opportunity for a free college education. Unfortunately, not enough athletes take advantage of this.

## **Making the Grade**

### **An inquiry into the chaotic state of the NCAA**

By Casey Shearer

It was the last week of March and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was celebrating its finest moment: the Final Four of the NCAA men's basketball tournament.

But there was a blemish on the celebration of the conclusion of the greatest tournament in recent memory. Two members of the Northwestern University men's basketball team were implicated in a point-shaving scandal, basketball's version of fixing games. This development, along with two similar scandals, one at Arizona State University unearthed last fall and one at Boston College in the fall of '96, has brought the issue of paying college athletes into public discussion.

High profile sports bring in millions of dollars a year to colleges, universities and the NCAA. The source of all this revenue, the athlete, sees none of the money. This can be frustrating to college players who are not quite good enough to be professional athletes. Observers speculate that it is this frustration that makes second-tier college football and basketball players susceptible to gamblers' advances about point shaving. The athletes see an easy way to get some quick cash and the gamblers see willing partners.

### **Just pay them, baby!**

Some people, such as ESPN commentator Dick Vitale, believe the way to stop point shaving is to pay the student athletes. The argument is that with a university cash stipend, the student-athlete would no longer be so desperate for money. Vitale's opinion goes beyond point shaving? he believes that schools do not fairly compensate the athletes for all the revenue that their skills generate.

However, Vitale and those who advocate paying student athletes overlook a number of issues. First, only a small number of the thirty-two NCAA sponsored sports are large revenue producers: football, baseball, men's hockey and men's and women's basketball. If we pay student athletes do we pay them all or only those who play in revenue-producing sports and sports on which there is a high volume of gambling? Would some athletes be paid more than others?

Second, if student athletes were paid, then other sports would have to be dropped. Schools already have enough trouble financing all of their varsity teams. Many schools have dropped well-established programs in non-revenue producing sports. For example, UCLA, a school whose basketball and football teams are annually among the best in the country and bring in millions of dollars, recently dropped for financial reasons its water polo program, which had been one of the top five in the country.

Third, many student athletes, especially in football and basketball, are paid in the form of a full scholarship. In return for their athletic services, the athletes receive the opportunity for a free college education. Unfortunately, not enough athletes take advantage of this. In 1990 the NCAA started its stricter initial eligibility standards requiring a minimum grade point average in core courses and a corresponding minimum score on the SAT or ACT for freshmen wishing to compete in division I or division II athletics. Only 52% of football players and 45% of male basketball players matriculating that year graduated within six years.

## It's not legit to quit

Too many student athletes do not graduate, and if they are not good enough to be professional athletes they have nowhere to go when sports are over. Some turn to gambling. These are often the same individuals who approach current students about point shaving. The people indicted for trying to bribe the basketball players in the Northwestern scandal were both former student athletes?Kevin Pendergast, a former place-kicker for Notre Dame who failed to make it in pro ball, and Brian Ballarini, a former Northwestern football player turned bookmaker.

Others suffer the fate of former University of Utah basketball star Billy "the Hill" McGill. McGill was the pride and joy of Utah during his years on campus, but when he went to the NBA after his senior season he did not have a degree. McGill did not play long enough in the NBA to qualify for a pension. Luck landed him an aerospace job, but he was laid off and has been unemployed for the past two years. The only jobs he has been offered are door to door salesman positions, but his knees, ravaged by years of playing basketball, cannot withstand that kind of walking. Everywhere McGill applies they say the same thing: they cannot give him a job because he has no degree.

Fates like those of Pendergast and McGill are the result of the attitude that schools and the NCAA have taken towards big time college sports. The emphasis has not been on education but on making money and creating stars. Fellow students view high profile athletes as special. Stars like Mike Bibby and Miles Simon of the University of Arizona basketball team can hardly walk around campus and go to class without being hounded for autographs and constantly pointed at and whispered about.

Even before stars get to campus as freshmen they are courted by schools, some of which offer illegal gifts of money, cars and other amenities. There are strict NCAA guidelines against such recruiting violations, but they do occur. The fact that schools or alumni and boosters will go to such lengths to have a good team clearly illustrates the skewed attitude toward college athletics on many campuses.

Some athletes get free rides from professors. Others receive tutors (like when Brandon Walsh was assigned to tutor the star of California University's basketball team) and job opportunities that non-athletes do not. In extreme cases some athletes do not even have to do their own work. New Mexico State University was caught by NCAA investigators in 1996 after having assistant coaches and cheerleaders try to take exams and do homework for members of the basketball team.

## Course evaluation

New Mexico State is the extreme case of the chaotic state of affairs. Some schools, such as Stanford, which graduates 88% of its student athletes within five years, are full of dedicated scholars who earn their grades. These schools have found a solution to the problem.

Yet at many other schools athletes believe that they are so special they do not need to do the work necessary to graduate because they will always be treated well. As the plight of Billy "the Hill" McGill shows harshly, that is simply not the case.

College and university administrators and NCAA officials must create an atmosphere where more than 45% of basketball players and 52% of football players will use their scholarship opportunity to complete a college degree. How to go about this is unclear, but paying student athletes is not the way. The problem is obviously worse at some schools than others. Each individual school needs to find ways to promote the benefits of going to class, doing more than just staying eligible to play sports, and graduating on time. Each school needs to individually assess whatever special treatment occurs on its campus and confront it head on. The NCAA needs to find some way to reconcile college athletics' enormous popularity with the well-being of the student athletes. The NCAA basketball tournament is a made-for-TV event that often takes students thousands of miles away from schools to play games on Thursdays and Fridays for the benefit of CBS, often in the middle of finals or midterms.

This needs to change. In a letter to the editor of the Los Angeles Times, Joe Yzurdiaga of Glendale, Ca. said, "When our alleged leaders decide not to worship the dollar, perhaps they will determine right is right and wrong is wrong and start to lead rather than bow."

At the moment, the NCAA seems to put monetary concerns over the academic well-being of the student athletes. However, if they change things they risk ruining the most exciting and spectator-friendly sporting event in the country, the NCAA basketball tournament.

The solution to making all college athletes more than just students in name only is not an easy one. The NCAA and its member colleges and universities will have to search long and hard and grapple with finding the right solutions. Some schools like Stanford appear to have found them. Here's hoping the rest start looking.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 is living just enough for the city.

September 10, 1998

## Cub scouting

Will the 90 year hex finally come to an end?

article by: Casey Shearer

In this summer of the baseball revival and the movie flop there has been no better story than the Chicago Cubs. More inspiring than Armageddon, more action than Lethal Weapon 4, and further out into left field than There's Something About Mary, the Fuzzie Cubbies have been the show of the year. Just what makes the Cubs story so special this year? Start with a team that hasn't won the World Series in 90 years, throw in the tragic deaths of the team's announcers Harry Caray and Jack "she's a" Brickhouse, add the dynamic duo of a 20 year-old pitching phenom and a former shoe shiner from the Dominican Republic who threatens the most hallowed and visible record in all of sports, and finally tie it all together with a tight race for the National League Wild Card playoff birth, and you have the story of the season.

## The Year of the Cub

For the past nine-tenths of a century Cub fans have been the most loyal and long suffering of all baseball fans. The motto "wait 'till next year" has been permanently etched into their minds. The slogan was never more appropriate than last season when the Cubs exploded out of the starting blocks and set a National League record by losing their first 14 games on their way to a 68-94 season, good for worst in the National League. "Gentleman, start your coffins!" This year, even without the crooning of Caray, the Cubs faithful are singing a different tune. The slogan these days on Waveland Avenue is "It could happen." It is the playoffs, the World Series, the end of the 90 year drought. Could it really happen?

The Cubs win the World Series? The Clippers win the NBA title? Brown win a baseball game? Rain in Southern California? Soccer captivate Americans? A sober first weekend? It could happen.

## Taming the Wild...Card

At the moment the Cubs are in the midst of a tight three way battle for the National League Wild Card. The Padres, Astros, and Braves have virtually locked up the National League division titles, leaving the Cubs, Mets and Giants to battle it out for the final playoff spot. Just like last season, the NL has come down to the final month of the season with only one meaningful race. However, this year the contestants number three, instead of the two from last year's Dodgers-Giants battle royal. (Uh, if you remember who was picked to win that race by authors in this space last season, uh like be quiet or something.)

The Mets have been galvanized by the acquisition of former Dodger catcher Mike Piazza and the pitching of their 64 man rotation. This has the New York Metropolitanans looking to make it back to playoffs for the first time since the Dodgers' miracle season of 1988 (thank you Kirk Gibson), and back to the World Series for the first time since 1986 when Bill Buckner's matador impersonation handed New York the title. The Giants are attempting to make it back to the playoffs with a team of bunch of no names in Orange and Black and a guy named Bonds. This rag tag bunch, led by manager Dusty Baker, managed to win the NL West last season by defeating a now perennially underachieving Dodgers' team and believing in what they called Dustiny.

The Cubs, meanwhile, are trying to reach the postseason for the first time since 1989 when they were promptly sent packing in four games by the Giants in the NLCS, and back to the World Series for the first time since dinosaurs roamed the earth. Will they do it? It could happen.

Ten Reasons Neither Piazza nor Dustiny will be served 1. Sammy Sosa In Swinging Sammy the Cubs have themselves the most valuable player in the National League. The man is leading the National League in

RBI's, while hitting above .300, stealing bases, using his cannon of an arm and single handedly causing an increase in insurance rates for cars parked on Waveland Avenue (Side note. Isn't America great? Where else can a former shoe shine boy from the Dominican Republic with a bad haircut who speaks English with an accent heavier than the ratty pasta cream sauce and who's first contract came with a not so flattering signing bonus of \$3,500 be a megastar).

## **2.Kerry Wood**

The young pitching sensation who is younger than a large number of the students at this university has a fastball that can't be seen, a curve ball that has received 14 moving violations and a change up that ESPN analyst Peter Gammons called unfair. Not to mention that the kid has more homeruns than Mark McGwire did at his age. Some people say that you can't count on a rookie in the playoffs. Two words- Livan Hernandez. And just in case those people are right....

3. Kevin Tapani, Steve Trachsel and Mike Morgan All three are veteran pitchers who give the Cubs a solid rotation and some much needed playoff and big game experience in case the rookie ace falters.

## **4.Rod Beck and company**

The Cubs' bullpen anchored by Beck, who manages to get it done even if he is walking on a tight rope, with help from Felix Heredia and Matt Karchner, is stronger than those of the Mets and Giants. Plus Rod Beck just looks mean and ugly which is a requirement for good closers (see Lee Smith, Goose Gossage and Bruce Sutter).

## **5.The San Francisco pitching staff**

This is why the Giants won't win. An old adage in baseball says you don't get to the playoffs without pitching. The Giants technically do have pitching, it just happens to be really old. Without the benefit of Jerry Reinsdorf trading them the entire White Sox staff, the Giants have been reduced to having a pitching staff that includes in it's top three pitchers, 42 year old Danny Darwin, an injured Shawn Estes and 39 year old Orel Hershiser. Now that's what I call Dusty.

## **6.Jerry Seinfeld**

Jerry, a New Yorker who actually moved to LA (he knew what's up), is a Mets fan. And this year the Mets will be just like the all the Seinfeld episodes you'll watch from now on—reruns. That's right: just like last year, the Mets will come up short in the wild card chase.

## **7.The Bleacher Bums**

Cub fans simply are the best around. Where else do they show up and sell out for 90 years without a championship to show for it? Nowhere. Who else has the tradition of throwing the ball back and having an intoxicated announcer sing the 7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch? No one.

## **8.Destiny**

In a year in which John Elway finally won his SuperBowl, Dale Earnhardt finally won his Daytona 500, the Detroit Red Wings dedicated their Stanley Cup to injured star Vladimir Konstantinov, and Michael Jordan won a title on what was most likely the last shot of his career, it simply has to happen that the Cubs make it to the playoffs and Sammy Sosa shatters Roger Maris' record. Besides, the Giants used up their Dusty last year and Buckner's gaffe in '86 used up the Mets quota for centuries. In a season when the Red Sox and Angels also look to make the playoffs, how could the Cubs not?

9. I said so.

10. It could happen.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 misses Chris Brown. Not really.

September 14, 1998

# Crowd control

## The emergence of the Brown sports fan

article by: Casey Shearer

A beautiful September afternoon, not a cloud in sight, the sun providing warmth from above and the beer from below, surrounded by hundreds of my fellow students and fans. A perfect day for a football game.

And what a football game we had last Saturday, as our very own Brown Bears battled down to the final whistle in a barn burner against the Yale Bulldogs. Coach Phil Estes's charges took part in a very special football game. Not only was the game decided on the final play with Yale scoring a touchdown with no time remaining to steal a 30-28 victory from the Bears' paws, but for the first time in a while, there were actual people in the Brown stands rooting for the Brown team in the field.

## Care Bears

In a game that featured eight fumbles, two interceptions, 58 points, and a 90 yard kickoff return by a two-time All-American wide receiver, the most exciting thing for this columnist was sitting amongst throngs of Brown football fans screaming at the top of their lungs for most of three hours. A real crowd at a Brown sporting event? Check the alignment of the stars. Somebody call Dionne Warwick. Half the population of Warwick, Rhode Island was at the game. There were actually more Brown students at a football game than at an Engine 9 or PS 22 lecture. Unheard of. Awesome. But why is a large, vocal crowd unheard of at Brown? Do the students just not care? Are there too many other things to do? Do our professors assign us too much reading? The answer may not be known, but suffice it to say, it doesn't have to be that way.

At an Ivy League school known for its apathy towards athletics and school spirit in general, showing up in mass numbers for a football game should be seen as a step in the right direction. The fans didn't just show up to sit on their arses all day and get some tanning in before the inevitable Providence rain began. Rather, the Bears' faithful were cheering with every play, screaming for their heroes and heckling the evil Bulldog opponents.

Choruses of "Let's go Bruno!" and "Yale sucks!" rained down from on high at Brown Stadium. Not the most original of chants, but chilling none the less. At some moments, flashes of heckling brilliance came from the Brown side of the field. After a Yale player was knocked silly by a vicious hit by Brown cornerback Alex Pitzan, one ingenious Bruno fan shouted, "Get that man a beer!" Sheer brilliance.

## Heckle and Hide

Brown students were publicly called out in the BDH last year for their lack of hockey heckling skills. It appears that the football hecklers are improving their skills. Meanwhile, Brown already proudly sports some of the best soccer hecklers in the nation. If you don't believe me, take a trip to the far side of the field at Stevenson during a men's soccer game and you will see Brown fans who truly know how to ride an opponent and cheer on their favorites.

Athletes have constantly and rightfully derided Brown students for not showing up en masse to Brown home games. Lately, it appears that students have taken this to heart. Crowds the first few weeks of school have been outstanding. The Brown men's soccer team opened up with a packed house at Stevenson Field, and large number of students have shown up to women's soccer games and Field Hockey games. For both the teams' and the fans' good, hopefully this won't be a short-lived trend.

Only a player who has played in front of a large hostile crowd and a large, vocal friendly crowd truly knows how much having the crowd behind you means to a team. They call it the home field advantage because the home fans are more numerous and more vocal. Loud and obnoxious fans can raise the home team's level of energy and hence level of play, and can affect the other team's on field communication, often acting as an intimidating force.

Do you remember the Fenway park crowd chanting "Darryl, Darryl" at Darryl Strawberry in the '86 World Series and how it flustered him? Ask any member of the Brown men's soccer team and they'll tell you that it helps to have supportive hecklers. Why do you think the football fans at Texas A&M are called "the twelfth man?" (Don't worry, at Brown it would be called the twelfth person.) Rob Scholl B'00, a fullback on the Bear football team, says, "A big crowd always adds energy to the team."

