

Is Walton's health only story?

by Bill Schaefer

The Portland Trail Blazers and the *Oregonian* newspaper, over the past couple of months, have been engaged in contradictory and very silly exchanges, sometimes bickering at one another but most of the time making themselves look foolish. The important thing is that the public interest is not being served in either case.

It all began about two months ago when an *Oregonian* columnist wrote a totally absurd and journalistically unsound story that the Blazers' Bill Walton was suffering from a serious bone disease, so serious that it might put his career in jeopardy. The story was devoid of any factual information and how it got past the sports copy desk and senior editors remains a mystery. Anyhow, the *Oregonian* subsequently apologized for the irresponsible piece and admitted that it was without merit.

The same day the column appeared, another story by another of the newspaper's columnists took great pains, through interviews with team officials, to deny the inferences in the first column. This unusual by-play (A) gave the appearance of

an in-house feud involving the two writers; (B) left additional doubts (if any were necessary) about the veracity of both stories; and (C) seriously undermined the credibility, not to mention the judgement, of the editors. Well, no matter. It was just one of those management errors that crop up from time to time and was certain not to happen again.

Surprise. A week or so ago the same columnist who penned the fairytale about Walton's "bone disease" interviewed Jack Scott. In what appeared to many to be an attempt to recover some credibility after his initial disaster, the writer quoted Scott as saying there is "real concern" about Walton's ankle, the one which was broken late last season. So the following day, another *Oregonian* columnist interviewed the team's physician, Dr.

Robert Cook, who intimated that no "real concern" existed.

There has got to be more going on in the world of sports that should attract the columnists' attention than Bill Walton. If we must read about his ailments and what everybody has to say about them could the newspaper not at least include the data in one story and not subject its readers to daily doses of it?

About Jack Scott. Who the hell is he? And why does what he has to say seem so important? He has been variously described as Walton's "friend" and a sports "activist". He must be important because the *Oregonian* seeks him out whenever there is a Walton story brewing. I'm beginning to think there is no Bill Walton — that the person we're marveling at on the basketball court is really an elongated Jack Scott. Will

the real Bill Walton please stand up?

If the *Oregonian* has brought its readers to their knees with the facts and fantasy stories about Walton, the Trail Blazers sank a notch or two in the estimation of many fans with their arrogant decision to boost ticket prices next season.

To be perfectly honest with you, what ticks me off more than the increase is the defensive, abrupt and saucy attitude team officials take when you discuss the issue with them. They are actually indignant when asked for basic financial information, guarding it as though public disclosure would ignite some sort of scandal. But then, why should they volunteer the information? They know the fans will pay whatever is asked to watch the Blazers. As Barnum said, there's one born every minute.

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Wilson, Greene

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Greene said that CETA funds would be targeted by areas, rather than political subdivisions, and that the Department would be cracking down on local managers of those funds to prevent mismanagement. New regulations would emphasize training and transition of CETA employees.

Ninety million dollars will also be pumped into veteran's programs directed at non-whites, noting that the unemployment rates of 24-year-old to 36-year-old "Blacks, non-whites and disabled veterans is twice as high" as for whites in the same age group.

Noting the impact of tax limitation initiatives on locally-directed federal funds, Greene noted that "many states considering Proposition 13 don't have the surplus that California has, and that's going to have a severe impact on social resources." He added that because of Federal aid that will be required, "They will find that they will depend more on Federal funding than less."

Matching funds and federally funded summer youth program monies are in jeopardy, he said, noting that already one-half of the people who are unemployed are under 24.

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