

attention!!

The art of cringing

You never really learn to cringe until you work on the sports desk.

Oh sure, the amateurs may do pretty well when, say, Joe Theismann has an extra knee added to his leg courtesy of Lawrence Taylor. But to fully exploit the gamut of emotions and expressions involved with cringing, one must be fully versed on the wide variety of possibilities on the menu. And that requires time with the writers, coaches and jocks.

Let me elaborate.

There's Number 1: Animated Grimace. The eyes close as facial muscles pull the corners of the eyes upward. Wrinkles form on the brow. The head tilts slightly to the right and recoils slightly. The tendons of the neck and jaw tighten and become slightly visible. The shoulders hunch slightly. A quick breath is held for a couple of seconds, then released as the complexion returns to normal with a couple of gentle shakes of the head.

This is the look one finds on the faces of those who root against Texas A&M when, for instance, Chet Brooks goes horizontal to flatten an airborne enemy receiver. Vicarious pain is the general concept. The common thought is, "I'm sure glad he plays for us," as well as, "I'm sure glad that wasn't me."

A sub-phenomenon of this is Number 1A: Animated Grimace with Cod-Liver Oil. Exaggerate all symptoms of Number 1 for a basic idea.

Number 2: The Excedrin Headache. The eyes close flat and the forehead wrinkles slightly in a look of complete emotionlessness as the body reclines and slouches. The emotion is expressed with the left hand, three fingers of which rest on the forehead while the thumb lodges itself beneath the left cheekbone.

Sports writers across the press box get this one when Jackie Sherrill refuses to change quarterbacks. "I can't believe it's Pavlas again." Or when the 27th attempt at a headline has also failed to fit. "I'm trying to be patient," is a frequent thought that enters the brain at this point.

Then there's Number 3: the Lemon Look. The neck tendons tighten and the eyes squint, as the mouth corners tilt slightly downward. Imagine drinking a bottle of A-1 and then looking in the mirror — that's the look.

This one is common in press boxes when scores are announced of games where a team did not cover the spread. Sports guys, thinking they know about the game, feel more comfortable betting on it, I guess. "Indiana did WHAT to Ohio State? Can't believe that (expletive deleted) conned me into that one."

On the other extreme there's Number 4: The Silent Scream. The eyes may close briefly, but no other outward signs appear. This is indicative of complete distaste, disbelief or boredom, and it only appears when one does not want to

show one's feelings.

For instance, Jackie Sherrill says, for the 86th time this year, "You have to remember, we're a young football team. We're going to make mistakes."

"Oh no, not again," thinks the humble writer, and scribbles away.

Or it could come when trying to take notes from a "poor quote." This is a person who, being inexperienced in the art of giving interviews, talks very quietly and quickly and says little, if anything, of any importance.

For example, Lance Pavlas: "wellitwasatoughgameandmyp laywasntuptoparbutyougotta



This week's attention!! photo was taken by Vinicio Murillo, a junior business administration major.

givethemcreditthey'reagreatteamandwe'llhavetoplaybetternexttimetowin." Honestly, that's what it's like.

Of course, once in the newsroom, all holds are barred. An exasperated editor might, for instance, cut loose with a Number 5: Primal Scream. The arms are pinched to the ribs, the eyes close tightly, the head rears back, and out of the throat leaps a gut-wrenching AAAAAUUGGGGHH!!! Just like Charlie Brown. This comes from editors who have a story that is not long enough to fit the hole for it to go in or who just deleted the only copy of a person's last name.

The more controlled members of the editing corps might choose instead Number 6: Focused Temporary Hatred. The chin is the key here, becoming prominent as the teeth clench tightly. The eyes flatten, fists clench tightly, and a quiet groan emanates from the throat with a slow exhale.

This is common among patient editors who hear a writer say, "I can't fill a hole that big," or "You mean, I was supposed to get quotes?"

Common thoughts that accompany this one include, "Kill him later — you're on deadline."

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Editor's Note: This attention!! page will be used each week as a forum for you, our readers. We encourage you to submit any original work that would be suitable for publication in At Ease.

Pictures should be black-and-white shots that are unique either in content, angle or technique. Columns, essays or poems should be no longer than 500 words. Please don't send us your gripes, complaints, or sermons on heavy-duty issues — send those to the Battalion's Opinion Page.

Don't forget to put your name and phone number on anything you send us. Then just drop it off at the Battalion, Room 216 of the Reed McDonald Building. Be sure to specify that it is for At Ease.