Brown students' attendance early this fall season has been stellar, but the crowds still have a ways to go before Brown can shed its label of sports apathy. "Brown's crowd still has a hard time figuring out when to get rowdy. But when they do, it helps us out," says Scholl. Brown crowds have a marathon trek in front of them before they measure up to the best such as the Cameron Crazies at Duke.

## **Band-ed**

The Brown Band has few things to learn about pumping up a crowd and playing at a sporting event. Throughout the Yale football game, the Yale band broke into song, playing classic rock hits and tunes intended to poke fun at Brown, as well as playing the Yale fight song whenever Yale did anything good, such as recovering a fumble. (Um, didn't that happen like every play of the game?) Basically the Yale band did what any normal college band does at a football game. By no means was the Bulldog band anything special. Meanwhile, our Brown jacketed musicians, even with the assistance of Providence Mayor Buddy Cianci who tried his hand at the cymbals and a few other instruments during the game, were only able to muster playing the Brown alma mater when the Bears scored. It was blatantly clear to all in attendance that the Brown band was out-performed by a wide margin by the Yale band. At one point, a fan so frustrated with the Brown band's lack of playing, screamed at the band, "Play something or go home!" Minutes later, the band picked up their instruments and left their seats. Alas, they were only preparing for their halftime field appearance—the only time all day they played something other than, "We are ever true to Brown."

For Brown to be seen as a school that knows and cares about its athletic teams, the band must improve on its current state. Perhaps they can watch films of other schools bands or just watch a few other college sporting events on TV and listen to how many times one hears the bands in the background. Despite the fact that a TV viewer gets to see commercials during the time that most songs are played, if you watch a game on ABC this week I guarantee that you will hear the bands playing many more times than our band picked up its instruments last weekend. To its credit, the Brown Band is enthusiastic in what they do—they simply need to do more. Hopefully the Band will come around as many Brown students seem to have this fall.

## **Fanning the Flames**

This sports season has been an encouraging one, from the school spirit side of things (if not from the scoreboard). However, we must hope that student enthusiasm at the beginning of this year is not a temporary occurrence. The school year is a long and winding road, filled with hundreds of home games in a multitude of sports. For Brown to truly shed its reputation of not caring about athletics, this recent surge in fan interest must be sustained throughout not only the semester, but the year, and carried on into next year so that a tradition of school spirit and fan activity is created and fostered for future Brunonians.

For this to occur, our teams must perform well on the field, giving the students added incentive to attend the matches. The flame of enthusiasm must be fanned by activities organized by the athletic department and alumni groups. Brown students must realize that one does not have to be a frat boy or athlete to be a passionate fan. Is all this wishful thinking? Probably. Would it be a good thing if it did happen? Definitely. Will it happen? Perhaps. But at least now we know it's possible, even if only for a short time, for Brown fans to lose their apathy and passionately care about Bears athletics. And, hey, knowing is half the battle.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 wishes a sad adieu to Flo-Jo, the fastest woman ever.





October 1, 1998

# Broken record

## This iron man doesn't rust

article by: Casey Shearer

The Streak is over.

16 years. 2632 games. Finished, done, caput. See ya.

"I think the time is right," said the man.

Calvin Ripken Junior did not start or play in a Baltimore Orioles game on Sunday, September 20. Wait, that can't be. Is this the April Fool's edition of the paper? Ripken not in the lineup? That's like no football on Sundays, no paper in the morning, no lines at the Ratty. I don't believe it.

## Iron if necessary

It's true. Read it and weep true believer, the Iron Man cometh no longer. No more will we hear "I am Ironman" and think of Cal. No longer will you pick up a copy of "The Avengers" comic book and think of Cal. The Iron Man is no more. Since May 30, 1982 Cal Ripken Jr. was penciled into Orioles lineup (they could have used a permanent marker). First at third base, then at shortstop for what seemed like forever and then back to third for the last two years. On that fateful Baltimore night two weeks ago, number 8 in white, orange, and black was not on the field to start the game. Instead some kid named Minor was out there. What was this? The minor leagues? Rochester?

No my friends it most certainly was Baltimore and Cal Ripken most certainly did not play, adding another amazing occurrence to this most amazing of baseball seasons. In a year that will be remembered for many things—the great homerun chase, Kerry Wood's twenty strikeouts, David Wells' perfect game, Brown breaking their losing streak, and the Yankees challenging the record for most victories in a season—perhaps the most compelling event of all is the end of the Streak.

Cal Ripken was something we could depend on, a security blanket. He was always there; his presence made you feel that all was right with the world even in times of chaos. After the baseball strike of 1994, it was Ripken's breaking of Lou Gehrig's consecutive games played record that re-energized baseball and laid the groundwork for this season of all seasons. How appropriate is it then that Ripken's streak came to an end at what is seemingly baseball's pinnacle, a pinnacle that he played no small part in creating?

## Sweet Sixteen

There are some that say Ripken should have stopped one game short of Gehrig or simply tied the record, not broken it. Others still have claimed that the Streak has hurt the Orioles and Ripken's performance over the last few years. These arguments may have some merit. But the fact remains that Ripken was the best shortstop the Orioles had and still is the best third baseman they have. Even now as Ripken's skills have diminished, he still ranks as one of the top third basemen in the American League. Who else is there? Robin Ventura? Too many injuries. Scott Brosius? Are you kidding? Who can fault a manager for putting his best players out there every day? No one. Who can fault a man for wanting to play a game every day? No one. And that is why Ripken is rightfully regarded by many as a shining example of what should be. A man that simply came to do his best whenever called upon. The statistics are mind-numbing. If Ripken restarted at zero the day after he broke the record he would still be the active leader in consecutive games played. Only sixteen other active players were in the majors when the Streak began. Yet Ripken's impact and his legacy is not just one of statistics as impressive as they may be. No, Cal Ripken Jr. is about something else all together, something that runs deep in the fabric of this country.

Cal simply showed up to work every day and did his job. He didn't rest on his laurels or past glory. He just did his job. He was paid to play baseball and that's what he did— every time the Orioles were scheduled to play a game for sixteen straight years. How many people do you know that can say they haven't missed a

day of work in sixteen years? You'd be hard pressed to find too many Brown or RISD students who haven't missed a class already this semester let alone since they started kindergarten about, oh around sixteen years ago. It didn't matter that Cal was a superstar. He is a sixteen time all-star and a two-time most valuable player. What mattered was that Cal was always there doing his job to the best of his abilities. He played through pain and injuries of all sorts that many of today's pampered athletes wouldn't dream of playing with. It was this dedication and hard work that endeared Ripken to the American public.

## Job well done

Like Mark McGwire's and Sammy Sosa's homerun chase this season, Ripken's assault on Gehrig's record was bigger than baseball, bigger than sports. Like the concept of the home run, hard work and diligence are engrained in the American psyche. Since the days of Horatio Alger, Americans have valued hard work, a sense of duty and persistence as tenets of a successful society. Ripken's attitude and accomplishments personified this oldest of American ideologies. For that reason he captured the hearts of millions of Americans by simply doing his duty and coming to work day in and day out. You hear all the stories of people's great grandparents who didn't miss a day of work until they died. Cal Ripken was the incarnation of the continuance of that legacy.

After the strike of '94, the American public was fed up with baseball players. Professional ball players and team owners were seen as greedy money-grubbing ingrates who didn't appreciate how good they had it. Ripken simply showing up and doing his job every day helped change this feeling and enabled baseball to win back America's heart by changing the impression that baseball was fool of selfish goons. Ripken was a polite, smooth, hard working player. Breaking Gehrig's record thrust him into the spotlight and provided the perfect remedy for baseball's ills.

Now once again Ripken is in the spotlight. Only this time it burns a little less brightly. Baseball is reborn and is in the midst of a season of dreams. Big Mac and Sammy have paved the way for a baseball renaissance and with the aid of Wood, Wells, the Yankees, et al, have returned baseball to its pre-strike place in the hearts of Americans.

Baseball is back. It no longer needs Ripken to personify an American ideology. McGwire and Sosa have put the home run, another concept woven deep into the fabric of American society, into the world's spotlight. Cal has done his job. Now it's time to step aside and let others carry the weight of all of baseball on their shoulders. It was a weight Ripken carried gracefully and without complaint. It was a weight he handed to McGwire and Sosa.

### Re-Calving the Streak

"I think the time is right," was all he said—the only explanation Ripken gave for his decision to finally sit one out, and a fitting one it was. I still can't believe it's true, but I think I agree with Cal. If it had to happen, now was the time. The Iron Man no longer has the Streak. Let's hope that his legacy won't rust with time. Cal Ripken Jr. was perhaps the greatest shortstop ever to play the game. His legacy of determination and hard work is even more impressive than his statistical feats. Just because the Streak is over doesn't mean the power of his accomplishment is gone. On the contrary it will last for as long as baseball is played, until someone else comes along who just does his job for sixteen straight years. Cal, as you sit through another off-season, be certain of one thing: The Streak is over, but the time was right.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 salutes the next most visible streak in the country—the naked woman running across the main green.

October 8, 1998

# Armageddon flops

## Eduardo Perez and David Justice do their part in saving the world

article by: Casey Shearer

The world is saved.

Armageddon is not upon us. We are not all going to perish once 1998 ends. Like Gloria Gaynor, I will survive. And so will you. The Ratty will still have lines. Nine o'clock classes will still suck. Water will still freeze at thirty two degrees and boil at one hundred. Melrose Place will be on at eight. Life will go on. The end of the world has been averted.

You must be thinking: what the hell has this guy been smoking? Well, ladies and gentlemen, you may not have known it, but until last Saturday night when some dude named Eduardo hit a home run we were dangerously close to having the world as we know it come to an end. How, you ask, is this possible? Get comfortable and I'll explain.

### It starts with an earthquake

It all began harmlessly enough back in January with a little thing we like to call the Super Bowl. Now this is an event that supposedly decides the championship of the National Football League. In years past, however, it has been more the sub-par bowl than the super bowl. The game had basically turned into the slaughtering of some sacrificial lamb of a team from the AFC by the 49ers or Cowboys. The AFC hadn't won one of these things in fourteen years. Fourteen years! Brown freshmen weren't even in kindergarten the last time the AFC won. The Super Bowl had become an annual winter ritual. Everybody got all excited for the game, the NFC wins in a laugh and people talk more about the commercials the next day than the game. Then 1998 came along.

January 1998 Super Bowl XXXII. Denver vs. Green Bay. Low and behold, the gods smile on us and give us an amazing game. Tight defense, well-executed offense and an outcome decided in the final minutes. To top it all off, the unthinkable happened: after thirteen straight futile attempts, the AFC won. Not only did the AFC win but the Denver Broncos and John Elway won. Denver had been a perennial Super Bowl doormat, losing their previous four Super Bowl appearances. These lovable losers just didn't get beat, they got shellacked. 55-10, 42-10, 39-20. And then a victory in 1998. Little did anyone know, this was an ominous premonition of things to come.

In February, Dale Earnhardt won the Daytona 500. Earnhardt, known in NECKCAR, uh I mean NASCAR, circuits as "The Intimidator," is a record seven time Winston Cup Champion, a former rookie of the year and the all time leading money winner in NASCAR history. The one thing missing from his résumé was the biggest of all the NASCAR races, Daytona. Earnhardt had tried and failed every year since 1980 to capture the checkered flag at Daytona. Then came 1998. Earnhardt won. Starting to see the picture?

### Something fishy

The miracles just kept coming. In April, the Brown baseball team actually won a game, breaking their twenty-plus game losing streak. Then in June, Michael Jordan put an exclamation point on the finest basketball career of all time, sinking the final shot of the final game of the NBA Finals to give the Chicago Bulls their 6<sup>th</sup> championship in eight years. It marked the beginning of the end for the NBA. Was it the beginning of the end for everyone else too?

To reinforce the coming of the end, the Clippers won the draft lottery and actually made an intelligent pick, choosing Michael Olowkandi over Mike Bibby. What was going on? I mean—this was the Clippers, the team that had drafted Danny Ferry, Bo Kimble, Joe Wolf, Reggie Williams and many many more in the lottery. Where the hell is Bo Kimble now anyway? The Clippers doing something right? A pattern seemed to be developing, though the danger was not obvious as of yet.

Then the baseball season began and all hell broke loose. In May alone, David Wells pitched only the 17<sup>th</sup> perfect game in Major League history, a twenty year-old phenom tied the Major League record for strikeouts with twenty in a nine-inning game, and the Dodgers and Marlins pulled off the trade of the century, sending all-star catcher Mike Piazza to Florida for Gary Sheffield, Bobby Bonilla, Charles Johnson, Jim Eisenreich, a crate of oranges, a surfboard, and two hot Miami Escorts. Strange indeed. Something was up in the summer of '98.

## **McGwire and Sosa know Jack**

It got even crazier as the Marlins completely disassembled their World Series winning team and finished in last place in the NL East with the worst record ever for a defending champion. Then Sammy Sosa smashed the record for most home runs in a month by hitting twenty in May. Twenty jacks in one month! That's a season for most, a career for some. (Rafael Belliard, paging Rafael Belliard.)

Two legendary Chicago Cubs broadcasters, Harry Caray and Jack Brickhouse, passed away. The Yankees broke the American League record for wins in a season, coming out on top an amazing 114 times in 162 games. Barry Bonds became the first man in history to amass four hundred steals and four hundred homers in a career. The signs continued.

The NBA, which has never lost a game due to a work stoppage, called a lockout. It appears that the unthinkable will happen and that for the first time ever a portion of the NBA season will not be played in 1998. Then of course there was the magical, mystical, soon to be mythical, home run chase between Sosa and Mark McGwire that finished with both of them breaking Roger Maris' seemingly unreachable record and McGwire finishing with the unheard of total of seventy home runs in a single season. That means that not only did McGwire break the old record—he shattered it. For someone to top McGwire's total by the 15 percent he dwarfed Maris's feat by, he would have to hit 81 homeruns.

Eighty One.

## **A hope and a prairie**

All these things would be enough to convince anyone that something was definitely up this year. Yet this wasn't nearly the end. On Sunday, September 20, 1998 Cal Ripken Jr. did not play in a Baltimore Orioles baseball game. The last time Cal had taken a day off was sixteen years ago. I was in pre-school. This really got me thinking.

The AFC winning the Super Bowl, Earnhardt winning Daytona, Jordan, the Clippers, Kerry Wood, Brickhouse, Caray, Barry Bonds, David Wells, McGwire and Sosa, and now Cal not playing. What was going on? Some cosmic forces must have been at work. The world was not as it should be. The Almighty's fingerprints were everywhere. Everything was happening all at once. Something was afoot, but I couldn't put my finger on it.

Then the most miraculous one of all occurred. Prairie View A&M won a football game. Let me repeat that, Prairie View won an intercollegiate football game. This is the school who hadn't won a game in over ten years. At one point they abandoned their football program altogether. Eighty straight games they lost. That's right, count 'em: eighty. Then came September 26, 1998, a day that will live forever in the hearts of Prairie View fans. A week after playing a game in which the main attraction was an all-out brawl between the Prairie View and Southern bands (maybe the Brown band could learn a thing or two from these brawlers), Prairie View beat Langston 14-12, stopping a last second two-point conversion attempt. Prairie View winning a game! What was next? Wile E. Coyote catching the roadrunner? This had to be the last straw. Nothing else could happen in 1998. Could it?

