

Blazers' season one to be remembered, not forgotten



TWO MINUTES FOR CROSSCHECKING
PETER HOCKADAY

There's a new sport out there, and it's called the BB League for short. Some call it Blazer Bashing. Since the Portland Trail Blazers ended their season in not-so-spectacular fashion at the hands of the Los Angeles Lakers last weekend, Oregon's only professional sports team has been forced to endure more grief than Charlie Brown kicking a field goal. The Blazers have been called "a disgrace" by The Seattle Times and a "team of disarray" by the Oregonian. Blazer players have

been labeled "an embarrassment" by the Register-Guard and "a disappointment" by The Seattle Post-Intelligencer. The Oregonian's Web site even has a "Blazer Survivor" contest, where fans can vote off their least favorite player each week. Thursday's castaway was Shawn Kemp, the fourth player to be voted "off the team." With all that bashing going on, people forgot to step away for a second and realize the Blazers really aren't that bad. Why, just a year ago, the Blazers were the jewel in the Northwest sports crown. Blazer fever swept over the state like an Eastern Oregon brush fire as Portland marched through the playoffs. Was that so long ago? Were we so different then? The Blazers have made a few changes since then, to be sure. Add Kemp and Rod Strickland, subtract Brian Grant, Jermaine

O'Neal and Bonzi Wells because of injury, and the resulting mixture isn't too pretty. Those things can be remedied with the ease of a layup. Make a few more roster changes, keep the core group of players like Rasheed Wallace, Steve Smith, Arvydas Sabonis and Scottie Pippen, and the Blazers could contend with the Lakers again next year. What I'm saying is, don't let this team leave a bad taste in your mouth. Sure, Rasheed got kicked out of a few games. Yes, the players got in fights. Of course, the referees were a little harsh on this team of bad boys, er, men. What you saw this season was a team in a tornado, being sucked into a never-ending circle of bad sportsmanship and losing streaks. But there's always next season. If the fans get behind them, if their coach,

Mike Dunleavy, supports them and if their general manager, Bob Whitsitt, thinks with his head instead of his rear, the Blazers will ignite the Fever once more. At last Sunday's Blazers-Lakers game, the final contest in the forgettable 2000-01 Blazers campaign, a fan toted a sign that said "Trade Whitsitt," in full view of the Portland GM. In a now-infamous incident, the woman and her boyfriend's son were removed from the game by Rose Garden security guards. That woman was wrong. The Blazers don't need to trade Whitsitt. They need to trade attitudes. They need to trade some personnel, and they need to trade reputations. Maybe then the bashing will stop, and next year the Blazers can trade a first-round exit for the NBA Championship that has been so close in the past. Peter Hockaday is a sports reporter for the Emerald. He can be reached at phockaday@yahoo.com.

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black
TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (May 7). First, hammer out an agreement and make solid plans. You'll need a partner's help to do this. It's hard to see eye to eye in May. An influx of ideas and money helps in June. In July, education is what you need. In August, rest and think things over. Compromise in September, and make lists in October. November is for commitments and challenges. For starters, face your own worst fears. They'll seem less scary by December and downright comical by February. In April, reward yourself for a job well done.
To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.
ARIES (March 21-April 19) — Today is an 4 — A scheme you've carefully devised could have a major flaw. It won't work as planned, through no fault of your own. The time is just not right for action yet. Let it wait a day longer and see what develops. You might be pleasantly surprised.
TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — Today is a 6 — Don't get into an argument with your partner or mate. The two of you need to join forces. You have a chance to broker a pretty good deal, but not on your own. United, your point of view will triumph. Otherwise, forget it.
GEMINI (May 21-June 21) — Today is a 5 — It may feel as if you're working too hard and not getting enough in return. That could be true, but don't make too big a deal of it. This is just part of growing up and getting the experience to move on.
CANCER (June 22-July 22) — Today is an 8 — Leave your wallet in your pocket. You've got what you need: friends, family, love and respect. If there's something you can't afford yet, don't worry. You'll eventually get that, too.
LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) — Today is a 6 — There are lots of tasks on your lists, but there's still time to get organized. A little extra planning now will save time and money later. Get input from the people who will be affected by the actions you're about to take. They'll love

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