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Hurricane: Games at LSU not selling well

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 permanently. It makes too much sense to move elsewhere, whether it's San Antonio or Los Angeles, instead of going back to New Orleans. Even a recent report of playing the 2006 season at Louisiana State University has a temporary feel.

It doesn't help that ticket sales for the four games at LSU have been slow. Only 30,000 out of a possible 79,000 seats have been sold for the Saints' first game at LSU against the Miami Dolphins and ex-LSU coach Nick Saban.

The Hornets had reasons to move other than Katrina. They struggled recently with attendance figures among the lowest in the NBA. The company was fined \$8 million after reporting inflated ticket sales when it was making its move from

Charlotte, N.C., to New Orleans. When the Hornets called Charlotte home, they sold out 364 consecutive games starting in 1988.

Owner George Shinn, whose legal problems with the city turned off fans, eventually decided to move the team to New Orleans, where they haven't done much better. Last season's average attendance of 14,221 was last in the league.

Recently, the Hornets have fought with city leaders over funding for a new downtown practice facility.

Shinn, not surprisingly, is praising Oklahoma City, where the Hornets will play 35 home games this season.

"To me it just mirrored what went on in Charlotte where we had such success," Shinn said of the team's

reception. "I started feeling good about it, and I realized, hey, they don't have a (major league) team there. We would be the only show in town. So my enthusiasm kept going up."

New Orleans fans' hope and support of professional sports shouldn't be held hostage. Even if either team returns, who is going to be able to shell out more than \$30 for a ticket? Sentimentality is nice, but sports franchises require money to survive.

Everybody loves the feel-good story — the idea that good overcomes evil. It's time league officials and team owners realize a good solution won't happen and publicly say so.

jdtransfeldt@dailyemerald.com

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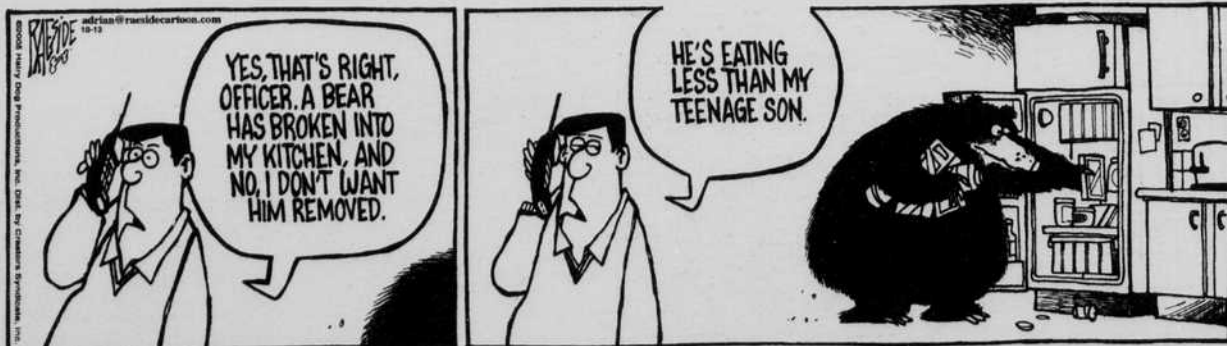
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by Adrian Raeside



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