## Apocalypse now

And then it happened. Meep Meep. Both the Cubs and Red Sox made the playoffs. The Cubs hadn't won a World Series since 1908, the Red Sox since 1918. Baseball's two longest suffering, some would say cursed, franchises in the playoffs at the same time. I began to see the light. The pieces were coming together. It seemed that this indeed was destiny's year. The World Series would be between the Cubs and the Red Sox, and in a one run game in the bottom of the ninth inning of the seventh game with two out and two on the world would come to an end. Judgment day would be upon us. Every single man, woman and child, with the exception of Dennis Rodman and the guy who thought up Celebrity Death Match (who just aren't huma) would simply cease to exist. We were doomed.

Then, last Saturday on the third day of October, we were saved by Eduardo Perez and David Justice. Perez, the Braves backup catcher and the unlikeliest of heroes, hit a grand slam, only his seventh homer of the year, in the eighth inning off Cub all-star closer Rod Beck (get a haircut!) to secure a series clinching win for Atlanta and eliminate the Cubs. Earlier in the day, Justice hit a two run double off the Red Sox's record breaking closer Tom "Flash in the Pan" Gordon to give the Indians a come from behind win and eliminate the Sox from the post season.

Many fans' hopes were crushed. The Red Sox and Cubbies must again wait 'till next year. I feel for the disappointed masses who root for these two unfortunate franchises. As I cheered and hoped for the Cubbies to win the World Series, it was always in the back of my mind that it might be better if they didn't. Because then I'd live past October to see my twenty-first birthday, my graduation, my first job, my first house, my children, my grandchildren, my first pair of dentures, my first cases of Metamucil and Depends. I think you get the pretty picture.

If the Red Sox or Cubs had won the Series, the world would have ended. I'm quite certain of it, what with all that went on this year. Eduardo and David saved us. The world has returned to normal. The Cubs and Red Sox continue to suffer. Prairie View's athletics program was suspended indefinitely because the band (yes, the band) violated it's suspension. We can breathe easy. We're safe. Life goes on.

Until next year.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 thinks Jim Leyritz is God.

October 22, 1998

# Value of a quarterback

## The art of being a leader and a winner

article by: Casey Shearer

One weekend. Opposite sides of the country. Two games. Two men. Two affirmations. One Story. On a sunny October weekend in Buffalo and Pasadena, two men illustrated what it means to be a consummate leader, winner, and quarterback.

Last weekend both Cade McNown, a Heisman trophy candidate, and Doug Flutie, a Heisman trophy winner, led their respective football teams to thrilling last minute victories. This came only a few short days after former Carolina Panther quarterback Kerry Collins had told his coach he didn't want to play any more because his heart wasn't in it. In so doing, McNown and Flutie contrasted the example of Collins and showed the sporting world that these two men truly embody the essence of a quarterback.

## Quarterback options

What exactly is a quarterback? Something you want when a vending machine doesn't work? No. Seriously, quarterback is a football term to describe the offensive player who calls the signals for the offensive team's plays. (Duh, does this guy think we're stupid or something?)

And yet the quarterback is so much more than just the guy who calls the plays and lines up in front of the half back (hence came the term quarter-back). The word implies so many other images. A quarterback is a leader, a general, a playmaker, a decision maker, the man with the ball, a coach on the field, and the man who is supposed to get things done.

The term is not limited to the gridiron. Other sports have adopted the term and shaped it to fit their game. In basketball the point guard is often called the quarterback. Hence good point guards are often described as having a "quarterback mentality". Hockey announcers often refer to defensemen skating the puck up the ice as quarterbacking the puck. The term is not just limited to the sports world. Corporate executives form teams to complete projects and the head of the team is often referred to as the quarterback. The quarterback is in charge on the field, court or ice and in the office and must decide where and when the ball or puck should go or what business strategy to pursue.

The quarterback is the leader. He is the man who must come through with the game on the line. He gets the glory in success and takes the blame in failure. The spotlight always shines brightest on the leaders and this often pushes quarterbacks into instant fame or instant infamy. The public, right or wrong, focuses their scopophilic gaze on the quarterback. For that reason a successful QB must be able to do much more than simply have a strong and accurate arm with which to throw the ball to receivers. Rather, the successful quarterback must embody all the characteristics of leadership, poise, and confidence that that the public associates with the word in the larger sense.

Doug Flutie and Cade McNown are two signal callers who fit this larger description of a quarterback. To put it simply, the two men are winners and leaders.

## No small feat

Flutie, who stands five feet ten inches tall, is a veritable midget by today's quarterbacking standards. At every level of the game he has been doubted and disrespected because his size didn't matchup with the quarterback prototype. Yet, everywhere he went Flutie just kept winning. At Boston College he pulled off quite possibly the most miraculous and stunning play in college football history in 1984 when his last second bomb to beat top ranked Miami in their home stadium and helped coin the phrase "Hail Mary".

Flutie then played briefly in the NFL, but was never given a true shot at being a starter and ended up exiled to the Canadian Football League. In the CFL, Flutie was a superstar. He won six MVPs and three Grey

Cups in eight years (the CFL equivalent of the Super Bowl). Still, Flutie had never proven himself in the NFL. So this season he signed with the Buffalo Bills, a team in dire need of a quarterback. And what do they do a week after signing him? They promptly trade for Rob Johnson who they declare the starter.

With Johnson at the helm, the Bills lost their first three games of the season. Then in the fourth game, Flutie relieved Johnson and the Bills won. In the fifth game, the same thing happened. Anybody notice a pattern here? With Johnson unable to play due to injury, Flutie was given the start for last week's game against the undefeated Jacksonville Jaguars, who are coached by Flutie's former college coach.

Making his first start in nine years, the longest stretch between starts in NFL history, Flutie struggled at times but made the plays when they were needed. With the Bills trailing 16-10 and under two minutes remaining, Flutie engineered a long drive deep into Jaguar territory. He threw a thirty eight yard pass to Eric Moulds that got the ball down to the one yard line. Then on fourth and one with the game on the line and only seconds remaining, Flutie showed why he is an exemplar quarterback.

The play called for a pitch to running back Thurman Thomas, but Thomas didn't hear the call and went the wrong way. Flutie simply did what he does best, turning a broken play into a game winner. With no Thomas to hand the ball to, Flutie turned and sprinted for the corner of the end zone, beating the Jacksonville defenders and giving the Bills the stunning 17-16 victory. While many in the NFL have overlooked Flutie, his teammates recognize that despite his diminutive size, when he gets on the field he leads them to wins.

"Doug is like a field general out there," said Moulds. "He's a big-time player who made big-time plays," Bills star defensive end Bruce Smith said. "His heart's a lot bigger than his size." Flutie might not have been pretty, he had four passes batted down, but for the third consecutive week he led his team to victory. He made the plays when it counted.

## **Making himself McNown**

Making plays when they are needed is McNown's specialty as well. McNown a senior at UCLA is the starting quarterback for the Bruins who are currently ranked number two in the nation. This stature gives McNown a national stage on which to shine every time he steps onto the field. Many expect him to win the Heisman trophy, handed out to the country's premiere college football player.

What all this means is that every time he steps onto the field he must bear the weight and pressure of huge expectations of greatness and a possible national championship on the line every time he throws the ball. What does McNown do with this burden? He leads and he wins.

Last weekend against Oregon, McNown was stricken with a fever and the flu.

He vomited before the game and later on the field after a 25 yard scramble. His statistics were impressive but not superb like those of fellow Heisman candidate Kentucky quarterback Tim Couch. Yet with the national championship on the line, McNown made the plays when he had to.

After UCLA had squandered a 24-7 lead and Oregon had taken a 31-24 lead with twelve minutes remaining in the game, McNown took the Bruins the length of the field to tie the score with a quick strike drive in under three minutes that is typical of the Bruin offense.

The Bruin defense then forced and recovered an Oregon fumble with under three minutes to play. On the very next play, McNown hooked up with Danny Farmer for a 60 yard touchdown pass to give UCLA the 38-31 lead with two and a half minutes to go. Oregon's fine quarterback Akili Smith took his team the length of the field, surviving a crucial fourth down conversion to tie the score at 38 with only 22 seconds remaining. So then McNown promptly throws a 53 yard pass to his backup quarterback to get the Bruins to the Oregon four yard line in position for a game winning field goal with 11 seconds left. The field goal attempt missed and the game went to overtime. In overtime the Ducks failed to score and McNown calmly took his team into field goal range and this time the kick was good and the Bruins had won, thanks in no small part to the poise, timing, and leadership of McNown.

"He made big plays when he had to make big plays," UCLA coach Bob Toledo said. "He's our leader. He directs the offense. The key thing is to get your team across the right stripe, and he does that."

McNown and Flutie do what quarterbacks are supposed to do. They lead their teams across the right stripe and into the winner's circle. They are poised and confident generals, leaders, coaches on the field and inspirations for their teammates. In short they are quarterbacks in the truest sense of the word.

## **Keep the change**

This deeper meaning of the word is something that many in the NFL don't understand. When drafting quarterbacks teams continue to choose the natural athletes with the longest legs and strongest arms. They continue to make errors in judgement on QBs. Despite his enormous display of cowardice Kerry Collins was picked up off waivers by the New Orleans Saints and will most likely get a chance to start again. The same may not be true for Flutie, who may be back on the bench for next week's game if Rob Johnson is healthy.

"Rob Johnson's the starter, and I hope people don't try and start a quarterback controversy," Bills general manager John Butler said.

Some people just don't get it. And until they do, they will never unlock the mystery of finding a successful quarterback. Meanwhile, Flutie and McNown will keep leading and winning wherever they go. Don't be surprised to see UCLA win the Fiesta Bowl behind the heroics of McNown or Flutie continue to pull some more upsets out of his bag of tricks.

Some people don't get it. But some people do. "[Flutie's] something special, isn't he?" said Bills Coach Wade Phillips, chuckling at his 35-year-old backup quarterback.

Indeed he is. A true quarterback.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 thinks that Rahul Mukhi is the IndySports QB.



October 29, 1998

# Locked out

## Do we really need the NBA?

article by: Casey Shearer

All Hallow's eve, ghosts and goblins, witches and pumpkins are upon us. As we turn the corner from October to November and turn back our clocks, the leaves and the temperature keep falling. It's autumn—time for basketball. Time for MJ, Shaq, Chocolate Thunder, the Ice Man, the Lake Show, and leprechauns. Time for our yearly NBA preview.

No it's not.

Wait a minute, that's not right. It's the beginning of November. Our thoughts should be turning to turnaround jumpers and tomahawk jams. Yet for some reason they aren't. I'm supposed to be writing about people playing bus driver and taking defenders to school. Yet for some reason I'm not.

That reason is the current NBA lockout. Why will NBA arenas be empty this week instead of packed full of fans ready for the opening games of the season? Because there is a lockout. What in the world is a lockout?

## The V files

Is it what happens when you have to call Police and Security to let you back into your room? Is it a total rejection by a member of the opposite sex? No. A lockout is simply the NBA owners deciding that they want to lock out their employees from their jobs because they are unhappy with the current labor agreement. Why don't incredibly rich men want to pay other rich men to play a game that makes the owners millions? Why won't players who make obscene amounts of money to play a child's game agree to the owners' proposals? The reasons for this are many and complex.

Some people speculate that the whole lockout is simply a plot generated by none other than ESPN and ABC college basketball commentator Dick Vitale to push college basketball, his favorite sport and personal meal ticket, further into the spotlight (College hoops—it's awesome bay-bee with a capital A!). Vitale has been complaining for years that players leaving college early for the NBA has been robbing the college ranks of it's deserved excitement and glory (It's the best there is bay-bee!). Vitale also openly campaigns for college basketball players to be compensated monetarily for the revenue they create for college athletic departments.

So the theory is that the screaming, bald-headed, one-eyed commentating fanatic has infiltrated the offices of the NBA owners and the NBA players association and has spread the his dogma of college hoops (He's a p-t-p-er bay-bee!). Vitale is trying to turn college hoops into the NBA with his ideas of paying players, and the elimination of the true NBA is only the next logical step. Vitale is in dire need of the spotlight.

He seems to want to be the commentator for the glamour sport in the country and he wants that sport to be college basketball. Simply put, Dickie V. wants to be John Madden. As strange as it may seem for a short, ugly, bald former Detroit Pistons coach who screams bay-bee all the time to want to emulate an ugly, fat, former Oakland Raider coach who screams whap, boom, boop all the time, that is the theory.

## Don't have to let us in

Others speculate, God forbid, that the lockout is based on actual economics. The owners are unhappy with the current labor agreement because unproven yet promising players can hold owners for ransom after only three years in the league. Owners have to pay up or risk losing their potential stars to someone who will. This situation makes the compensation of giving the worst team the top draft picks worthless, as the poor teams cannot hold onto players. The players are unhappy because the upward spiral of superstar contracts

has created a very small upper class of multi-millionaires and an ever-growing legion of players playing for the league minimum.

In general, both sides agree on all major issues but are separated on the small details. They might come to some sort of agreement soon; they might not. The question is—does it matter? Do we really need the NBA?

Not right now.

As blasphemous as that may sound it is the truth. Look around at the sporting world and tell me that right here, right now in November of 1998 that we really need the first few games of a season that many think is already too long. Look at all the other sporting beauty that surrounds us at the moment.

We've got college football and the race for number one breeding excitement across the country. Texas's Ricky Williams is breaking NCAA rushing and scoring records left and right. Ohio State, UCLA, Tennessee, Kansas State and a host of others are trying to reach the Fiesta Bowl and play for a national title. Prairie View A&M won a football game. Temple pulled off the biggest upset, point spread wise, of the century by beating Virginia Tech. Even the Brown Bears are getting into the act. Anyone who witnessed last Saturday's 58-51 sandlot shootout against Pennsylvania will tell you that excitement is in the air. If James Perry, Sean Morey and company keep putting on offensive shows like that, who needs to watch people put a ball in a peach basket?

## **Still gone after November**

Then there's the NFL. Lilliputian Doug Flutie keeps on trucking down in Buffalo and has the Bills in the midst of a four game winning streak. Flutie-mania is spreading throughout the country as the sales of Flutie Flakes skyrocket. Next week, Flutie Flakes in the Ratty. Add to that the undefeated Vikings and Broncos and the return of the 49ers gold pants after a three-year hiatus and you've got non-stop fun and excitement.

Also soon to be upon us: the season of Dickie V's beloved college hoops. The passion of college fans and players makes every game seem like a life or death situation. The NBA regular season has got nothing on regular season Pac-10 or ACC play. Just ask the Cameron Crazyies (Dickie V. fever bay-bee! It's spreading bay-bee!). Even Brown Coach Happy Dobbs has been caught up in the whirlwind, reportedly ditching his famed "no-shot" offense and replacing it with an offense that actually features the novel concepts of picks and cuts. With developments like these, who needs the NBA?

We've also got Brown's two stellar collegiate hockey teams back for another season of wonderment as the women prepare to defend their ECAC title and the men look to improve on their playoff showing of a year ago. Plus there's the professional version of hockey, the NHL, to occupy our time as well.

With all these other options the public really won't miss the 114 exhibitions and 99 regular season games that have been cancelled. Nor will they miss the other 95 games not played if the rest of November's games are cancelled.

However, that's about where the line needs to be drawn. Once the New Year's rolls around and the college football season and Super Bowl have come and gone, the public will want to turn it's eyes back to professional basketball. So at some point the NBA players union and the owners will have to put away their petty differences and come to an agreement. Some one will have to foil Dickie V.'s ingenious plot.

