

Shreveport not pretty sight for bowl game



From the Sidelines
Dave Charbonneau

SHREVEPORT, La.—“WELCOME WAKE FOREST AND OREGON STATE FANS.”

Believe it or not, that was what the bulletin board read in the lobby of the hotel where I was staying for the Independence Bowl.

That was only the beginning. Anyone who argues that the bowl system should stay the way it is obviously has never been to Shreveport.

Sure, the people of this run-down city do their best to provide that infamous “Southern hospitality,” and the cajun food is good, but the fact that this city hosts a bowl game is a little embarrassing.

To get a better feel of what the Independence Bowl is like, imagine moving Parker Stadi-

um to Springfield and inviting two barely-above-500 teams to play in a bowl game there every New Year's Eve. (Of course, the name of the bowl would have been changed to something like the Homophobic Bowl.)

Bossier City, which was where I stayed, along with much of the media, looked like LA after the riots. There were literally blocks of gutted-out buildings that used to be small businesses.

Directly across from Independence Stadium is a real nice refinery piping smoke and dust into the air. One Duck booster told me she actually saw a man peddling drugs in broad daylight on a corner in Shreveport.

A cab driver in the city told me the economy is so bad in Shreveport that many residents can't even afford a ticket to the game.

“This city is in terrible shape economically,” he said. “People get so excited about this game because it gives our economy a little kick in the butt, even if it is for just a few days.”

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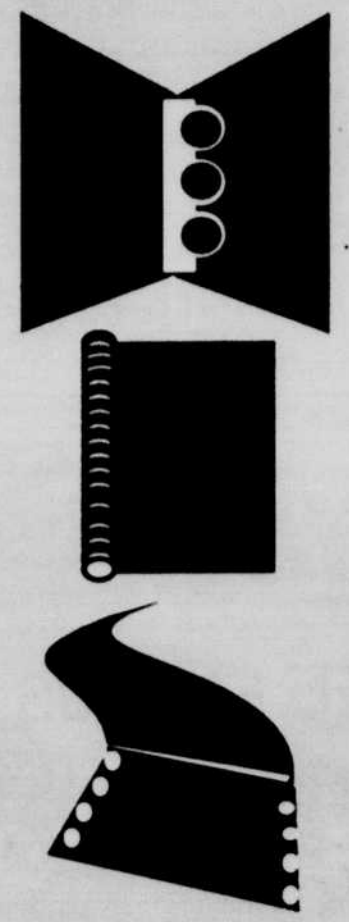
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