

Basketball will never be the same again

If you haven't taken the opportunity to watch the U.S. Men's Olympic Basketball Team in action, you've missed history in the making. The greatest team of professional athletes ever assembled is currently wreaking havoc on a group of woefully mismatched national teams, and the only point of contention is whether or not the margin of victory will exceed 100 points.

Watching the Globetrotteresque shenanigans of Michael, Magic, Clyde, et al, the initial sense of awe is quickly replaced by boredom and pity. There is simply no competition. And isn't that what the Olympics are supposed to be about?

The NBA game is exciting because every couple of minutes, a great looking play occurs, bringing the crowd to its feet (or silencing it) and increasing the adrenalin flow of the players. What the U.S. team is subjecting its opponents (and spectators) to is forty minutes of highlight film. Much like the slam-dunk competition during the All-Star break has become routine (how many ways can you stuff a ball through a hoop?), so will the U.S. Dream Team.

In fact, the NBA may actually suffer next season. Fans will have grown accustomed to super-basketball, and the real thing could lose its appeal.

The U.S. team is an over-reaction to the fact that foreign players are getting as good as our college players, and that this is somehow a threat to the United States' pre-eminence over the game.

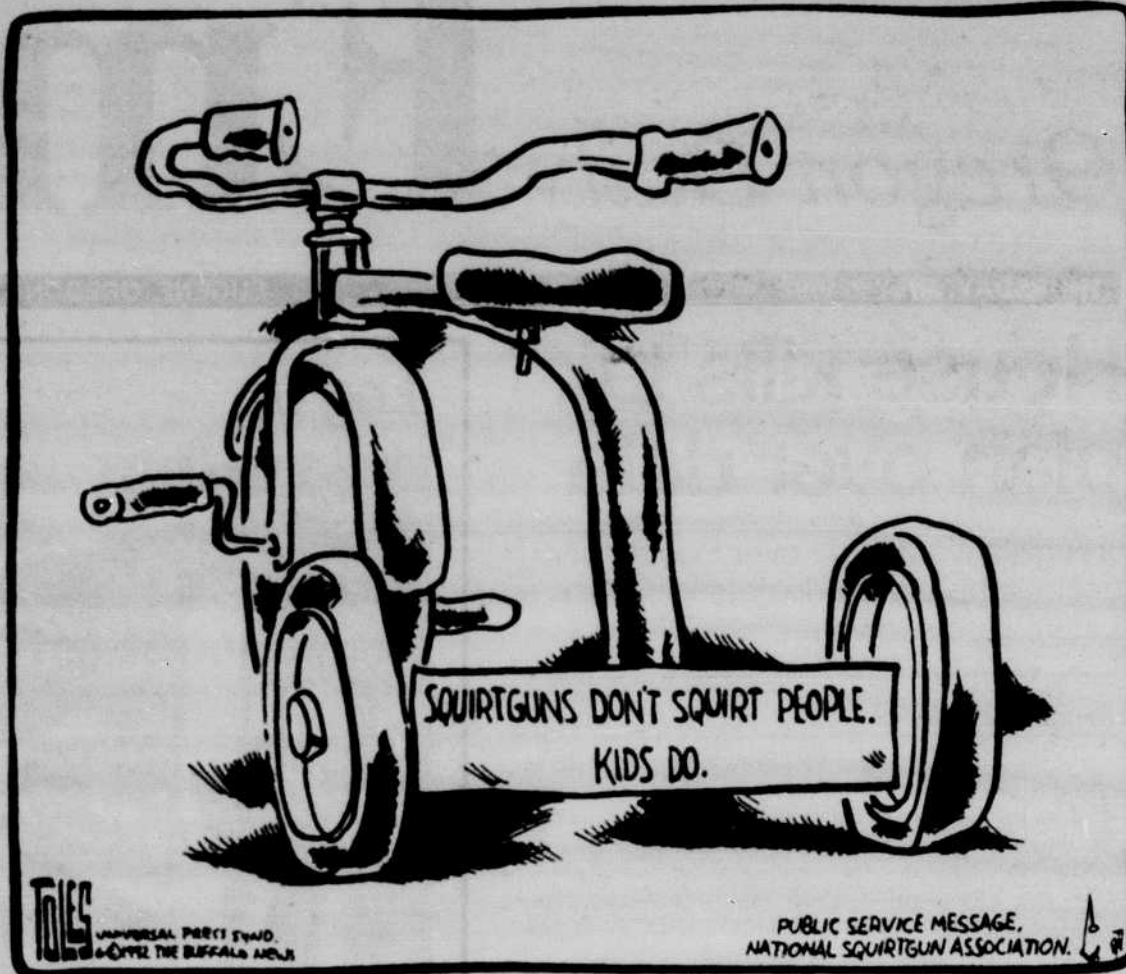
Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Most international players are well-paid professionals (read: government subsidized) yet retain amateur status. That after 100 years of trying, these players can beat a hastily assembled group of 18-21 year olds should alarm no one.