The experience of the NHL in the '94-95 season, when an owner's lockout caused the cancellation of the first half of the season, showed us that a major sport can lose some games to labor strife and not be any worse off. The NHL missed almost half of the season, but was able to play an abbreviated season plus regular length playoffs and Stanley Cup Finals. The NHL did not appear to lose any of its fan base or interest. It is logical to assume that if the NBA resumes in time to play a decent length schedule, say 40 games per team, plus the playoffs that fans would hardly notice that the NBA had been gone. However, if the lockout continues and the NBA is forced to cancel the entire season and the playoffs, the consequences could be disastrous. All one has to do is look at the ripple effects of the 1994 baseball strike caused by the cancellation of the World Series, tossing baseball off its pedestal of king of American sports.

Seeing that the distance between the owners and the union is not really that wide and that the two sides have a history of working together, all signs point to an eventual agreement. If one is not reached, heads will role. NBC Sports President Dick Ebersol will be fuming if he continues to pay the owners billions of

dollars to televise games that aren't being played. Yet even Ebersol won't miss the NBA until Christmas day, the date of NBC's first scheduled broadcast.

Although I lament the fact that it was time for my NBA preview and I couldn't provide one because of the lockout, it appears that the NBA truly is not needed, even for a diehard sports-aholic like myself. I don't miss the NBA that much.

Do we really need the NBA? No....for now.

But ask me the question again in January.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 doesn't have a byline this week. He's locked out.

November 5, 1998

# Stealing Minnesota

## The Body is Governor

article by: Casey Shearer

Ladies and Gentleman, let's get ready to rumble! Welcome to the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome for the main event. Tonight Vince McMahon and James Carville promotions bring you the mother of all battles, the fight for the gubernatorial seat of the great state of Minnesota. In the red corner standing in as a career politician is Norm "Vince" Coleman. In the blue corner the grandson of the man the Minneapolis Metrodome was named after, Skip "Bobby" Humphrey. But wait—here comes a surprise third contestant, in the white corner—Jesse "The Body" Ventura?

That's right. The former WWF superstar, Jesse Ventura, known to legions of wrestling fans as "The Body," is the new Governor of Minnesota.

## The ultimate warrior

Excuse me? Jesse "The Body" Ventura running for and winning a Governorship? You're kidding. I mean a WWF wrestler running for serious political office. What's next? George "The Animal" Steele for Congress? Junk Yard Dog for mayor of New York? Look out Rudy Guilliani. A presidential ticket featuring the Bushwackers of the British Bulldogs? What is the world coming to?

But to the voters of Minnesota, Jesse Ventura for Governor isn't that funny. The people of Minnesota seem to have taken him quite seriously. They voted Ventura into office with 37% of the vote, ahead of 35% for Coleman and 28% for Humphrey. Before Election Day, pundits thought that Ventura's candidacy would prove pivotal in deciding the winner between Coleman and Humphrey. Very few thought he would actually be that winner. "We've shocked the world," said Ventura.

Is this a joke? Is Rowdy Roddy Piper running for lieutenant governor? No, my friends, Ventura is no joke. For a man known best for parading around a ring in a choreographed charade, screaming and yelling that he was better than his opponent, politics has come easy. For a man who has a background in acting and once said, "I don't have time to bleed" in the movie Predator, motivating followers seems to be second nature.

In fact, Ventura is no rookie politician making a sudden splash on the political scene. He served as Mayor of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, from 1991 to 1994 and believes that his presence in the gubernatorial election led people who have never voted before making their ways to the polls. (On election night, a poll indicated that 28% of Ventura's voters would not have voted at all if it were not for "the Body's" candidacy).

## Hollywood Hogans

In a cynical world where the nation's most visible politician is dragged through the media because of his sex life, Ventura is a breath of fresh air. One of the former athlete's official campaign statements actually said he can win because his opponents are boring. His official campaign song was a version of the theme song from Shaft. Ventura has also said that he can win because he's big and strong and his opponents are not. One of his campaign ads featured him discussing his favorite heavy metal band. Yet "the Body" is also strong on the issues. If you don't believe it, check out his website.

So what does this mean that a former Navy Seal turned pro wrestler turned actor can win serious public office? It is simply the story of another athlete attempting to establish him or herself away from the field, court, ice or ring.

Actors becoming politicians is a commonplace occurrence. Remember—we elected Ronald Reagan to the highest office in the land. That was the guy who played George Gipp when Knute Rockne won one for the Gipper. Damn, we can be stupid.

Yet athletes becoming politicians is extremely rare. Most often they attempt to diversify themselves in other entertainment fields as Ventura did with his acting in films like *Predator* and *Running Man*.

Today's entertainment industry is littered with athletes and former athletes trying to make it in other high profile public fields. Dennis Rodman has shown that he has the talent to win an Oscar in the near future with his thespian work alongside Jean Claude VanDamme in *Double Team*. Shaquille O'Neal has set the music industry aflame with his amazing rapping skills displayed so frequently on his four albums, the most recent of which is entitled *Respect*. (Hey big fella, you want respect, try making a free throw once in a while.) Other athletes including Deion Sanders have come out with rap albums of their own on the eternal quest for respect. Former running back extraordinaire Jim Brown has flashed his considerable acting talents in such great works as *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka*, *Mars Attacks* and *Original Gangstas*. (One wonders how the Academy could overlook these performances for Oscar nominations.)

## Powering forward

Movies and the airwaves are filled with athletes trying to show they are more than just jocks who get paid millions to play games. Politics is a different arena altogether. While many have considered the career, virtually no high profile athletes go into politics during or after their professional careers.

The lone exception, before Ventura, is New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley who, before he turned to public service, was an all-star forward for championship New York Knickerbocker teams. Before Bradley was a power broker on Capital Hill, he was a power forward in Madison Square Garden. Other athletes have hinted that they might one day venture into politics. Charles Barkley continually spews out the nonsense that he will run for governor of Alabama when he retires, but few take the Round Mound of Rebound seriously. How can a man who said, "I am not a role model," become a public leader? Easy—he can't.

The connection between people like Barkley—whose political aspirations are ridiculed—and the athletes who attempt to act or sing is that they all are viewed as athletes just dabbling in other fields. Not very many people take Dennis Rodman's acting seriously, nor do they consider Shaq's music on par with *A Tribe Called Quest*. To the public, Rodman is not an actor and Shaq is not a rapper. Rather, they are just basketball players having a little fun.

The reason for this may be that the athletes just don't measure up in their new fields (Rodman's acting is quite poor), but more likely it is simply the result of a stigma being placed on their heads because of their athletic prominence. In reality, some of Shaq's songs are quite good. Jim Brown has been in some quality films, *Running Man* for instance, despite his plethora of clunkers. What actor hasn't been in some bad films? Tom Hanks was in *Joe Versus the Volcano* for crying out loud.

## Joey Hart

### Dream a little dream

Professional athletes seem to have a critical strike against them in other public fields, simply because they are athletes. Bradley is once again the lone exception. He is considered a possible presidential candidate in 2000. However, he was no typical pro athlete—an Ivy League educated man from a family background that includes many social and political movers and shakers. The stigma may have worked in reverse for Bradley, who was underestimated by some on the court simply because he went to Princeton. But man, could he knock down the jumper.

All of this brings us back to Ventura. Many voters in Minnesota have obviously taken his campaign seriously (even if you or I didn't because all we can picture is "The Body.") The simple fact is that starting

in January, Jesse Ventura will be the governor of Minnesota. The question remains, will he be seen as a politician or simply a former WWF wrestler?

This is a question that we should apply not just to Jesse Ventura and his candidacy for governor, but to all professional athletes who try to find second callings in other public fields. We do not need to treat these athletes with undue sympathy in their new fields, but nor do we need to unfairly stigmatize them. They should simply be evaluated in the same way as other members of that field.

Jesse Ventura is a bonfide politician now and appears to be a good one at that. I'm glad he won. He deserves to be taken seriously.

"The American dream still lives," Ventura said. Maybe next term this dream will include Jimmy "Superfly" Snooka running for Governor of Hawaii.

CASEY SHEARER'S B'00 mother was in the movie Dave. She did not receive any votes in the Minnesota gubernatorial race however.

November 12, 1998

# Annual asphyxiation

The Buckeyes fall victim to the state of Michigan again

article by: Casey Shearer

Gggggggghhhh!!

That big choking sound you hear is coming from Columbus, Ohio.

It has happened again.

It was bound to happen. We all knew it was coming. Only nobody thought it would happen this early. It's an autumn ritual—like the leaves falling, the temperature dropping, Halloween, Oktoberfest, and the naked party. Every November we've come to expect it. Some people in Michigan even claim to set their clocks by it. It is no surprise that it has happened again. Only this time it was two weeks early.

An undefeated, top ranked Ohio State Buckeye football team has lost to an inferior team from the state of Michigan, choking away their chances for a national title. Don't be surprised if that sounds familiar. It has happened before. Barring legendary Buckeye coach Woody Hayes coming back from the dead, it will most likely happen again.

In both 1995 and 1996 Ohio State was the number one team in the land and undefeated heading into their final regular season game—an annual matchup with Michigan. Both times Michigan came out on top, thwarting the Buckeyes and drowning their dreams of a national championship in a sea of maize and blue.

## Turning green

This season Ohio State was once again everybody's preseason number one. Everybody should have known better. Sports Illustrated put Buckeye All-American linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer on the cover of its college football preview issue. The SI cover-jinx is alive and well.

The Buckeyes came out of the blocks roaring and were a near unanimous number one in both major polls. The consensus seemed to be that this was finally Ohio State's year. Yet for skeptics it wasn't a question of if they would stumble, but when. Creatures of habit and suckers for tradition figured Michigan would continue their dominance over OSU and once again squash the hopes and dreams of the Buckeye faithful on November 21. They overestimated Ohio State. This year the Buckeye decided to choke even earlier.

Last Saturday, Michigan State, a twenty-eight point underdog (that's four touchdowns for the mathematically challenged), came out and shocked the world, beating Ohio State 28-24 on the Buckeyes home field. It was the first time an unranked team had beaten a number one in almost ten years since Michigan State beat Michigan. We should have seen it coming. The Spartans have a knack for these things. The Michigan State defense shut out the Buckeyes in the second half and came up with huge play after huge play. They forced fumbles, intercepted passes, sacked the quarterback—you name it, they did it. The Spartans trailed 24-9 early in the third quarter after Ohio State's Damon Moore picked off Bill Burke's pass and returned it 73 yards for a touchdown. Just when the game seemed out of reach, the Buckeyes began their annual vanishing act and Michigan State dominated behind their defense and five field goals from their kicker.

Said Ohio State coach John Cooper, “They out-coached us, out-played us. Their defense was better than ours, their offense was better than ours, their kicking game was better than ours.”

What he meant was: it happened again. “This hurts the most,” Ohio State wide receiver Dee Miller said. “We had everything lined up. We just didn’t get it done.”

Sound familiar anyone? You almost have to feel sorry for the Ohio State players, ahem...student athletes. (Hey, Big Kat, how tough was the midterm in Golf? And what did you learn in that other class—AIDS: What Every College Student Needs to Know? Did they do the condom on the banana trick?)

## **Betchya find a...buckeye?**

Every year the red and silver start with visions of glory dancing in their head and every year they choke it away. You have to feel sorry for them because the players really aren’t to blame. This isn’t the Buffalo Bills losing four straight Super Bowls with pretty much the same team every year. In that case you might be able to blame Jim Kelly, Thurman Thomas, Bruce Smith or Andre Reed for the Bills’ shortcomings.

Ohio State has a different team every season. In the world of college football, where players only play for four years and new ones keep coming, a 1995 team bears no resemblance to a 1998 team. For confirmation of this just look at where current unbeaten UCLA and Kansas State were in 1995. The point is that although Ohio State may end up raising their hands to their neck each season, it is not the same collection of players that comes up one rung short of a championship every year. Every single Buckeye recruit can’t be a choker before college, so how can we blame the players?

The question we must ask ourselves is why and how can these talented teams that appear so dominating for most of every season, continually fail to perform up to their capabilities at least on one Saturday in November each year. Where does the blame lie?

## **Let us explore some theories, shall we?**

The obvious thing that jumps to mind to this observer is the Ohio State mascot. All the great college football programs of lore have a mascot. The Fighting Irish of Notre Dame have their wee little leprechaun. The Trojans of USC have the white horse, Traveller, upon who sits the despised Tommy Trojan. The Georgia Bulldogs have the canine UGA. UCLA has Joe Bruin. Colorado has Ralphie the Buffalo. Brown has Bruno the Bear. I think you get the picture.

Ohio State’s team is called the Buckeyes. A buckeye is a type of seed that grows prolifically in the state of Ohio. OSU players often have decals of Buckeyes on their helmets. A buckeye is about the size of a thumbnail. This leaves Ohio State with a problem. If their team is named after a seed, what do they make their mascot? The problem solvers in Columbus, where Ohio State is located, came up with a brilliant plan—the mascot would be a...cookie? That’s right ladies and gentleman—a cookie. You see, in Ohio they make cookies that look something like buckeye seeds, and are called buckeye cookies. Hence the Ohio State Buckeyes have as their mascot a cookie.

giuseppe castellano

## **Gee whiz**

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to tonight’s showdown between the Wolverines of Michigan and the fighting Oreos of Ohio State! Let’s go Chips Ahoy! Hold that line Mrs. Fields! How can you expect to win when your mascot is a cookie? It’s just not going to happen. No college team will win a national championship with a cookie as a mascot. It is a simple fact of life. This may be the reason Ohio State cannot seal the deal. It also leaves hope for the Brown Bears basketball team. (Yeah, right. Keep dreaming, Case.)

Another reason for Ohio State tripping up yet again may be the departure of Gordon Gee. Since Gee left Ohio State and became the President here at Brown, the Bears athletic program has been filled with newfound energy while the Buckeyes were left to pick up the pieces after their beloved leader’s departure.



Perhaps the emotional strain of losing Gee to free agency finally caught up with OSU on Saturday and it resulted in their loss to Michigan State. Or maybe Ohio State was being given payback for dodging the pre-season scrimmage Gee was trying to set up between Brown and OSU. Maybe if the Buckeyes had seen the likes of Sean Morey, James Perry and Ernest Dean in a scrimmage they would have been able to better cope with the challenge of Michigan State. Then again, maybe not.

In all seriousness: the one constant in this unfortunate (if you're from Ohio) or splendid (if you're from Michigan) tradition of November Buckeye stumbles has been OSU coach John Cooper. Cooper is highly regarded around the country as a quality head coach. Yet in his tenure in Columbus he has shown a propensity to lose the big game. Only once since Cooper arrived on campus has Ohio State beaten Michigan in their traditional season ending tilt. Michigan has owned the Buckeyes in recent years. To put it another way, Columbus has been Ann Arbor's female dog for most of the nineties. Some people feel that Cooper is to blame, that he loses his nerve in the big game and makes coaching errors. Yet he was able to win the Rose Bowl in 1997, even after not beating Michigan. Whether you like him or not, Cooper is obviously a pretty good coach to produce the types of seasons he has. Even if you think your grandma could have coached some of Cooper's teams, finishing in the top ten for four straight years is nothing to laugh at. So as we reflect on the fulfillment of another American autumn ritual, we must consider all sides. As we laugh at the plight of the overrated and cocky Buckeyes, we must also take a moment to feel sorry for them and their continual choke jobs. Well, maybe we don't. It was bound to happen.

Only this time it was two weeks early, Michigan State instead of Michigan.

"This hurts, no question about it," John Cooper said. "It seems like anything that could happen to us did happen to us."

