

SPORTS

Razorbacks always win before Barnhill animals

The profanities began in an ancient throat, flowed through ancient lips and were amplified by a modernly acoustic plastic pig.

The man straining to see over the hog-helmeted heckler looked down upon the press row, wanted to know what the hell I was looking at and chillingly assassinated the small of my back with a high-velocity ice missile.

The editor of The Northwest Arkansas Times leaned 20 degrees to his right (any more would have placed him in my target zone) and, in a voice strangely reminiscent of Romans, Christians and Lions, said, "Welcome to Barnhill Arena."

And that was before the game even started.

Fayetteville, mountain home of the University of Arkansas, has become a living legend in the sports world as the epitome of the "homecourt advantage." Hogs in all shapes and sizes (some of them human) come down from the hills of the Ozarks to see their beloved Razorbacks play basketball.

They bring with them their pig hats, red sweatshirts and plenty of easily propelled potential projectiles.

They chant such intricate witticisms as "Go Hogs Go," and "Soooooo, Pig."

And they are masterminded by a certified pork psychologist, Razorback Basketball Coach Eddie Sutton.

"I think it's important for the crowd to get into the game," Sutton, a student of crowd psychology, has claimed on several occasions.

The problem with that philoso-

BRANDON BERRY
Sports Writer

phy, in Arkansas at least, is that the crowd actually does get into the game.

If they have good aim, that is. "This was as good as I have ever seen this crowd," Texas A&M Basketball Coach Shelby Metcalf said following a 58-53 loss to the Hogs last Friday. "They didn't throw anything (or very much), and they didn't really threaten anybody."

"One time a few years ago we had to pick up our chairs and move out onto the court during a time-out because they wouldn't leave us alone. They're a tough crowd, no doubt about it."

118 victories against seven defeats (the Hogs' record since Sutton set up practice in 1974) doesn't really leave very much doubt at all. The Hogs just don't lose in their Barnhill wallow, located just up the hill from the abortion clinic and "Clyde's Hog Kuntry Kwisne."

And the referees are by far the most quoted reason as to why the Razorbacks become Super Piggies in their kryptonite Ozark setting.

"The Los Angeles Lakers would lose here if (Arkansas) had their officials," A&M forward Winston Crite said.

Probably not, but you can bet Kareem would foul out of the

game. Or maybe the lights would go out.

"I don't know why I should get frustrated, because it's always something up here," Metcalf said. "One time the lights went out, another time it's a charge on a guy at the buzzer. Maybe that's how come the crowd was so nice tonight; they knew that if things got really bad they could still turn off the lights."

They rarely need to turn off anything but the electronic tally board that keeps count of their opponents' personal fouls. It overheats.

Kenny Brown, the A&M leading scorer who earned the nickname "Downtown" by shooting from long range, mysteriously became an aggressive inside force against the Razorbacks. Just ask the officials who gave Brown his fifth personal foul with two minutes left in the game, thereby disqualifying him for the first time this season.

Barnhill truly is a tough place to play, especially if you're sitting on the bench.

"Arkansas really isn't that good of a team," Crite said. "We beat ourselves more than they beat us. But they always seem to win; every year they win a lot of games, especially at home."

Maybe because they're afraid to face 9,000 screaming meemies with the social graces of Jethro Clampett when they lose.

Everyone else sure is.

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by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



New Broadsider bat a 'hit'

Associated Press

CORPUS CHRISTI — Remember when you were a kid and one of the chuckle lines by baseball game hecklers to a frustrated batter was "Get an ironing board!"?

Softball players will be able to do something like that beginning this season.

The unique Broadsider bat, made with a triangular barrel the inventor says "provides the biggest 'sweet spot' of any bat made," has been approved for full use in a vote of the council of the Amateur Softball Association at its convention here recently.

Approval of the bat, designed and manufactured by New York architect Bill Merritt, made it legal for all levels of play, both slow pitch and fast pitch.

Merritt, obviously pleased with the ASA action, was uncertain how long it would take his company to gear up manufacture of the bats for the anticipated increase in demand. The bat previously had been approved by the United States Slo-pitch Softball Association (USS-SA) and the NCAA for its women's program.

Merritt developed the bat from

his architectural and engineering background to try to help what had been, graciously put, his modest showing in softball in New York City.

"I was playing in a pickup game with some friends and just couldn't hit the ball," Merritt explained. "I was at bat three times and popped up all three times. I was somewhat annoyed. I played a lot of tennis and I've been active athletically so I figured it couldn't be me, it must be something else."

From that point, Merritt's design background began to focus on the bat and, adapting the principle used in manufacture of a tennis racket, particularly the oversized Prince model, he began to concoct what became the Broadsider.

"I had access to a metal fabricating shop and its lathes and other equipment so I started experimenting," Merritt said. "I thought of the Prince, but if you make a wooden bat bigger, you might get one that weighs 20 pounds."

The first few he manufactured he used in playground games with friends and found himself being so successful, he decided to try to sell

his idea to an organized program. When he went on a vacation trip to San Francisco, he made a point to visit with California-Berkely women's softball coach Donna Terry.

"I originally had intended the bat only for the recreational player but Coach Terry liked it so much she prompted me to go to other sports organizations with it," Merritt said.

Terry called the bat "the most effectively constructed bat that I have ever used," and it was dubbed "the first innovation in the equipment used in the sport in the past 40-50 years," by Lynn Ebert, professor of engineering and sports mechanics at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.

Only a few thousand models of the bat, the wooden version of which is made of northern white ash, are available, but Merritt leaves no doubt the plants in Michigan and New Jersey which produce the Broadsider could tool up to fill the demand.

As Merritt says, "Imagine trying to hit a golf ball with a round golf club or a nail with a round hammer. Does it make any more sense to hit a softball with a round bat?"

Wolfpack's Washburn to serve three days in jail

Associated Press

RALEIGH — North Carolina State University basketball standout Chris Washburn pleaded guilty Monday to three charges stemming from the theft of stereo equipment and was ordered to serve three days in jail later this year.

"Yes sir," Washburn said when asked by the judge if he was guilty of the charges.

There was no immediate comment on Washburn's status from North Carolina State. Wolfpack Basketball Coach Jim Valvano couldn't be reached immediately for comment.

The pleas resulted from an agreement between Wake County District Attorney Randolph Riley and defense lawyers Wade-Smith and Dan Blue, both of Raleigh.

Washburn, 19, a freshman center from Hickory, was arrested Dec. 21. His attorneys said at a hearing Jan. 8 in Wake County District Court that Washburn took \$800 worth of stereo equipment from another athlete's room as a prank.

Riley said last month that evidence gathered by police showed Washburn "intended to take (the stereo) and, furthermore, intended to keep it."

Washburn-told police he took the equipment from the room of William West and Jeffrey Davis, both sophomores on the North Carolina State University football team, but said he was going to return it.

The 6-foot-11 Washburn, a top national recruit a year ago, was a starter for the Wolfpack team before

his arrest. Coach Jim Valvano said after the arrest Washburn was dismissed from the team and declined to say whether he would reinstate Washburn.

Wake County Superior Court Judge Milton Reid sentenced Washburn to six years suspended for five years as part of the plea agreement. The judge ordered Washburn to

serve three days from Dec. 19-21. Washburn was charged last Dec. 21. Last Sept. 20, Washburn was found guilty of assault on a female, given a 30-day suspended sentence and fined \$25 and court costs.

Washburn pleaded guilty to two charges of breaking and entering and a third charge of taking the equipment with "fraudulent intent."

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