FIBA, basketball's international organization, saw the opportunity to continue improving only if NBA players competed. Whether the Dream Team was what FIBA had in mind is uncertain. The ideal arrangement would have been at least a 50-50 split between pros and collegians. Instead, the U.S. sent 11 players whose combined salaries probably exceed the GNP's of many of the countries against whom they are competing.

The Dream Team could just as easily win with three players on the floor as they do with five, so why not give those surplus positions to a collegian. Hopefully, the 1996 Games will see the return of college players in red, white and blue, along with a smattering of pros (just in case).

But for now, with an average margin of victory of 61 points over three games, the novelty and excitement of Team USA will fade nearly as quickly as its opposition.



LETTERS

Wake up call

A Vancouver-based white supremacist group distributes hate-flyers to "recruit new members" from our area (*Register-Guard*, June 4). Surprised? America's underbelly heard the clear invitation when Oregon Citizens Alliance Measure 20-08 passed in Springfield.

It's also served to wake up others who had told me that my concerns about the OCA were unfounded, that the OCA was too "extremist," "too unbelievable." These same people are now involved in preventing (the) further spread of OCA (sponsored) oppressive measures in our state. The OCA got a toehold in Springfield. In a hard-pressed economy, people want to kick anything at all ... including fellow human beings. So now the OCA aims at placing an even harsher discriminatory measure on the state ballot this November. Pay attention to the Springfield wake up call. Share with friends and neighbors the message that there's no room for hate in, at least, the rest of our state.

Springfield has my sympathy and will continue to have my business. Their Chamber of Commerce, representing 550 businesses, solidly opposed OCA Measure 20-08 with only one business objecting. These businesses deserve our patronage. I'll continue to support those merchants who did not support hate.

Springfield is a town that needs compassion and understanding.

Carol Berg
Eugene

of all, and to live lives of love and obedience as disciples.

Can't fool God

I would like to correct a misconception about Christianity conveyed in Angie Froom's letter (*ODE*, June 23). Her impression seemed to be that Christians can commit crimes and sins and still be admitted to heaven, regardless of their acts. This implication that our actions are irrelevant to God is incorrect.

A primary thesis of the Bible is that it is people's sinful acts that separate us from God, even though we all seem to have at least some redeeming qualities. Just as a single criminal act in a normally law-abiding life warrants legal punishment, so do sins against God warrant His punishment, even sins committed in a life normally characterized by goodness.

The great news of the bible is that God freely extends pardons to all who seek his forgiveness and turn away from their sinful ways. Such people are true Christians, and they will be the ones populating heaven. The Bible is equally clear that those who continue to practice sinfulness, e.g. lying and murdering, have no place in heaven and will receive just recompense for their deeds. These principles apply to all, regardless of one's profession or faith.

The point of life is not to see how much one can "get away with" and still get into heaven. God is not fooled. The point is to acknowledge God as master

Kyle Gee
Chemistry

God is for all

I'm afraid Angie Froom (*ODE*, June 23) is right. There are some very unsavory characters on their way to Heaven. I was as guilty as any of them, undeserving of the promise of salvation. But I have it because of the sacrifice of Jesus.

Eternal destiny is not a matter of degrees. Either you are bound for glory or you aren't. And no one, regardless of how fine a life they lead, is entitled to membership if they have unforgiven sin in their life. And all have sinned. The only relevant question is whether it has been forgiven. I certainly had fallen short, and exempted myself from fellowship with God. But Jesus loved me enough to pay my debt. He continues to forgive my sins when I fail. All I did was choose to believe his promises.

God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is not democratic, swayed by public opinion, or afraid of ridicule. He is not God just to please Angie Froom. Or me. But He is God. And He does not give partial credit. Only his son has the answer.

Ken Thomas
Eugene

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