A cookie for a mascot. No more Gordon Gee. He should have seen it coming.

CASEY SHEARER B'00's mascot is Chris Brown.

November 19, 1998

# Da' bears

Brown sports provides us with the weekend of the season

article by: Casey Shearer

A beautiful, sunny, Sunday afternoon. A countdown ends. A buzzer sounds. A blond-haired kid from Michigan drops to his knees, arms outstretched to the heavens as tears well up in his eyes. All of a sudden he is swarmed by throngs of crazed teammates and fans. A fitting image for the weekend.

And what a weekend it was! Who needs the NBA? In fact, who needs pro sports at all? We've got the Brown Bears!

## Chillin' and thrillin'

Wow! I'm out of breath, what with running from Meehan Auditorium to Stevenson Field to Brown Stadium to the Pizzitola SportsCenter to the Smith Swim Center and back all weekend. If you're a Brown student and a sports fan, this past weekend was what it's all about. Excitement, drama, intrigue, injuries, championships at stake, goals, touchdowns, bumps, sets, spikes, the naked party, cheerleaders, cross-checking, bands, retired numbers, and tears of joy. All that is good about intercollegiate sports could be found on College Hill over one wondrous three-day span.

On this weekend-to-end-all-weekends, three Brown teams were fighting for Ivy League titles, four teams were looking for NCAA tournament births, two other teams were making their season debuts, an Olympic gold medal winner returned to the Meehan ice, a number was retired for the first time in Brown history and a myriad of seniors played in their final regular season home games.

The Bear men's water polo team hosted the Eastern championships at the Smith Swim Center with high hopes of an NCAA tournament birth and a trip to sunny Newport Beach, California. Mmmm...Cali. Home sweet home. Unfortunately, those hopes came quickly crashing down as the Bears lost their first round game. The loss marked the first time in many years that the water polo team had failed to make the final four of the Eastern championships. The Bears were able to rebound from their poor start and win the consolation bracket. However, the victory was just that—small consolation.

As the water polo team's season was winding down in the Smith Center, across the Erickson Athletic Complex parking lot at Meehan Auditorium, the Brown hockey teams were getting their seasons into full gear. Backed by rather large crowds on Friday and Saturday nights, coach Roger Grillo's male Bears, fresh off a 4-1 thrashing of Harvard, took on Colgate and Cornell, heard live on Brown Student Radio (love the shameless cross-promotion). The Bear offense which had looked so promising and opportunistic the week before in Cambridge simply forgot to show up Friday night. Against Colgate the Bears managed only a paltry thirteen shots on net, compared to thirty-one for Colgate. In the first period alone, Colgate had more shots than the Bears did all game. Despite sensational play from junior goaltender Scott Sterling, the lack of offense and all around poor play translated into a 3-2 loss that wasn't as close as the score. On Saturday the Bears outshot Cornell 24-21 but couldn't find the back of the net, losing 3-1 as Big Red goaltender Ian Burt made 23 saves and was named ECAC goaltender of the week for his weekend efforts. The two games marked a step backward for the Bears hockey team, but provided the Meehan faithful with moments of excitement and were the prime time evening portion of this weekend's activities.

## The Morey story

While the men played in the evenings, the women's hockey team took to the ice for two bargain matinees on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Saturday's game was the season opener for the defending ECAC

champions and national runners-up. Unlike last season, when the Bears dropped their season opener to Dartmouth on the road and cost themselves the Ivy title, Saturday saw the Bears play a solid game and come away with a 1-1 tie against the #4 ranked Northeastern Huskies. Sunday's game saw four Olympians take to the Meehan auditorium ice—Harvard's gold medal winners A.J. Mleczko and Angela Ruggiero and silver medalist Jen Botterill, plus Brown gold medalist Tara Mounsey. The Bears proved one Olympian is better than three and beat the Crimson 4-2 behind an obscene 46 saves from goalie Ali Brewer. The weekend's games marked the advent of a yet another chase for Ivy League, ECAC and national glory for the dynastic Brown women's hockey team.

As the hockey teams started their journeys toward Ivy glory at Meehan, the women's volleyball team completed theirs at the Pizzitola Center. The Bears played host to the Ivy League Championship tournament and took care of business as they had all season. Once again the Bears were led by all-everything junior outside hitter Tomo Nakanishi who was named the tournament MVP. After beating Princeton 3-2 in the final, the Bears were able to hoist the championship trophy and complete an undefeated Ivy League season. The three-day tournament was a coronation for the Bears volleyball team, but by no means the end of the road. The victory clinched an automatic birth into the NCAA tournament where the Bears will try to prove themselves on the national stage.

The final football home game of the year took place at Brown Stadium on Saturday and featured a special presentation to a Bear athlete who has proven himself on all stages, two time all-America wideout Sean Morey. Before the game, Morey's #24 was retired, marking the first time in University history that an athlete has been so honored. After the moving ceremony, the Bears proceeded to play yet another heart-stopping football game, the kind we've grown so accustomed to this year. After having seen a last second Hail Mary touchdown pass in the Yale game and the wacky and wild shootout that was the Penn game, Bears fans thought it couldn't get any crazier. They were mistaken. James Perry and company survived yet another fourth down Hail Mary to grab a victory with a 24 yard touchdown pass from Perry to tight end Zach Burns with five seconds left for the final points in a 28-21 victory. It was a fitting end to Burns's home career as he rumbled into the endzone not about to be denied. The emotion of the day was enhanced by the strong performances put in by seniors Morey, Burns, Mike Wall, Ernest Dean, Shelton Magee, Tim Hevesy, Frye Wernick, Al Lairson and Alex Pittz, as they played their final games in the home Brown uniform. Just another spectacular part of a spectacular weekend.

michelle sullivan

## **Titletown**

And then there was the icing on the cake, the topper, the cherry and the whipped cream. In the midst of all the other Brown sporting events, the men's soccer team was scheduled to play Dartmouth at 4pm on Saturday with the winner taking the Ivy League title and the automatic birth to the NCAA tournament. Everyone was ready—the players, the coaches, the fans, the linesmen, the referee. Wait, the referee wasn't ready. In fact, he wasn't even there. Because mister zebra didn't show, the game had to be rescheduled for Sunday at one. This was one of the most ridiculous occurrences imaginable in Division I NCAA athletics and it must have played havoc on the minds of both teams' players and coaches.

Yet on a beautiful, sunny afternoon the next day, everybody was ready once again—this time, including the referee. What everybody was ready for was a match-up billed as titanic. The game, and especially Anders Kelto, did not disappoint. Kelto, a junior midfielder from Michigan was unable to play his first two years at Brown due to a medical condition. He was finally cleared to play earlier this season, and immediately stepped into the center of the Brown midfield, eventually becoming the creative force behind the Brown attack. On Sunday, whenever Kelto was on the field the Bears were the better team. On several occasions he stunned the crowd and Dartmouth defenders with daring displays of skill. At one point, amidst traffic in the Dartmouth penalty area, Kelto flicked the ball over his shoulder, between two defenders and ran onto it for the shot, only to miss the attempt on net by inches. Finally, a few minutes later on a beautiful series of give-and-goes with senior Andy Dixon, Kelto was able to create the deciding goal, laying the ball off for Dixon on the final give-back as Dixon drilled the ball off the crossbar into the net. The goal gave the Bears and their stellar defense a 1-0 lead. About a half an hour later the game and the Kelto show came to an end. The countdown began. The buzzer sounded. Kelto dropped to his knees at midfield, hands spread toward the sky with tears in his eyes as the celebration began.

It was the celebration of an Ivy title, yet it was symbolic of so much more. A weekend of unparalleled excitement and glory. Fifteen home games in a three day span, two Ivy League championships and thousands of happy students. At a school with a reputation for its athletic apathy, a weekend like this makes one think if it's really true. We do care about intercollegiate sports don't we? On a weekend like this, it hardly seemed possible not to. A celebration of Bruno, fun, excitement, teamwork, hard work, dedication, victory, defeat and all that other stuff that makes sports what it is.

A weekend to cherish. So many things to remember. Yet it can be summed up with one image: teammates and fans rushing towards a bushy-blond haired soccer player on his knees with tears in his eyes and his arms spread towards the heavens.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 is the superfan.

December 3, 1998

# Earning their stripes

## Heads I win, tails you lose

article by: Casey Shearer

A classic scene from Monty Python: The Search for the Holy Grail

“Answer these three questions and you may cross the bridge.

What is your name?”

“Sir Robin.”

“What is your quest?”

“To find the Holy Grail.”

“What’s your favorite color.”

“Blue...no! yellow!!! Ahhhh!!!”

This brilliant Monty Python dialogue was eerily similar to a scene played out in the Pontiac Silverdome on Thanksgiving Day. Answer this question and you too can be a National Football League referee. When you flipped the coin what did the team captain say?

## Tails...No! Heads!

How do you miss the call on a coin toss? Heads or tails, what did the man say? It’s a pretty simple question. This is most certainly not astrophysics. We assume a five-year-old could tell whether someone says heads or tails. Yet it appears that at least one post-toddler NFL official cannot.

## Heads up

The scene epitomized the performance of the zebra men in a contest that was perhaps the worst officiated game in NFL history. At the end of this epic, penalty-filled, low-scoring, not-very-entertaining game, the head referee put his very own special stamp on Turkey Day football. After sixty minutes Pittsburgh and Detroit were tied and heading for overtime. Then came the coin toss. The ref showed the captains the coin and tossed it in the air. Steeler runningback Jerome Bettis called tails. The referee then said, “Pittsburgh calls heads, tails it is. Detroit will receive.” The exchange was caught live on both national television and the public address in a stadium filled with eighty thousand people. Detroit took the ball on the ensuing kickoff and drove for the game winning fieldgoal.

Pittsburgh may have felt that the men in black (stripes) cost them a game by inexplicably blowing a call on a coin toss. Yet that wasn’t the only thing the officials blew—these guys were on their knees for an entire afternoon. In fact, the Steelers were fortunate to have any chance to win the game. Earlier in the day the erstwhile officials had missed a number of key calls that helped turn momentum in Pittsburgh’s favor. At one point, Steeler quarterback Kordell Stewart fumbled but was ruled down by the referees. The Steelers kept possession and went on to score. Later a Lion receiver caught an apparent touchdown pass but was ruled out of bounds. Added to these guffaws were numerous poor pass interference penalties and a surplus of calls that weren’t made.

When one considers these Thanksgiving Day lemons with the phantom pass interference call that enabled the Patriots to beat the Bills and a horrendous non-call that let the Cowboys escape the Cardinals a few weeks earlier, a pattern starts to emerge. One sees a simple, inescapable fact—NFL officials have been

atrocious lately and the league should consider implementing some form of instant replay. Officiating must improve. Something has to be done. But at what cost?

## Ruling the world

The presence of human officials has always created an interesting dynamic in the world of sports. Games have rules and somehow these rules have to be enforced. Players, constantly looking for a hidden advantage, will do whatever possible to bend and break the rules; hence the spitball in baseball and numerous other little dirty tricks in other sports such as holding jerseys and stepping on toes. With the possible exception of golf (a gentleman's game indeed Geeves), most sports cannot leave it up to the athletes to govern themselves on the playing field. Professional athletes are so driven to win that they will do whatever it takes. Hence the need for someone to uphold the rules and to make sure, as Steven Segal did in a classic film, that no one is above the law.

There must be referees, but how good do they have to be? It is commonly accepted that officials make errors and may give preferential treatment to stars. We have come to expect and maybe even love these aspects of officiating. Sports have written rules, but how many officials follow the rulebook to a tee? Not many. Witness the phenomenon of baseball's incredibly shrinking strike zone (the rulebook says from the batter's shoulders to his knees in case you're curious), the habit of hockey refs swallowing their whistles in the third period, and the practice of NBA officials calling a foul every time Michael Jordan is breathed on. In all of these cases the referees are not upholding the rules of the games yet we accept and expect this standard.

Some people argue that by not making calls late in a game or by favoring stars that officials are simply giving the people what they want to see and letting the players decide the games. Everyone hates to see a game decided by a referee's decision, witness the Steelers-Lions debacle. Yet if a ref doesn't make a call or alters the rules slightly then aren't they deciding the outcome anyway through their inaction or incorrect action?

Why are there different rules in the fourth quarter than the first? Why can Patrick Ewing travel every time he touches the ball and not be called, but Travis Knight cannot? Isn't it the same game in the fourth quarter as in the first? Didn't Ewing and Knight learn the same rules?

## Play it again sports

A purist would want officials to call a game the same no matter what time it is or what players are involved. As ideal as that would be, it simply isn't possible. The reason for this is that referees are human beings. They are not robots with impeccable decision-making skills. Scores of NBA officials took part in a tax evasion scam for Pete's sake. Officials get excited, nervous, happy, and sad. Game situations and crowd noise affect refs in a very similar manner that they influence players. Some are calm under pressure and make better calls, others crack and make mistakes. This is part of the beauty of human beings, the capacity to shine brilliantly or fail miserably. Unfortunately for the zebras, they are only recognized when they screw up.

This is why professional officials are supposedly trained to be the best sporting judges they can be. Yet they continually make errors—sometimes small and infrequent and sometimes large and numerous as in the Steelers-Lions Thanksgiving Day game. It is games like that one that lead to clamoring for instant replay in the NFL or more computerized officiating like the “Cyclops” device that aids tennis judges with calls on serves.

Many of these innovations, like instant replay, would lessen the number of blown calls. These advancements might improve the quality of play and might truly let the players decide the games. After the Thanksgiving debacle, it's hard to form an argument against some form of instant replay in the NFL. However, along with the human errors, refereeing aids take some of the fun out of sports.

## No Fun League

For many a fan, the greatest part of sports is the controversy. Everybody agrees college football should have a playoff to determine the champion, but everybody also loves the controversy and talk that the bowl

system provides. The same goes for officiating. Almost everyone agrees that instant replay in the NFL is a good thing, but those same people have a field day talking around the water cooler about officials' controversial calls. If the officials hadn't been so atrocious on Thanksgiving, this article would not have been written and you wouldn't be reading it.

So as we lament the poor quality of officiating in the National Football League and other professional and college sports, we must remember that while improvements in the way games are officiated would be a positive thing, taking the possibility of human error away from the zebras would mean less excitement. Human error and controversy are part of the beauty of sports. Would it have been as fun if that referee made the right decision? You make the call.

CASEY SHEARER B'00's brother once mooned a ref in an AYSO soccer game.

December 10, 1998

# Bowl Shit

A look in to why the NCAA has still not implemented a playoff system.

article by: Casey Shearer

As John Goodman so eloquently puts it in the film *The Big Lebowski*, "Come on Dude, let's go bowling."

It's that time of year again; it's time to roll. So break out your ugly shirts that say 'Fred' or 'Buck' or 'Billy Joe' on the front and that have ads for Bob's toilet cleaners or the local game and bait shop on the back and those beautiful blue and red shoes, and head for the lanes: bowl season is upon us. Bring on senseless corporate sponsorship and the further commercialization of American sports. Bring on the Rose Bowl presented by AT&T, the Nokia Sugar Bowl, the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, the MicronPC Bowl, the Insight.Com Bowl, the Chick-Fil-A Peach Bowl, the Sharpe Refectory Salad Bowl, the General Mills Cereal Bowl, the Smoka Bowl and the Toilet Bowl.

Once again the sports world is faced with the only major college sport that doesn't decide it's championship on the field. College football instead leaves it up to an age old system of bowl games and, believe it or not Ripley, two completely subjective polls. This is America after all, the home of democracy and free choice. We vote for our political representatives, why not vote for the college football national championship? It makes sense to me. Actually, it doesn't.

