

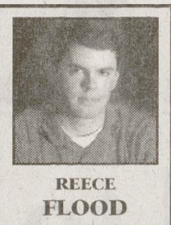
# SPORTS

THE BATTALION

## “Rags” to riches

### Preseason college football magazines are not worth buying

As summer draws to an end, signs of the upcoming college football season are starting to appear. Players are getting ready for practice, which will begin in the coming weeks, and coaches are studying game films and scouting reports.



REECE FLOOD

Because the first game of the college season will not be played until Aug. 26, fans are left searching for an outlet to satisfy their football cravings. Some turn to NFL preseason games, but for true die-hard college football fans, this is like going to the city park early Saturday morning to watch Junior run around with the other wannabe players in a Pop Warner game.

Weak and delirious from gridiron starvation, fans only have one place to turn — the preseason football magazine industry. These magazines start hitting the newsstands as early as June and offer little credible information about the upcoming season.

Stories about spring football practices and injuries that occurred nearly four months ago are just about the only reasons for someone to spend money on these magazines. Yet people will spend between \$6 and \$10 to get this virtually useless information.

One reason is for the “season preview.” Readers eagerly flip through the pages to see what a so-called “expert” has to say about their favorite teams. Writers fill pages with fluff about how each team will fare against its conference rivals. Some even go on to include a season’s-end record for each team — all before the first kickoff.

It is ridiculous for someone to presume to know the outcomes of games before they are played. If these “experts” were so knowledgeable about the future, they would be living the high life in Vegas, not writing for a summertime rag.

But preseason magazines have more to offer than that. Readers can look to see what the coach

has to say about a team’s chances in the upcoming season. To no one’s surprise, politically correct phrases such as “We like our chances” and “Things are looking up this year” run rampant in preseason stories.

Coaches should say what they really think for once: “Man, this is going to be a long year. I just hope I don’t get fired.”

The concept of a preseason poll is completely ridiculous. Polls, official or unofficial, should not be released until sometime after the third week of the season. Nearly every year, a team is placed at the top of the poll only to prove the inadequacies of the pollsters once the season begins.

The University of Arizona was last year’s poll debacle. Picked in the top 5, the Wildcats lost a highly publicized opening game against Penn State University 41-7 and went on to end the season 6-6, with only three conference wins.

And there is the University of Notre Dame, which, regardless of players, schedule or personnel, will always be placed in the preseason top 25.

The AP and Coaches Polls should not be released until teams have a chance to prove themselves on the field. Instead of basing their selections on reputation and public-relations hype, pollsters should make judgments about the top 25 teams in the nation based on performance and game execution.

Despite all the worthless reporting and preseason prognostications, these preseason magazines do have some redeeming qualities. Occasionally, one can find an interesting feature story and several high-quality photos. That does not make up for the football rhetoric found in each of these magazines. Readers should not waste their money on this dribble.

Still, avid football fans rush to the bookstores and newsstands and plunk down money for a quick fix every year.

Here is a little experiment for readers to try — hang on to this year’s preseason magazines until December and then compare the real results to what the “experts” predicted. Maybe this will save fans some money next summer.

Reece Flood is a senior journalism major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

After getting the “in-depth” scoop, readers can turn to the ever-popular preseason poll. Each magazine’s poll is in no way official. It is merely an editor’s opinion and could easily be replaced with Joe Blow’s version without anyone noticing a difference.

## Duncan might not play with U.S. team

Already short of big men, the U.S. Olympic men’s basketball team now has a big problem: Tim Duncan might not be able to play.

Duncan only recently began rehabilitating his left knee after undergoing surgery May 24 to repair torn cartilage.

“There’s a question of whether he’ll be ready by the time the Olympic training camp opens,” USA Basketball president Russ Granik said Tuesday.

Duncan originally expected to be recovered in time for the start of Olympic training camp on Aug. 25, but he recently informed USA Basketball he might not be able to play.

“We had a conversation, and we agreed to have another conversation in the next couple of days,” said New Jersey Nets president Rod Thorn, who also serves as chairman of the selection committee for the U.S. team.

“There’s a possibility he may not be able to play, but as of now he’s still on the team,” Thorn said.

If Duncan is unable to play, it would leave the U.S. team with a serious shortage of big men. There is only one center, Alonzo Mourning, on the roster, and the only other players who can play power forward are Vin Baker, Kevin Garnett and Shareef Abdur-Rahim.

The logical choice to replace Duncan would be Shaquille O’Neal, but he has been unwavering in his stance that he does not wish to play for the Olympic team this summer.

O’Neal’s agent, Leonard Arman, could not immediately be reached for comment Tuesday.

Other possible choices — assuming the selection committee would go after another big man — include Antonio McDyess of Denver, Daniel Robinson of San Antonio and Karl Malone of Utah.

The Olympic roster does not have to be finalized until Sept. 15, two days before the United States plays its first game against China, although the selection committee would replace Duncan well before that date if he

is unable to play.

“As far as I know, he hasn’t made a final decision yet,” Granik said. “We’ll just have to wait and see.”

Duncan is expected to re-sign with the San Antonio Spurs in the next few days. Duncan, a free agent, turned down an offer from the Orlando Magic in favor of signing a three-year deal with the Spurs.

The 24-year-old forward led the Spurs to their only NBA title in 1999, but missed last season’s playoffs with an injured left knee.

“There’s a question of whether he’ll be ready by the time the Olympic training camp opens.”

— Russ Granik  
USA Basketball president

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