



It's all a hype

I was going to write a nice story about John Drew. He is the 20-year-old hardship case drafted by the Atlanta Hawks and because of hustle, desire and instinct is the most outstanding newcomer to the NBA. But I've had enough of that shit.

A most disillusioning experience finally pried my eyes open to the reality of the world of professional sports — a realization that has been in the back of my mind since I first entered a locker room to cover a game story. That is, that it's all a hype. The players

By DAVE BRAFF
Of the Emerald

are just ordinary men — bigger and stronger — but in most other respects just ordinary guys. It is the job of the press to make living legends out of them.

Sometimes things get twisted; people can no longer play their proper roles. Recently we have seen that the Gospel According to Lombardi — winning isn't everything, it's the only thing — has produced a few aberrations. Norm Van Brocklin challenged a writer to go a few rounds. Woody Hayes did the same and supposedly slugged a student after the Michigan State game.

These unfortunate incidents provoked Bob Robinson of the *Oregonian* to print an open letter to Hayes — from the safe distance of Portland — which castigated Hayes for his treatment of the press and called him a bully for threatening sports writers.

But there was no report in the *Oregonian* that John Johnson of the Portland Trail Blazers threatened to kick the ass of this reporter in the locker room after the Atlanta game last Thursday.

Johnson was enraged because I had quoted him (accurately, despite his fervent denials) using the

word "motherfucker." In doing this I committed a sports writing faux pas. I tarnished the athlete's image.

I portrayed him as a human being. No matter how much league management — and players themselves — try to cover it up, it is true that professional athletes make mortal mistakes. They swear, they drink, some even take drugs.

But sports writers are expected to maintain the hero image of the athlete. They clean up their grammar, (do you think that they all speak in such neatly constructed sentences?), omit profanity, and, in general, make them look like fine upstanding members of the community. This rule was harshly expressed by Evel Knievel at Twin Falls, "If anybody doesn't wanna help me, I'll go after them and throw them out."

The athlete and the daily reporter share a mutually parasitical relationship. One helps the other climb the ladder to success. The star needs the print and the writer must get "colorful quotes" to please his editor.

As an *Emerald* reporter — an infrequent guest of the Trail Blazers — I did not feel shackled to this system. I do not work with these people every day, and after all, who reads the *Emerald*?

Well, through a series of strange coincidences, John Johnson read my story, in which he believes he was slandered. In his eyes I was a loathsome creature, one of the "five per cent of the press" who Knievel thinks to be degenerate.

It is ironic that I was a big fan of John Johnson. The story centered on his accomplishments and — in all honesty — praised him obsequiously. I was playing the game, cultivating a working relationship with the star. Perhaps I was playing a bit too loosely for JJ's liking.

But this is a familiar theme. Powerful men are forever threatening the press. Only within the last two years has the media recovered from the near fatal blows delivered by Nixon-Agnew. But can the audacity and perseverance that unravelled Watergate find a place in sports reporting?

The idea of perpetrating false hero myths lies at the heart of the deceptiveness of our society. Will the time come when we can believe what we read in a newspaper? In political journalism progress has been made. In sports — with a few rare exceptions — no ground has been broken.

Stickers to regionals

By JEFF NIELSON
Of the Emerald

The Oregon women's field hockey team, coming off a highly successful season with one defeat, will finish their 1974 season this weekend when they travel to Ellensburg, Wash., for the Northwest College Women's Sports Association (NCWSA) field hockey tournament.

To the Duck women, this year's tournament holds a special meaning. Although the NCWSA tournament is now the only opportunity for post season play, next year holds the promise of a national field hockey tournament — and a chance for Oregon to go as the Northwest team entry.

To head coach Becky Sisley, competing at Ellensburg will play a big part in next season's action.

"In order to budget for the nationals next year, we have to prove to the athletic department that we have a team worth budgeting for," said Sisley. "This means making a good showing at Ellensburg. There will be only one team from the Northwest going to nationals next season, and the girls know they're fighting right now for that spot."