## Volunteers needed

Progressively over the years, the powers that be in the NCAA have slowly tried to improve their system. Of course, since a playoff system would be too intelligent, they haven't tried that one yet. A long time ago, the pollsters actually voted for their national champions after the regular season ended and before the bowl games were played. Now that's brain power for you. This year that would amount to Tennessee being declared champion before playing the Fiesta Bowl. At some point, some Einstein decided to switch one of the polls to after the Bowl games, but the other poll continued voting before the polls. The predictable result: numerous split championships. Eventually both polls were moved to after the bowls. Yet often there was still no clear cut number one. That led to further innovation. For the last three years we had the Bowl Alliance. Yet that didn't work either. In 1994 Penn State finished unbeaten and untied and without a share of the title. Then last year Michigan and Nebraska shared the title. This led to the latest system, the Bowl Championship Series.

1998 has been the first year of the BCS and most people have spent a good portion of the fall claiming that the middle initial should be removed. The BCS system involves the Rose, Orange, Sugar and Fiesta bowls and is designed to match number one versus number two in a championship game on January 4. This year, the Really Large Tortilla Chips Fiesta Bowl gets the big prize. The BCS determines the top two teams using a complex system that weighs the two polls, three computer rankings, a team's number of losses, and a strength of schedule quartile. This system spits out rankings from the BS, um I mean BCS computer every week.

As the regular season ended last week, the BCS managed to luck out and end up with the approximate consensus number one versus number two match-up in the Fiesta Bowl pairing Tennessee and Florida State. Yet just how close were we to controversy and uproar? UCLA lost by four points and was a thirty yard Hail Mary away from victory and Kansas State lost by three in double overtime. If they had both won then we would have had three unbeaten at the top of the polls and one of them shut out of the national championship game.



## **We're one, but not the same**

As it stands now, there is a clear cut number one, Tennessee, but does Florida State deserve to be number two? What about the other teams with one loss. Florida State lost 24-7 to 7-4 North Carolina State who lost to 2-9 Baylor.

Is FSU definitively better than Ohio State who lost by four to 6-6 Michigan State? What about UCLA, who lost by 5 to #24 Miami? Or Arizona whose only loss is to UCLA? Kansas State lost to #8 Texas A&M in double overtime. Even Tennessee's dominance is misleading. They needed a miracle against Arkansas plus a bad call and a missed field goal in the Syracuse game to stay unbeaten.

It appears that this "title" game is more arbitrary than we thought. Why is FSU rewarded for losing early in the season to a mediocre team instead of late in the season to a good one? Florida State knows they were fortunate. "It looks like a situation where Tennessee came through the front door and we kind of came in through the back door and now we're going to meet in the middle of the room," FSU coach Bobby Bowden said. "We haven't been that lucky in the past. It was great for us. I've never accomplished so much doing nothing [Saturday] just sitting on the couch." I was sitting on the couch Saturday and I don't get to play for the title. It's madness.

As fortunate as FSU was, Kansas State was unlucky. "How can we go from one point away, one play away from playing Tennessee for the national title to playing Purdue in the Alamo Bowl?" Kansas State President Jon Wefald said in an interview with the Associated Press.

The BCS may have gotten what they wanted, but it may have been better if they didn't. If UCLA, Kansas St. and Tennessee had all finished unbeaten, all hell would have broken loose. The unanimous call for a playoff system would resonate from sea to shining sea. Now that there is a semblance of a true national championship game, the talk of playoffs goes out the window for a while. That is truly a shame because a playoff system would double the excitement of the college football season. Look at last Saturday; with UCLA, K-State, and Tennessee all playing win or go home games, it was four times as exciting as New Year's Day will be. Just imagine, we could have that excitement for four straight weeks using a playoff system. Division 1-AA has it, yet 1-A does not.

## **Playoff or payoff?**

Opponents of the playoff system say that it would extend the season too far or that it would ruin the tradition of the bowl games. Others argue that the controversy is good for the popularity of the sport. The season extension argument no longer holds water because the season this year will last until January 4. That's three days past the traditional end. As far as tradition goes, it would be affected a little bit, but how much tradition is left? In Pasadena on New Year's Day it is no longer the Rose Bowl, but the Rose Bowl presented by AT&T. The bowl system is not about tradition. It's about money. As far as controversy being good for the sport and exciting, tell that to the 1994 Penn State team that doesn't have a trophy in their case. For pure excitement purposes and memories, playoffs are the way to go; just look at the NFL.

Ask someone if they remember who split the national championship in 1990 and they probably don't have a clue (It was Colorado and Georgia Tech if you're curious). Ask someone who won the Super Bowl that year and all you have to do is mention the name Scott Norwood. One name evokes so much memory. That just doesn't happen in college football. It could.

A playoff system could keep the bowls too. Take the top eight or sixteen teams and use the lesser bowls as preliminary rounds and the major bowls as the late rounds. This would mean people would really care about the Sun Bowl because the winner would still be alive and the larger bowls would only gain importance. We could even keep the corporate sponsorship.

But this is all just a pipe dream. It won't happen and the reason has nothing to do with tradition or season length or common sense. Like seemingly everything else in this country these days it boils down to money. The bowl system is simply too lucrative for athletic directors and the NCAA to get rid of. ABC paid \$518 million over seven years for the rights to televise all BCS bowls under the terms now in place. There is an escape clause in the deal, but not until after the 2001 season. This means that like it or not, and most people don't like it, we are stuck with the BCS until after the millennium. Controversy will reign over excitement

and justice for a few a more years. We will have to consider the possibility of a team losing a shot at a title because of a quartile ranking. We will see the number three team in the nation stuck in the Outback Bowl playing an unranked team. We will see all this and more because as usual the NCAA has acted like Steve Miller and taken the money and run. What we won't see is what is need most—a playoff.

It doesn't have to be this way.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 votes for Tulane for the title.

February 4, 1999

# On the Case

## Chris-Miss

By Casey Shearer

I'm back...but I may be gone tomorrow.

Appropriate words for this time and place.

I, personally, am back after my byline didn't appear in this publication last week for the first time since March of last year. Yet I may be gone tomorrow since my former partner Chris Brown has become an Indy Sports editor.

I'm not the only one for whom this phrase is appropriate. It also describes many of the students here on College Hill shopping classes, trying to readjust to studying, and remembering how it feels to go to class with a hangover.

This phrase also permeates the one thing that has preoccupied the sports world for the past week, the Super Bowl. Amidst the dog collar and guaranteed victory of Ray Buchanan, the kickoff returns of Tim Dwight-Boy, and the taunts of the Falcons calling Shannon Sharpe Mr. Ed, this phrase was an underlying theme of Super Bowl XXXIII.

## Holy molars

The equine-esque John Elway arrived to his fifth Super Bowl, a record for a quarterback, declaring "I'm back." He also made his return to the winners' podium, once again grasping the Vince Lombardi trophy. This time he managed to pick up a Super Bowl MVP award as Number Seven was back on top of the NFL. Everyone, Elway included, was back to speculating whether he would indeed be gone tomorrow.

"It would be great to come back and three-peat," Elway said, "but also it would be nice to walk away forever after the way I'm playing right now. There's such a fine line, because as a football player I'll never want to not play football. It's just such a fine line. I'm one of those guys, I don't want to walk away too late. But I also know that if I played like I played last night then I could play a little bit longer."

For a night, the old Elway was here again. He might never return.

Atlanta safety Eugene Robinson, after becoming symbolically and literally the spiritual leader of the Falcons and winning the NFL's Bart Starr Award, which is supposed to go to someone who exemplifies high moral character, temporarily fell from grace when he was arrested on the eve of the Super Bowl for propositioning an undercover-cop acting as a prostitute for oral sex.

## Way to get some—I mean, way to use your—head Eugene!

The next day Robinson was back, forgiven by the Falcons and leading them out onto the field, where he proceeded to get burnt like a piece of toast. The Bronco offense flat out beat Robinson on four crucial plays, including an 80 yard touchdown pass from Elway to Rod Smith which was the biggest play of the game.

Said Falcon coach Dan Reeves of Robinson's play and behavior, "I'm more concerned about him personally, that's enough. I talked to him a long time [Saturday night] as did his teammates, and he's a member of our family and our love is unconditional." That's coach-speak for he may be on the next train out of here.

## Danny boy

Speaking of Reeves, the Charles Schwab look-a-like, and apparent advocate of family values, he too was making a return. After leading the Broncos and Elway to three Super Bowl losses, firing current head coach Mike Shanahan, and then being unceremoniously dumped because Elway didn't get along with him, Reeves had revived a historically horrendous Falcon franchise and shocked the world by getting them to the Super Bowl.

Thinking of the Falcons in the Super Bowl was like thinking of the Clippers in the NBA finals—it just didn't make sense. Yet there was Reeves back at the big show to face his old friends Elway and Shanahan. So much was made of the family feud between Reeves and Elway and Shanahan during Super Bowl week that I expected Ray Coombs to appear. Survey says...annnnhhhhhh!!!

For a few weeks anyway, Reeves had returned to the spotlight, but, after the 34-19 destruction of his team that Elway and company put on Atlanta, Danny Boy might be gone tomorrow. "Schwab.com here I come!"

## Stiffed

My opening statement appears appropriate for a large number of people. Yet the words are most appropriate for Falcon quarterback Chris Chandler.

Chandler was not your typical Super Bowl winning quarterback. When you think Super Bowl QB's you think Starr, Bradshaw, Montana, Aikman, Elway. You don't think Chris Chandler. For most of his career Chandler had been a mediocre player on bad teams. Before he got to Atlanta he had tours of duty with the Colts, Buccaneers, Cardinals, Rams and Oilers. Coincidentally, or not, none of those teams won a playoff game while he was with them.

Chandler was so highly regarded in football circles that his own teammates gave him the moniker "Stiff." Now that's a nickname you can respect. Broadway Joe, Sweetness, LT and Stiff. Can you say immortality?

Yet this season old Stiffy seemed to have turned it around. He appeared to have matured and no longer blamed teammates, coaches or management for his team's shortcomings. It was a calmer, happier Stiff.

He got better on the field as well. This season Chandler led Atlanta to a 14-2 mark and had the best fourth quarter quarterback rating in the NFL. He also led the league in red zone QB rating with a whopping 109.6. (The formula the NFL uses to calculate its QB rating is only slightly less complicated than the Brown housing lottery.) Now Chandler was at the Super Bowl, he was back in the football gods' good graces.

And then Sunday came. And on the seventh day Stiff sucked. He would have been better off resting.

As I sat at our Super Bowl party in New Dorm, which by the way was featured on the cover of Monday's BDH, I and a room full of drunken, temporary Falcon fans watched Chandler do his best impression of a scrub. Where was Steve DeBerg when you needed him? (Yes, Steve DeBerg is still alive and is the Falcons back-up QB.)

Elway was the Broncos MVP for the game, but Chandler had to be a close second. Elway has thrown more interceptions in Super Bowl play (eight) than anyone else, a record many incorrectly thought Chandler set in one game on Sunday. In fact, it was only three interceptions for Chandler, but if you mix that in with the fact that the Falcons ran the ball well and Chandler did a horrendous job recognizing Bronco defenses, it is no stretch to throw a good portion of blame on Chandler.

Perhaps illustrating how he got his nickname, Stiff at first characterized his performance as "fine." After some meditation, he changed that analysis to fair. Here's a quarter; buy a clue. In the biggest surprise of the night, Chandler didn't get hurt, but maybe his analysis of his poor play was the result of an undetected concussion.

Chandler didn't do everything wrong. After one of his interceptions killed yet another Falcon drive in Bronco territory, Stiff was able to tackle Bronco Darien Gordon who had intercepted the pass and thereby prevent a sure touchdown, humiliating Gordon in front of the whole world in the process. After being tackled by a quarterback, and a slow one at that, Gordon had this explanation, "There's a billion people watching and I get tackled. I think the humidity had a lot to do with it." Nice excuse, buddy.

“I took a shot in the first half and my ears were ringing,” Gordon said, trying a different excuse. “I felt like I just had woken from a long sleep, but you know I can’t make excuses, I just let Chandler tackle me in the open field.” That’s better.

On the open field of Super Bowl week, Chandler failed to vindicate himself. Like Jim Kelly before him, Stiff found out that it’s damn hard to win a Super Bowl as a quarterback who has a large bald spot. Rogaine worked for Jim, maybe Chris should try Propecia.

Chandler tried to declare that he was back at the top of the football world. Maybe he was, but after the events of last Sunday, he may be gone tomorrow.

CASEY SHEARER B’00 is gone...but only ‘till next week.

February 10, 1999

# Puck you

## Get off my Case and let me jeer

by Casey Shearer

Sportsmanship is the hallmark of the Ivy League.”

A mother of one of the Princeton woman’s hockey players said this to me last Sunday in between periods of a Brown-Princeton game at Meehan auditorium.

A few other loyal supporters of the Lady Bears and I had been vocally supporting Bruno for two periods, at times taking good-natured jabs at the visiting Tigers players. This woman’s pompous and ridiculous statement, to which I neglected to respond out of my own self-respect, did make me sit down and think about just what was going on.

## Ladies night

We were cheering, heckling and screaming at a women’s hockey game. That simply doesn’t happen.

“We don’t get heckled very often,” said Brown defenseman Cara Gardner B’01.

This is women’s hockey. Not many people show up, let alone vocally express themselves constantly and creatively throughout the whole game. The attendance for Sunday’s game was listed as 370 (yeah, right). Saturday’s game against Yale supposedly drew 423, although a good 120 of those could be attributed to the midget Concordia Waves who played during an intermission. I have no idea who’s counting or how they count because admission is free and there are no turnstiles, so these attendance figures are about as trustworthy as the ones from a Los Angeles Clippers home game. With so few people showing up, the mere fact that we were screaming and yelling may have caused the Princeton mom to think we should be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct.

From a heckling standpoint we were very tame—a men’s soccer game at Stevenson this most certainly was not. Our brilliant cheers included—“Ug-ly, Un-is!” “Who’s your daddy, Patti?” and “Nice job Princeton!” We were not making references to anyone’s mother or stillborn child; yet this Tiger mom probably would have not chastised her daughter if she charged into the stands and punched me in the face as NBA player Vernon “Mad Max” Maxwell once did to a taunting fan. As it was, one of the Princeton players did resort to hucking a projectile over the boards at us at the start of the third period. We were standing, cheering yet another Brown goal when a Princeton player launched a missile in the form of a pretzel in our direction, almost hitting the leg of one of my fellow hecklers. This of course led to a whole new series of chants. “Pret-zel, Pret-zel!”, and “Where’s the mustard?!”

Pardon me number 14, but would you happen to have any grey poupon?

Over the course of the game we used no profanity. At a men’s game that might not be the case, but these are women we were screaming at and it makes a difference. “There’s an unspoken code when heckling girls,” says fellow fan Eric Driggs B’99. “It takes genius to get inside someone’s head without insulting them. That’s true heckling. It’s true genius.”

Obviously the definition of true genius is different at Princeton than here at Brown.

It was this type of true heckling to which we aspired at Meehan on Sunday. We did not ask the Lady Tigers how their girlfriends were doing as Northeastern fans had questioned Brown goalie Ali Brewer B’00 earlier this season. “That was just wrong,” said Brewer. We simply had a good time in a family environment.

“Our heckling is professional, classy,” said Driggs, “[Other styles] may be more effective.”

It appeared our style was affective enough.

