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SPORTS

Media keeps hurling a curve

By J. Daniel Pierson

Baseball is not in serious trouble, regardless of what the media says.

L.A. Times columnist Jim Murray compared baseball fans to battered wives, who keep coming back to the source of their misery after they should have grabbed their coats and walked away years ago.

ESPN is always making references to what they claim is obvious fan distaste with the direction of the game, and what the national pastime should do to regain its footing in the American sports market.

When Jeff Conine received the MVP Trophy after this year's All-Star Game, an ABC interviewer concluded her segment with, "Thanks Jeff, this will be good for Major League Baseball." Her comments were not only broadcast to millions of viewers worldwide, but also over the public address system at the stadium.

But while the media insists something is terribly wrong with the grand old game, the actions of fans, and player and team performances, seem to suggest otherwise.

Yes, average attendance has

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fallen 20 percent compared to the 1994 season. But on the flip-side of that statistic, 80 percent of the fans have returned and continue to attend games on a regular basis. Just look at the Cleveland Indians or Colorado Rockies; both teams have sold out nearly every home game this season.

So what if fan favorites Ken Griffey Jr. and Matt Williams have been sidelined for most of the season with injuries?

Need someone to grab the fans' attention?

How about Los Angeles Dodgers rookie pitcher Hideo Nomo? Not only has he thrown 119 strikeouts in 90 innings pitched, he's the first Japanese-born player in the majors in more than 30 years.

Need to generate excitement in major league cities to hold fan interest?

A new round of playoffs was

added last year, and come October baseball fans will finally get to see how it works. It seems to be living up to its intended purpose. At the All-Star break 12 teams were within eight games of first place.

So quit writing your analogies, Jim Murray, and stop broadcasting cynical views, ESPN. Use your pens and satellites for something positive. Baseball doesn't need a Babe Ruth or a Jackie Robinson to save itself and generate fan interest. What it needs is for the media to start looking at the game optimistically, as the fans, players and owners have been trying to do.

After all, Ken Griffey Jr. isn't going to be seen walking around city streets or eating in popular restaurants like Babe Ruth was. The only way people can get a sense of the game's personalities and inner workings is through media contact.

Baseball is not in trouble, and the fans aren't going anywhere. It just needs a little time to heal its black eye. So don't keep coloring it in with your professional pens.

J. Daniel Pierson is a guest columnist for the Emerald.

Ems outfielder earns batting award

Mark McTyre

Oregon Daily Emerald

After an outstanding week of baseball, Eugene Emeralds' right fielder Roosevelt Brown has been named the Northwest League Batter of the Week for his performance at the plate July 3-9, Howe Sportsdata announced earlier this week.

The 19-year-old from Vicksburg, Miss., batted at a .412 clip, going 7-17 in five games played. Brown hit two home runs, drove in five and scored six runs in helping the Ems along to a perfect 6-0 mark during the span. Brown nailed two doubles and

swiped two bases, as the third-year pro notched an .882 slugging percentage and a .500 on-base percentage in becoming the first Emerald to be honored by Howe this season.

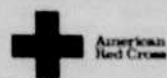
So far this season, Brown is hitting .359 in 14 games. His two home runs tie him for second on the team, and he also has chipped in with eight RBI and three stolen bases in addition to drawing six walks through July 10.

The Ems return to Civic Stadium Friday for a five-game home stand against their Northern Division foe, the Everett AquaSox.



EUGENE EMS

- Last game: Wednesday at Bellingham Giants (results not available)
- Streak: Two straight losses, as of Tuesday
- Next game: Tonight 7:05 pm at Bellingham
- Next home game: Fri., July 14, 7 p.m.
- Radio: KPNW 1120 AM



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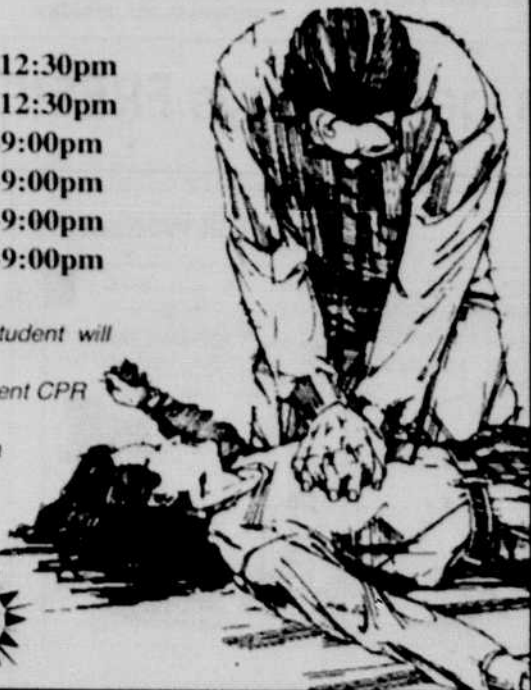
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Weds., July 12	CPR	8:30am-12:30pm
Tues., July 18	First Aid	5:00pm-9:00pm
Weds., July 19	CPR	5:00pm-9:00pm
Tues., July 25	CPR	5:00pm-9:00pm
Weds., July 26	First Aid	5:00pm-9:00pm

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