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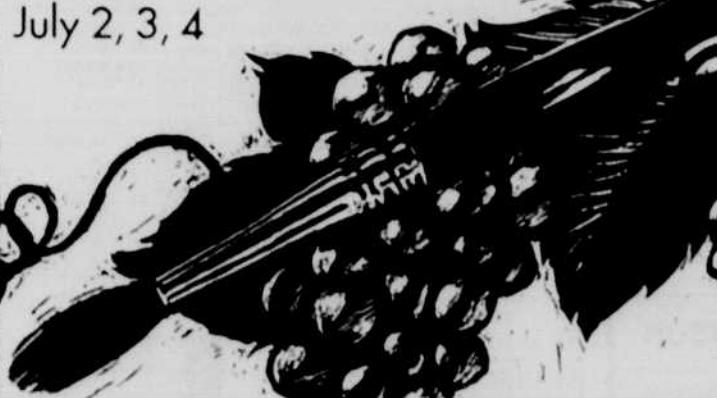
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Carlesimo may get Blazer blood flowing

First O.J., now P.J. Whatever happened to normal guy names like Frank, Bob or Dick. I don't know about anyone else, but I always thought that PJs were a cute abbreviation for my mom invented for my Spider-Man pajamas. I guess it's the 1990s and a man can be named P.J. if he so pleases.

This two letter man that I speak of is P.J. Carlesimo, the new head coach of the Portland Trail Blazers (let me tell you, it's quite refreshing to write something good about the Blazers as it has been a while).

I say good, because at worst, this move is a risk that at least gets the Blazer-faithful blood flowing again. At best, it could finally bring an NBA championship back to Portland.

Oh sure, Carlesimo could fail horribly. After all, he has no previous NBA experience other than being an assistant coach for the Olympic "Dream Team" in 1992, and his winning percentage in college is just slightly over .500. He did, however, take his Seton Hall Pirates to the NCAA tournament six of the last seven years including the championship game in 1989 where they barely lost to Michigan in overtime.

While it is impossible to predict just how Carlesimo will do on the NBA level, smart people will bet on his success.

Carlesimo is generally considered a likable guy off the court and an intense competitor on the court. He also brings some much needed charisma to the Blazers, something definitely lacking under Rick Adelman (heck, even Charles Barkley likes Carlesimo).

There is also a lot to be said for a fresh face, especially in the NBA. The Blazers could have adopted the dreaded Sacramento Kings/ Los Angeles Clippers philosophy and hired some washed up, rehased NBA relic — oh, I mean coach — (Gene



CHRIS METZ

Shue and Dick Motta). Instead the Blazers went out and pursued top notch college coaches. Owner Paul Allen made it no secret that he was willing to pay top dollar to the right man.

Sure, it would have been nice to have landed a Mike Krzyzewski or John Thompson, but if there is one thing Mick Jagger and I have learned in this life, it is that you can't always get what you want.

Carlesimo's biggest challenge will be adapting his intense, disciplinary style to the ice-show-attending, practice-skipping Blazers, a team more famous for their off-the-court entertainment options than their spirited play on the court.

Critics have already jumped out and scoffed at the choice of Carlesimo to head the Blazers, saying that there is no way his tough stance will float in this, the modern age of multi-million dollar professional basketball players.

Maybe it is impossible to transform a bunch of selfish individuals into a cohesive, winning basketball team, but I'll give old P.J. a little credit. He knows the obstacles that stand in front of him.

So here they are, the top 10 things that Blazer fans can expect P.J. Carlesimo to do to instill a new feeling of youthful exuberance and team unity into the Blazers.

Drum roll please.

10. Make a trade. Yeah, right!

9. Mandatory sleepovers at Clyde Drexler's house, complete with pin-the-tail-on-the-Duck-

'Sure, it would have been nice to have landed a Mike Krzyzewski or John Thompson, but if there is one thing Mick Jagger and I have learned in this life, it is that you can't always get what you want.'

worth (a target big enough for even Harvey Grant to hit).

8. Three words - Snuggles for Dudley.

7. Adopt Barney as team mascot; team colors are now purple and green.

6. Blazer Girls out, Up With People in.

5. No more "Star Spangled Banner." The Pledge of Allegiance is much easier to remember.

4. Starting lineup determined by alphabetical order. Sorry Tracy Murray, you still can't play.

3. If they do win it all, team instructed to say "We're goin' to Wunderland."

2. No more black-then-white mid-season shoe controversy. P.J. is taking the whole gang down to a Volume Shoe Store where you get a lot of shoe for a little money. Why pay more?

1. The No. 1 thing P.J. Carlesimo will do to install a new feeling of youthful exuberance and team unity into the Blazers: a new team motto. "One guy gets a tattoo of himself on his arm, we all get tattoos of ourselves on our arms."

Chris Metz will be sports editor for the Emerald next fall.

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