## Like it is

I arrived about six minutes into the first period and after greeting some fellow fans proceed to alert the Princeton goalie to my presence, “Susan Maes, how’s it going?” She turned her head so fast to look at me, she got whiplash. I had been in the building for two minutes and I was already in the opposing goalie’s head. Pure genius. A minute later, the Bears proceed to score three goals in under three minutes and the rout was on. I take full credit. I continued to talk politely to Maes, informing her that I would not be leaving after intermission and that we would continue our conversation.

In the second period with the Bears leading 4-0, Brown took a penalty and Princeton went on the powerplay. Using my Nostradamus-esque skills I stood up and screamed, “Susan, can you say ‘shorthanded goal?’” Exactly twenty-four seconds later Jordan Jiskra B’00 took a feed from Carly Reigner B’99 and roofed one past Maes, who must have been looking at me because she certainly didn’t see the puck. I then took the opportunity to inform Susan that I was indeed a prophet. Moses, Muhammed and me. I’m sure she agreed.

We really weren’t that bad. Yes, we insulted Princeton’s uniforms, but they really were downright hideous. Perhaps we were a little harsh on Maes, but we did leave her alone with her thoughts for the rest of the game after the fifth goal (two more would follow). Yet one truly wonders whether a Division I college athlete really should be affected by the words (no matter how brilliant they may be) of four guys in the stands.

“[Hecklers] can make a difference,” said Gardner. Yet she feels that players should not let fans get inside their helmets. “If you let hecklers bother you, you’re not a top-flight athlete. Mental toughness is part of what it’s about.”

As far as us fans deserving two minutes in the penalty box for unsportsmanlike conduct, the Princeton mom made as bad a call as any blind referee. “When I get old and I can’t see, I want to be a referee!”

“I don’t think [heckling’s] unsportsmanlike. No one takes it personally,” said Gardner. “I play along. I think hecklers are funny. It’s great.”

“It’s part of American college hockey,” said Brown forward Patti Long B’01.

Indeed it is.

## Market demands

Fans cheering, heckling and screaming also manages to give a team a home-ice or field advantage, something that most Brown teams, with the notable exception of the men’s soccer team, are sorely missing. It’s basic economics, bay-bee; there’s demand for a product we have, and we supply it.

The contributions of vocal fans are an important aspect of what college athletics is all about. How much do the Cameron Crazies mean to the Duke University basketball team? How about the Maples Maniacs to Stanford? Can we be so wrong if our players who must deal with heckling on the road agree with us?

“I love it when you guys are there,” said Gardner.

“We really liked that ‘ugly unis’ chant. The whole bench was cracking up when you started it. It was awesome,” said Jiskra.

All around the country, the tradition of heckling and cheering is lauded and praised by all as long as it’s done with class. We feel that our heckling was classy and appropriate for the setting of a women’s hockey game. We did not cross that line into being crude or improper. They were the one’s throwing stuff at us, not the other way around. I find it unfortunate that a loyal Princeton supporter, in her disappointment at losing, didn’t agree with us. Perhaps she’ll learn from the players she supports.

As I was leaving Meehan last Sunday, I was introduced to one of the Princeton players. “Nice to meet you, I’m Casey,” I said with a smile. She smiled back.

Heckling is the hallmark of college athletics, but sportsmanship still lives in the Ivy League.

CASEY SHEARER B'99 got his mouth washed out with soap at the homecoming football game.



March 4, 1999

# As the Worm turns

## Chris and Case return

By Christopher Brown and Casey Shearer

He's back. Who's back? You know, the guy who dresses all funny, is always late but not that late, is always acting outrageously, trying to get away with everything he can, constantly pushing your patience to the limit, and somehow wiggling out of every tight spot and ending up on top. You know, that guy. He's back.

## Oh, you mean Chris Brown?

Well, him too, but we were referring to the dude they call "the Worm."

A worm. It wiggles. It squirms. It's slimy. It's hard to pick up. Yet, once you get a hold of one, it can help you hook the big prize on your line.

"The Worm" is Dennis Rodman, former Chicago Bull, San Antonio Spur and Detroit Piston, seven-time NBA rebounding king and five-time NBA champion. The erstwhile fisherman trying to get a grip on the worm is the Los Angeles Lakers franchise. The big fish they hope Rodman helps them hook is the Larry O'Brien trophy, which is handed out each June to the champions of the National Basketball Association.

## Worm burgers

After a tumultuous, drawn out courtship that went on longer than anyone except Rodman believed possible, especially since the Lakers were the only suitor and the amount of money they could offer was non-negotiable, the Worm signed with Los Angeles. Even before he was a member of the team, Rodman was late, signing twelve games into the season instead of the usual pre-season signings most players opt for. When he finally announced his desire to play for the Lakers he did so with his own press conference at Planet Hollywood, showing up dressed like Casey did this Halloween—as a pimp—and proceeding to laugh, cry, rant and rave about everything except basketball. Dennis, as he always does, did things Dennis' way, once again showing that the early bird will never catch this worm.

Three years ago the Chicago Bulls were in the same position as the Lakers, signing Rodman to be the final part of a championship puzzle. Things seemed to have worked out pretty well for them, as they went on to win three consecutive championships and are mentioned among the greatest teams of all time. Sounds like the Lakers will have no problem, right?

## Is there a new king in Jordan?

Well, there is the small matter of some guy who used to play for Chicago named Michael Jordan, who the Lakers don't have. Of course the Bulls won; they had Michael. It didn't matter what Dennis did and if Rodman did step out of line, he had to listen to Jordan didn't he? Shaquille O'Neal is an awesome force, but he is not MJ. The Bulls also had coach and Zen master Phil Jackson, supposedly the perfect coach for the flammable Rodman. The Lakers had Del Harris whose claim to fame is he looks like Leslie Neilson, the star of the Naked Gun movies.

Then there are the San Antonio Spurs for whom Rodman toiled before going to Chicago. He arrived on the scene and teamed with David Robinson to energize and fuel the Spurs to the best record in the Western conference. However, ever the human time bomb, Rodman detonated two consecutive years in the playoffs, taking Robinson and the Spurs down with him, and turning nice guy head coach Bob Hill into a lame duck.

Both the Bulls and Spurs gambled. The Spurs crapped out and the Bulls hit the jackpot. Where will the Lakers' roulette wheel end up?

It's true the Lakers don't have Jordan, but neither are they the soft and cuddly Spurs. The Spurs had David Robinson, Sean Elliot and not much else. Avery Johnson and Vinny Del Negro as your starting back court will not get you anywhere in this league. The Lakers have Shaq, Kobe Bryant, two-time all-star Eddie Jones and a host of other talented players. All Rodman has to do is rebound and play defense against big power forwards, the two things he's best at doing, and two things the Lakers were lacking. With the Spurs, Rodman was the dominant personality because David Robinson is simply too soft. The Lakers are Shaq's team and will be Shaq's team whether he plays along side a cross-dressing power forward or not.

## Can dis be Rambis?

The other difference between the Lakers and the Spurs is the coach. The Spurs had the non-descript, tired Hill. The Lakers had a coach similar to Hill, but then they fired Del Harris last week and hired Kurt Rambis. Rambis is anything but a lame duck. In his Laker playing days, Rambis was known for his horn-rimmed glasses and tireless work ethic. He did the dirty work that allowed Magic and Kareem's Showtime to shine. Rambis rebounded, played defense, dove for loose balls and got in fights with Danny Ainge. Sound familiar anyone? Rambis did everything on the court that Rodman does, just without the off-court craziness. As a coach he understands Rodman's role on the court, but does not think so highly of himself that he will clash egos with Rodman, O'Neal or Bryant. How can a man who only has three suits in a league full of Armani sporting coaches think of anything but the team first? He can't.

Rambis may be the perfect coach for these Lakers and for Rodman. Then again, none of that may matter because Rodman, the social phenomenon, may overshadow anything that goes on inside the gym. Let us try and understand, now, this social circumstance.

## The analysis

Los Angeles is a town of stars and superstars, night clubs, swingers and disco balls, Casey's false teeth and facades, new smiles, fake breasts and worked-over tan lines, golden hair, nipple rings, and roller-skate asses. It is a town so littered with glitter that it burns the bottoms of your eyes unless you wear sunglasses. It is a town of burnt-out bums on curbs. It is a town of purple-painted convertible cars from the forties being driven by open-shirted pimps in gold chains with naked women in the back seat moving their fingers over their nipples and honking the horn. Oh, that's just Chris. In short, LA is a town where nothing is unexpected or out of the ordinary. It is Rodman's town.

Understanding Rodman's town makes it easier to understand Rodman the personality. But it is a complicated personality, not as easy to take, probably, as the eye shadow and lip-rings. There is more to Rodman than a rebel in a velvet hat. In fact, it has only been in the last few years that Rodman has presented himself as the queen that we see, though the elements of his recent explosion have always been present in him. He had a rough and troubled childhood and never knew his father. He has a record of suicidal tendencies and was once reported to have fallen asleep in his car with a rifle on his lap, perhaps planning to kill himself. Much of this can be attributed to his violent youth.

But who really knows? Who really knows what led to his transformation into a life of bisexual glamour and make-up, widespread fame, unpopularity, and an inspired work ethic and hunger to win? Who really knows why he did not marry Madonna when she asked him? Who really knows why he married Carmen Electra?... Well, we have a pretty good idea.

With Rodman, you must take what you see. You see his bright hats. You see him in drag on MTV and you hear about him wrestling for the WCW as "Rodzilla." It's clear that Rodman is a self-creation, an invention. There is no

Rodman other than the one we see on the television, in interviews, in dresses, or in basketball uniforms. It's not worth much to look for a Rodman underneath all the make-up, or a "true Rodman." He has created himself into an object of public entertainment. The true Rodman is in his tattoos and spray-painted hair and is just as easy to see. That is, he is easy to see but not easy to digest.

Los Angeles is the place where this wild drama will play out further. At the Forum, Rodman will be under the eyes of the most well known public figures, like Goldie Hawn, Jack Nicholson, Ice Cube, and Chris and Casey in the cheap seats. Under the warm sun Rodman does not have to be bundled up in NorthFace jackets like everyone at Brown but can flex his arms under tank tops or bras.

## **LA gets a Worm perm**

For the Lakers, this means good news. This means Rodman will be a wild happy camper, and he won't get too out of line because he likes Rambis coaching. So far, as is to be expected in the first few weeks of a marriage, it has been nothing but a honeymoon. The Lakers have played better and the people of Los Angeles have fallen in love with the Worm. His teammates seem to have taken to him as well. "He's definitely a very special player," Laker point guard Derek Harper said after Rodman's first game in purple and gold. "He gave us instant energy. The minute he came in positive things started happening."

The Lakers have played as if transformed, bringing hope that they will challenge for the title in May. "Whoooo! It's like we've got a whole new club," said Actress Dyan Cannon said on her way out of the Great Western Forum after Rodman's second game with the Lakers.

So all will be well with the Lake Show and the travelling circus that is Dennis Rodman? "So far," Harper said with a grin. "Just wait, though. We'll see."

Chris and Case. Just like Rodman, we're back. Deal with it America.

We'll see.

CHRIS BROWN B'00 likes to drink Casey Shearer's B'00 Powerade.

March 11, 1999

# Go Nads!

## The RISD ice experiment

By Casey Shearer

Thank you, Will Shakespeare. On Thursday, March 11, it starts. Let the madness begin!

Oh yes, ladies and gentleman, we have reached that three-week period when college campuses and the sporting world in general come down with a very serious case of delusions, over-excitement and even more excuses to drink beer and gamble. It's March, and to sports junkies that means one thing and one thing only—tournament time.

The brackets are set, the teams are psyched, the fans are ready, and Dick Vitale is screaming "Yeah bay-bee!" From the time the first game tips off until CBS goes off the air on March 30 playing "One Shining Moment," people all around the globe will eat, sleep and breathe college basketball.

## Mad about you

The National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Tournament is without a doubt, the single best three weeks of the sporting world. Fans, players and coaches alike push each game's importance to Biblical proportions. Where else can you find blood, sweat, tears, cheerleaders, mascot squabbling and of course, more cheerleaders? Where else can you find college students playing their hearts out, knowing that if they lose they go home to mamma (or at least to that Russian Lit midterm)?

The excitement of the NCAA basketball tournament is unparalleled. Every game counts, and, as such, many of them are excruciatingly close. Little schools like Samford or Mount Saint Mary's can shock the world by winning two games when they weren't even supposed to make a contest of the first one. Dreams come true or are crushed in a matter of moments.

One cannot truly explain the greatness and brilliance that is the NCAA Tournament. Just go and see for yourself. Find a TV, tune in to CBS and watch the drama unfold. Subject yourself to Digger Phelps' ranting and raving and to Clark Kellogg's talk about spurtability. It's worth listening to their talking heads spin round and round like the girl from *The Exorcist*, because the basketball is simply so exciting.

Games that, even to a die-hard fan like myself, meant nothing a week ago, suddenly have become Must See TV, even if it is on CBS. The Texas Longhorns may be in the tournament, but Walker, Texas Ranger this most certainly isn't. No, my friends, this is the kind of entertainment that grabs your buttocks and glues them to your couch or lazy boy for hours on end, just to watch a basketball game between SouthWest Missouri State and Texas-San Antonio.

## An underdog with mustard

But why does this tournament pull us in like we were college students who heard there was free beer at a party? It can't be all about excitement, can it?

It's not.

These games are not just about college basketball, last second jump shots, crazy fans or ferocious slam dunks. Rather, they are something more. They are almost an allegory for the American dream; the tournament as a microcosm of the American social fabric.

In economic terms, the tournament can be described as a classic case of haves and have-nots. The haves are the big schools like the number one Duke Blue Devils, the defending national champion Kentucky Wildcats and the eleven-time champion UCLA Bruins. Schools like these are in the tournament every year

and are disappointed if they don't make the Final Four. The have-nots are schools like Florida A&M, Siena, Samford, Alcorn State or the Fighting Hens of Delaware. These schools are happy just to be in the field of 64 and are even more ecstatic if they end up winning a game.

Somehow, both the haves and the have-nots are the teams that this country supports most vigorously.

America is a country for big winners. The masses of Duke fans around the country, not just in North Carolina, are proof of this. The United States loves to celebrate the biggest, brightest, loudest and most spectacular. Our obsession with Mark McGwire and his monster home runs while we ignored Moises Alou lead his team to the playoffs illustrates this fact. Face it, we are drawn to the big glamorous show. The Lakers are on NBC every weekend, not the Portland Trailblazers or Indiana Pacers. Everybody loves Duke or U. Conn., because America loves favorites.

Yet we love underdogs as well. When Valparaiso made their stunning run into the Sweet Sixteen last year, the whole country was rooting for them. If Murray State or Weber State manages to string together a couple of wins, the same thing will happen to them. It's Horatio Alger's classic bootstrap theory at work. America loves the less fortunate who, through sheer hard work and perseverance, were able to push themselves to success. This attitude permeates all aspects of American popular culture.

## Happy berth day

We cheer for the rich as we marvel at movie stars, celebrities and millionaires. Equally, we root for the poor who are fighting for a better lot. Yet somehow, in all aspects of American life, those in the middle are ignored. Whether it's basketball or movies, the middle class doesn't get any run in the press. Who goes to see a movie because it stars Omar Epps? Likewise, who outside the state of Oklahoma, cares how the Sooners fare in the NCAA tournament? The middle class simply gets no love, except perhaps from politicians, but that's another matter.

