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local news

Power bursts

A few odds 'n' ends regarding the winningest team in the American Basketball League's Western Conference

by Inga Sorensen

There's nothing more tantalizing than a teaser about queers—or so one would think by glancing at the cover of the Nov. 19 issue of *Willamette Week*, which shouted: "They're Here, They're Queer, They're Portland Power Fans."

(*Just Out* has reported on the lesbian community's Power craze since the women's professional basketball team debuted in the Rose City nearly a year and a half ago.)

That aside, Power general manager Linda Weston questioned whether *WW*'s headline was simply designed to entice.

"I think the headline was inappropriate. My first reaction when I saw it was, 'This is an odd headline,' and I don't think it did justice to the story, which I felt was fair," she says. "The actual article acknowledges the support we receive from the lesbian community—but also other groups too. The headline didn't reflect that at all."

Part of the story, crafted by writer Patty Wentz, addresses the lesbian embrace of the Power, as well as women's professional basketball in general.

But it also discusses the refreshing accessibility of the team, which performs in the fan-friendly environs of the Memorial Coliseum.

"We love playing there," Weston tells *Just Out*. "While the big new arenas [including the Rose Garden] may be beautiful, I think in many ways they put more distance between the fans and the teams. Fans feel less connected. In Memorial Coliseum you feel right on top of it."

Indeed, at least when it comes to Power games, there doesn't seem to be a bad seat in the house. As for talk that the Coliseum may be torn down, Weston says city officials "have assured us that's not happening."

The Power also holds regular autograph sessions after games and often mingles with fans at the nearby bistro Cucina! after the games.

As for the *WW* piece, Weston says she's not sure whether any of the players or Coach Lin Dunn have seen it.

"When it came out we were on the road, and then we got back and the players left for a pre-Thanksgiving break," she says. "And Coach had a death in the family, so I have no idea if anyone else read it."

Assessing other media's handling of the Power, Weston admits she's a tad frustrated with the lack of newspaper coverage.

And given the fact that the Power has led its conference the entire season and appears poised for a playoff berth, the deficit is that much more irritating.

"People should call if they don't think there's enough coverage," says Weston, who is wise to

the ways of the media. "I don't think people often realize that can make a huge difference."

Despite the spotty reporting, fans continue to find their way to the Coliseum.

When we talked with Weston, the Power had completed eight home games, drawing an average of 5,146 followers. Last season's average was 4,200.

"Things are going well in that department," she says.

Still, she doesn't hesitate to plug Power tickets and merchandise as perfect gifts this holiday season.

In other news, for the second season in a row, the Portland Lesbian Choir received a mention from the Power announcer during a game.

As with other large groups in attendance (including those representing schools and churches) PLC was publicly acknowledged via the loud-speaker system.

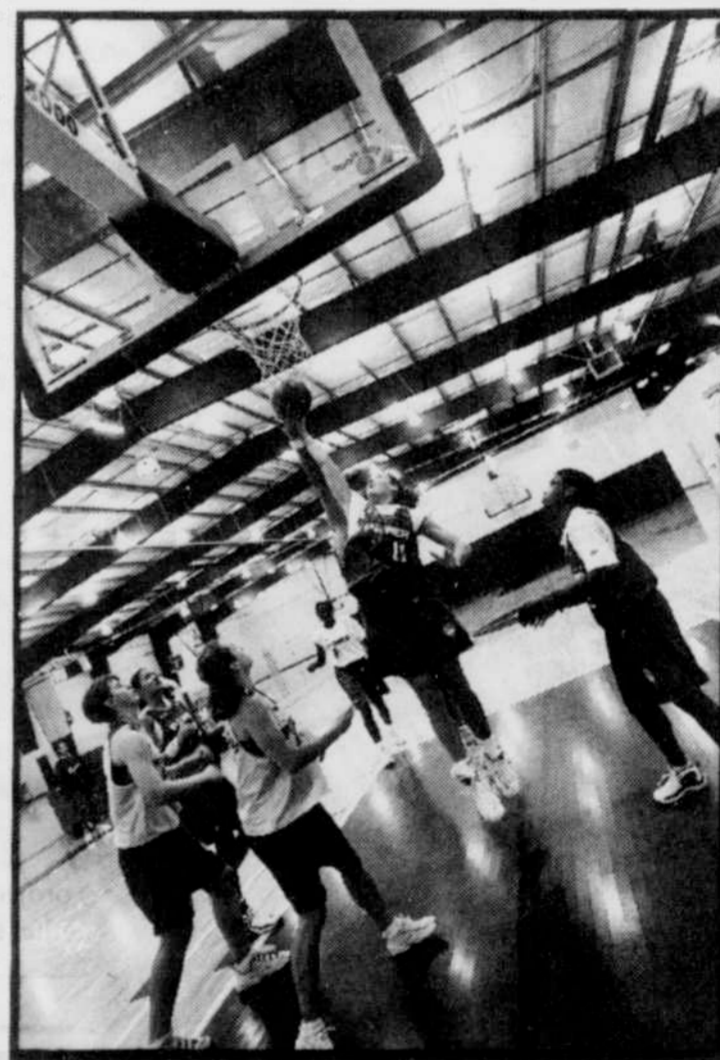
Last season the inclusion evoked surprise—and squeals of pleasure—from many dykes in the stands. The lesbian Power addict to my left excitedly chirped: "Can you believe it?"

This season, however, the acknowledgment was greeted with more nonchalance—nary a squeal was heard from the sisters to my left, my right, behind me or in front of me. (Do I have great seats or what?)

In Other Words, a Portland feminist bookstore which has its own hefty lesbian following, will host a free "Rules of the Game" workshop Sunday, Dec. 21, at 1 pm.

According to bookstore volunteer Johanna Brenner, the event is designed to offer participants an opportunity to learn the rules and regulations of basketball.

She says the instruction, which will be served up by two women referees, was sparked by women's



Power players at a fall practice session

PHOTO BY LINDA KLEINER

enthusiasm for the Power.

"Women love going see the Power, but some of them haven't ever learned the rules of the game because, as women, they've never been taught," she says. "This will give them a chance to learn."

She jokingly adds, "I initially wanted to call it the 'How to Learn When to Yell at the Referees' [workshop] but since we have two referees teaching it, it didn't seem like a good idea."

Participants will have a chance to put their newly acquired knowledge to the test right away—the Power hosts the Philadelphia Rage later that day at 4 pm.

In Other Words, located at 3734 SE Hawthorne Blvd., has \$11 and \$13 Power tickets available for home games occurring Dec. 5 and 27, Jan. 4 and 22, and Feb. 5 and 12. Much Power merchandise is also on sale. For more information, call 232-6003.

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