According to team captain Diane Smith, however, competition under pressure is the Duck's best competition.

"The Ellensburg tournament is great for us," says Smith, "because we always have competition that we never get in Oregon. The Canadian teams are always good, and Washington State is tough. Mainly, though, we're just trying to prove that we can compete with out-of-Oregon schools."

The Ducks have a strong defense as their biggest asset. With a backfield that allowed opponents less than 15 goals all season, Sisley is looking for an improvement over last year's contest, when Oregon won one game, lost two and tied one.

There is also one factor that might hurt the Oregon women. Stacey Mellum, one of the team's offensive leaders, was forced to stay behind in Eugene because of family illness. If the situation is improved Saturday, Mellum will fly to Ellensburg in time for the starting game with Central Washington State College.

"I think it'll really hurt us if Stacey doesn't make it," said Sisley. "Not only is she a great morale builder, but she's instrumental in our front line play."

But, obstacles or not, Sisley is determined to win. "This is live or die for us," said Sisley. "and we really want to go next year."

sports

Landers Cowan: took by the Storm

By DAVE BUSHNELL
Of the Emerald

The rain is here, but the Storm is gone.

So it is with the World Football League's team in Portland. With its collapse go the jobs of two former University of Oregon Athletic Department employees, Bill Landers and Hal Cowan.

Landers, who was in charge of public relations for the AD, joined the Storm early last June as director of promotions and ticket sales.

Cowan was the sports information director at Oregon before joining the new franchise in Portland as their publicity director.

Both gave up good jobs at Oregon in order to pursue the

challenges and the financial rewards that accompany professional sports. But now the Storm is on the verge of non-existence and Landers and Cowan, as well as the players and coaches, have gone over two months without a paycheck.

"The last time I got paid was September 15," said Landers, who has officially quit the organization as of November 10. "I don't regret that I made the move. I didn't come up here with any rose-colored glasses on. It's kind of like a poker game, you know the stakes when you sit down at the table, it's just a gamble I took. But I don't regret making the move."

"Right now I'm doing a little freelance writing and looking for a job in the public relations field mostly," Landers said. "We're

just living from month to month. Not getting paid for two months cut into our savings, but we'll survive."

Cowan doesn't regret the move either, but he too is looking for work. "I'm looking for a job—in public relations, writing for a newspaper as an SID in the pros or college, it doesn't matter. I guess I'd prefer the pros because the money is better but if Oregon offered me a job I wouldn't hesitate to jump at it."

The Storm has been plagued by financial troubles throughout its brief existence and candor has not been Storm owner Bob Harris' strong point in dealing with the problem. "We were lied to a whole lot, lied to for the last eight weeks," said Cowan bitterly.

"We were told after the game on TV at Shreveport (LA.) that

\$600,000 would be in the bank and we would all get paid when we got back. We got home and found out that there was no money and that the game with Florida was moved from Portland. (The Florida-Portland game was scheduled to be played in Portland but was changed to Florida at the last minute.) The Florida game broke our back. It was the ultimate lie by Harris."

Throughout the season Harris has expressed his disappointment with the attendance and the lack of local support. "The attendance was good, about what the people in the office expected," said Cowan. "I think Harris hurt us more than any one else with his negative comments. Harris was the only one who was bitching and he really didn't understand the situation."

While Cowan feels resentment toward the owner, Landers holds no hard feelings. "I've never held any great resentment toward Bob. Lord knows he has put enough of his own money into the team."

If the WFL is in existence next year, Landers and Cowan are betting Portland won't be a part of it.

"I think it looks a little bleak for Portland," chuckled Landers as he acknowledged his understatement. "I give it less than 50 per cent that the WFL will be around next year. I think that a merger with the Canadian Football League would be a real possibility."

"It's a long shot that the WFL will be around next year," Cowan commented. "And for Portland...only miracles could save it."

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