The heart of American social fabric lies in the interaction between classes. This is where we see the human drama of life in the United States. It's in the tension of scenes from everyday life such as a rich business man walking past a bum on the street. The NCAA basketball tournament is simply a smaller stage where these scenes are played out. The poor like Winthrop fight to redistribute wealth by beating a rich Auburn to take a place at the table in the second round. Meanwhile, Auburn will fight like gangbusters to make sure they don't fall from the ranks of the fortunate, not giving any change to Winthrop sitting on the street corner.

The NCAA tournament is filled with clashes like this one that can be equated with many walks of life, of which social economics is only one. The fact that NCAA basketball games run parallel with huge chunks of American ideology makes them dramatic, tension filled, and seemingly important on small and large scales. This is before one even takes into account what happens on the court. The fact that so many of these games come down to miraculous, heart-stopping finishes only adds to the excitement and power of the tournament, transforming it from a social phenomenon to pure, unadulterated madness.

It's March. The ides are upon us. Beware of the madness.

Tournament time.

Casey Shearer B'00 needs a doctor who has a cure.

March 18, 1999

# Cujo...psycho?

## The weird world of goalies

by Casey Shearer

The goalie. Goalies are a species unto themselves in the genus of athletes. They alone are charged with the responsibility of keeping the opposing team from its appointed goal. If they succeed they are lauded as heroes, if they fail they are blamed as goats. "There is no position in sport as noble as goaltending," former Russian hockey great Vladislav Tretiak once said. Practitioners of that noble position go by names like the Eagle, Saint Patrick, Weeds, Perl Necklace, the Dominator, Stirls, Brew-dog, Ad-Rock, the Bandit, Satan's Wallpaper, the Mask, Octopus, The Cat, Hollywood, CuJo, Shamu, the Cheese, Scoops, the Peroxide Kid, Blue Line, the Accountant, the Leprechaun from Palmarolle, and Olie the Goalie. Some go into battle dressed in armor like medieval knights, others like gladiators with only their bare hands to protect them. They have one job to do—keep the other team out of the net.

A goalie must clot the wound, stem the tide, divert the river, save the day. They can do the impossible by making a great save or do the unthinkable by giving up a soft goal. "The goalie is like the guy on the minefield. He discovers the mines and destroys them. If [he] make[s] a mistake, somebody gets blown up," noted NHL goalie Arturs Irbe. Is that your idea of fun? To the casual observer, sweeping that minefield is not an understandable career choice. Ice hockey columnist Jim Taylor once observed, "Any discussion on hockey goaltenders must begin with the assumption that they are about three sandwiches shy of a picnic. I can prove this. From the moment Primitive Man first lurched erect, he and those who came after him survived on the principle that when something hard and potentially painful comes at you at great velocity, you get the hell out of its path. Goalkeepers throw themselves into its path. I rest my case."

Net gains, losses?

Goalies are different. Goalies are special.

"Goalies are weird," says Brown women's ice hockey forward Patty Long B'01. "They have to be. They're always alone on the ice; they don't have the camaraderie on the bench. They have to deal with being the last line of defense. They get 80 mile-per-hour slap shots at their head. Weird."

"It takes a different breed to tackle this position," says Brown men's hockey goaltender Scott Stirling B'00.

Some members of this breed indeed do strange things. Some dress left side first, or listen to Garth Brooks, or eat caramel chocolate bars and grapefruit before every game. Others leave the TV on in their apartment on a certain channel or have their girlfriend carry a puck in her purse. One minor league hockey goalie even gave the goalposts names, naming one after his mother.

The belief that you own the area surrounding the goal is essential for any goalkeeper. A goalie is alone on the field or ice, or in the pool. The other players are in constant motion while the keeper remains, for the most part, stationary. Other players come in and out of the games on a regular basis; a netminder is only removed due to gross incompetence or serious injury. Goalies must be confident that they themselves are capable of fulfilling their daunting task. Besides their literal foes, they must battle inner demons in their heads.

Former Montreal Canadiens goaltender Ken Dryden explains the inner battles of a goalie: "Because the demands on a goalie are mostly mental, it means that for a goalie, the biggest enemy is himself. Not a puck, not an opponent, not a quirk of size or style. Him. The stress and anxiety he feels when he plays, the fear of failing, the fear of being embarrassed, the fear of being physically hurt, all the symptoms of his position, in constant ebb and flow, but never disappearing. The successful goalie understands these neuroses, accepts them, and puts them under control. The unsuccessful goalie is distracted by them, his mind in knots, his

body quickly following.” Confidence drives a goalie’s success. They must think positively and defend their penalty box or their crease as if it were the Holy Grail. They must carry an air of invincibility. People in the stands taunt you. Your teammates depend on you. If you make the big save the girls or guys will want to date you. You get to sit back and think about this while the ball or puck comes your way. You need to believe that you are going to stop the shot. You need to feel like, as Brown women’s ice hockey goalie Ali Brewer B’00 puts it, “I’m a goalie, don’t fuck with me.”

## Harvard sucks

A sunny yet cold Saturday afternoon in Cambridge. Brown versus Harvard women’s ice hockey. The first and second ranked teams in the country. Harvard leads 4-2 late in the third period.

Harvard attacks. Two attackers dressed in white and crimson skate up ice, rushing at only one brown-clad defender in a charge toward Ali Brewer’s goal. The puck is passed from the left to the right, sliding in front of Brewer, just out of the reach of her stick. The other Harvard attacker takes the puck on the backhand. Brewer slides across the crease, attempting to stack her pads, as the puck is lifted over her outstretched pads and glove hand and into the net. Goal.

A red light goes on behind her. Suddenly 1700 people rise in unison, clapping and screaming their lungs out. Brewer bangs her stick on the ice and against a goal post before fishing the puck out of the net. Seven guys who sit in the packed stands with no shirts on have H-A-R-V-A-R-D spelled out on their chests. They pick up long cones of the type used by cheerleaders to amplify their voice and begin chanting, “Breeew-er, Breeew-er,” the way Boston Red Sox fans at Fenway Park chanted Dar-yl Dar-yl at Daryl Strawberry in the 1986 World Series.

Moments later it begins again. A rush by the girls in white. A shot on goal. Brewer goes down and slides to make the first save with her pads.

The fans on the far side of the ice rise in anticipation, trying to get a better look. The puck rebounds away from the goal. Brewer turns back towards the goal, not knowing where the puck is. A Harvard player retrieves the puck and winds up a slap shot. The puck fires toward net. Brewer spins around back toward the goal, desperately trying to find the puck. One of the Brown defenders sees the puck heading for the net and dives futilely to block the open net, in the process knocking Brewer to the ground as the little black disc rockets into the netting for Harvard’s sixth goal of the game. Brewer simply gets up, turns around, crouches in position and stares toward center ice.

The boys behind her with the painted chests, this time joined by the Harvard band and a third of the heavily partisan crowd, start another chant. “Hey Brewer, you’re not a goalie, you’re a sieve. Hey Brewer, you’re not a sieve; you’re a funnel. Hey Brewer, you’re not a funnel; you’re a vacuum. Hey Brewer, you’re not a vacuum; you’re a black hole. Hey Brewer, you’re not a black hole; you just suck! You just suck! You just suck!”

## Come and get some!

Whether through hurting others or simply stopping the ball or puck, a goalie must make the goal their domain and no one else’s. The goal must be Camelot to their Arthur, the Alamo to their Davy Crockett. They must fight to the death and be certain of victory. Adam Weinstock B’00, a goalie on the Brown club soccer team finds, “As a goalie, I need to maintain a special mentality that I own the penalty box and I must take it personally when someone thinks they can try to penetrate my goal; so I assume the mentality that no one can get by me...this is my ball, this is my goal, and I’ll do whatever is physically possible to assert my presence in the space of the penalty area. While it’s important for all players to have confidence and assume the attitude that no one can beat them, it is particularly so for the goalie to possess such an attitude. It is when you question yourself that you make mistakes and fail to assert your presence as a goalie must do.”

An attacker rushes up the middle of the soccer field toward the goal. The defender takes the attacker down from behind with a vicious slide tackle. A shrill sound rings out across the pitch as the man in black blows his whistle. The referee points to the white chalk dot twelve yards away from the goal. Penalty shot.

Everything stops. All the players save two leave the eighteen-yard area of the penalty box. One, the shooter, stands a few steps away from the white dot where the ball sits. The other, the goalie, stands a measly twelve yards from the ball on the goal line.

The thought of making a big save pumps up the keeper. He smiles. A well placed, well-struck ball will mean the goalie has no chance. Easy goal. Yet the goalie smiles. He knows he is mentally stronger than the shooter. He steps on the chalk of the goal line, bouncing hard on his toes, his arms outstretched to assert his space. It's his goal, not the shooter's. The goalie whispers words of encouragement to himself. His total focus is on the ball. He doesn't even look at the shooter as the shooter begins his trot toward the ball. He stares at the ball, nothing else. He tells himself, "That ball is mine."

He must react, not anticipate. He must be ready for the ball to go anywhere, high or low, left or right. When the shooter reaches the ball, the goalie split steps on his toes and stays balanced. The ball is struck. The keeper takes a strong step in the direction the ball is kicked and takes off. Full extension on the dive toward the side of his net. The ball is in his reach. He collapses on it.

"My ball," he says.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 is a brick wall.



April 15, 1999

# Shark bait

## Tracking the elusive Yellow Shark

by Casey Shearer

The Masters. A tradition unlike any other. And what a tradition it is.

It's springtime. The trees are sprouting green leaves, baseball season has begun, April showers are paving the way for May flowers, women are wearing bright colors and short skirts and Greg Norman has once again choked amongst the azaleas and dogwoods of Augusta, Georgia.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen it has happened again. Golf's favorite bridegroom once again came in just behind the top dog at the Masters. This time Norman, known in golf circles as "The Shark" finished in third place, two strokes behind the winner, Jose Maria Olazabal of Spain.

Norman was attempting to redeem himself for countless previous failures at the Augusta National golf course, home of the Masters, including his legendary, epic, shocking collapse in 1996 when he took a six-stroke lead over Nick Faldo into the final round, only to completely squander all of it and end up losing by five strokes. (Ladies and gentlemen that loud sucking sound you hear is coming from the white-haired Australian wearing the straw hat.) Three years later Norman's breakdown is still remembered as one of the biggest choke-jobs of all time. These types of things have become commonplace for Norman. Did we really expect this time to be any different?

## Masters diasters

Entering Sunday's final round of play, Olazabal held a one-stroke lead on the rest of the field, but a shark was lurking on Augusta National's storied fairways. But the Shark, as seems to happen at Augusta every year, turned into a guppy.

Sunday brought vicious gusting winds, blowing the azaleas and dogwoods in the breeze and playing havoc with the best golfers in the world. The conditions and pressure were so tough that only seven players broke par in the final round. Norman was one of the many who didn't, finishing with a one over 73. Norman had the opportunity to take the tournament; yet, as has happened so often in the past, the Shark let the tournament slip from his jaws.

Norman and Olazabal were tied at five-under heading to the tenth hole with a large majority of the crowd rooting for Norman, the sentimental favorite. It's almost as if Norman has become a sick puppy dog of sorts at Augusta—an object of pity for whom the fans root just so his torment will end. Olazabal took the lead with a birdie on number ten but Norman answered with a 30-foot birdie putt of his own at the eleventh. Norman bogeyed the par-three twelfth hole with Olazabal saving par from the sand trap to take the lead. Then came the fateful thirteenth.

Unlucky number 13. If any hole would be the downfall of Norman, surely it would be this dangerous par five. Not quite.

Norman calmly hit his second shot, a 198-yard five-iron, right on the green, leaving him with a 30-footer for eagle. Norman knocked down the eagle putt, taking a one-stroke lead, and looked skyward, perhaps asking a higher power if this would indeed be his year.

The answer came moments later as Olazabal calmly sank a birdie putt of his own to pull even with the Shark. Norman looked over at him and smiled in disbelief. Olazabal winked and pointed his finger at him, the Spaniard seeming to have the mental edge over the Australian. Five holes to play. Through the first

three rounds, Norman never made worse than par on the final five holes. This was going to be his year. He was finally going to get the monkey off his back.

Yeah, right.

## **Bogey man**

Norman, pulling what has become a patented collapse, proceeded to bogey the next two holes and missed a very sinkable birdie putt at 16, essentially destroying any chance he had of winning, as Olazabal made par on 14 and 15 and birdied 16 to take a three-shot lead that he would never relinquish on his way to capturing his second green jacket. Once again Norman couldn't make the big shots required of a Masters champion—the ones on Sunday.

Not that we should be surprised. Just like Ohio State's big choke against Michigan State during the college football season, we should have seen it coming. The Buckeyes lost their shot at a national championship in November, the Cubs and Red Sox didn't win the World Series, Duke went to the Final Four and Greg Norman didn't win the Masters. All is right with the world.

Now that Norman has failed yet again, what else can we look for to happen this year? What other things have happened every year Greg Norman didn't win the Masters, you ask? Well, let's see. The US was the lone superpower, we all got one year older, taxes were due April 15, Brown was politically correct and Christmas was December 25. I think you get the picture. As far as surprises go, Michael Jordan losing in the NBA finals this wasn't.

Yet, perhaps this is the year Greg Norman should have won. We need something exciting, shocking and new to talk about. (Let's face it. UPN has been running re-runs of Jerry Springer lately.) We need something to take our minds off of the tragedy and horrors of Kosovo, something to help us forget about interns giving blowjobs and Presidents smoking cigars. Greg Norman's winning the Masters could have been just what we needed. Or maybe it wouldn't have been. In any Case, we are back to being our same apathetic and pessimistic selves. Who knows, Norman wins, we change the world. Or not.

## **Sharky shark and the funky bunch**

The simple fact of the matter is that the Shark didn't have what it takes inside to win the Masters, after hardly playing golf the last 12 months because of a shoulder injury. Instead, he settled for his ninth top ten and sixth top three finish in nineteen career appearances at Augusta. The contrast with his opponent couldn't have been more vivid.

While Norman has struggled to find a way to win among the azaleas, Olazabal has done his best work at Augusta and managed to have time to stop and smell the dogwoods along the way. Olazabal also won the Masters in 1994, making him the only golfer to win the event twice in the nineties. In '94, Olazabal won despite a gallery that was rooting for Tom Lehman. This year, he triumphed with the crowds cheering on Norman. They should have known better.

Olazabal, too, was coming back from a debilitating injury. Three years ago, as Norman was self-destructing at Augusta, Olazabal was watching on TV from Spain. He had foot and back problems that made it nearly impossible for him to walk—let alone swing a golf club—and had him wondering whether he would ever play golf again. He's back playing again, and as he walked down the fairway on 18 toward the history books, there was not the slightest hint of a limp in his gait. "I thought I would never play golf again. To stand before you in a green jacket is an achievement I didn't even think about," said Olazabal.

Norman meanwhile found a way to outdo himself and was forced to make that fateful walk to the eighteenth green in the final group of a major he wouldn't win for what seems like the hundredth time. As the two men walked to the final green, the gallery applauded them both. Two warriors, one a Masters champion, the other described by television commentators as a classy loser. And, well, he should be: He certainly has had enough practice.

"It was a successful week, and a sad week, all rolled up in one," Norman said.

One wonders how successful it would have been had he finished second instead of third. It doesn't really matter, though; in the end, the Shark drowned himself. Again.

Death, taxes and Greg Norman not quite winning at the Masters. Nothing could be more certain. You can hang your hat on it. You can go to bed feeling safe. All is right with the world tonight.

Next year Olazabal will be back to defend his title. We all know what Norman's plans are.

It's a tradition unlike any other.

CASEY SHEARER B'00 can't believe he just wrote a column about golf.