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THE REFRESHEST

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EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Ernest H. Pitt

STAFF WRITERS
Randy Pettitt
Craig T. Greenlee
Roscoe Nance

PHOTOGRAPHERS
J.D. Schwaim
Joe Daniels
Mark Lyons
Craig T. Greenlee

PRODUCTION
Yvonne H.B. Truhon
Brenda Thomas
Courtney Mack

Playing hardball

Baseball may be America's favorite pastime. But it may be headed for hard times on the campuses of historically black colleges and universities across the nation.

Coaches cite low participation on the youth level, lack of funds, increased fascination with football and basketball among blacks and white universities siphoning off the best players as factors threatening baseball on black campuses.

"It's in trouble ... a lot of trouble," said Jackson State Coach Robert Braddy. "It's always been a lesser sport on college campuses. It's even lesser on black campuses. We just don't put as much into it."

Braddy said as recently as six years ago, his travel budget was between $10,000 and $20,000 a year. Now it's down to between $11,000 and $12,000 a year.

"There's only so much money that can be put into baseball with all the budget cuts," said Grambling Coach Wilber Ellis. "That makes it difficult."

Baseball is not a revenue-producing sport at most schools, black or white. Most administrators would rather put money into sports that are going to generate revenue, i.e., football and basketball.

The lack of funds hurts baseball where it can least afford to suffer -- in recruiting, which is the bloodline of all college sports.

"We don't have the resources to recruit," said Braddy. "Schools that are competitive have two or three assistants who can recruit during the season. There's nothing like having an assistant out getting a good look at kids. We have to rely on word of mouth. We just don't get the caliber of athletes we once got. You'll get one once in a while, but you won't get enough to be competitive. College baseball is vastly improved. We haven't kept up."

The NCAA playoffs are proof that black schools have not kept pace. No black school has ever participated in the College World Series since they began competing in 1982.

"Reaching the College World Series would be a great achievement," said Grambling's Ellis. "It would mean a 100-percent increase in interest in baseball at black schools."

Once, not so long ago, there was that sort of interest. That's when black schools were producing such players as Hall of Famer Lou Brock (Southern-Baton Rouge), Ralph Garr (Grambling), Hal McRae (Florida A&M), Al Bumbry (Norfolk State) and Don Clendennon (Morehouse). In more recent years, Jackson State has sent Oil

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Salute To Doug

Recalling the thrill of victory in Super Bowl XXII recently was Washington Redskins quarterback Doug Williams (second from right), who was feted at a special "Doug Williams Day" dinner at his alma mater, Grambling State University. Sponsored by Anheuser-Busch Cos., the dinner was attended by more than 500 friends, former classmates and teammates of Williams. The star quarterback led the Redskins to a 42-10 victory over the Denver Broncos and captured the coveted Super Bowl MVP award for his efforts. Joining Williams at the celebration were, from left, former New York Giant Ezell Bibbs, Mick Lewis, southwest region manager for Anheuser-Busch, and Lane Howell, a former player with the Philadelphia Eagles and New York Giants.

Reader longs for 'good old days'

To The Editor:

I love reading your magazine. I started reading it five years ago, while I was a student at Morgan State University. I was a big fan of black college sports, and *BCSR* would enlighten me every month. I couldn't wait for *BCSR* to come out every month because I would read things about black college sports that I couldn't read anywhere else, but since then, your magazine has changed.

The reporters were very good. Barry Cooper, Sam Davis, Allen Johnson and Lonza Hardy Jr. wrote very good articles.

The quality of the articles has since changed. The articles are very short and often misquote facts. Also, *BCSR* had more pages. The average *BCSR* had 24 pages; now it only has 16 pages. Before, it would take me a couple of days to read *BCSR*, but now it only takes a day.

I recently looked at an older issue of *BCSR* (March '85) -- and that was the type of magazine that I fell in love with.

It had an issue section and a department section that featured Instant Replay, Interview, Commentary and reports on all four conferences.

I hope that your writers look at some back issues and bring back the magic.

Todd Smith
Baltimore

Mahorn

From Page 15

Raiders' T-shirts. The Raiders have long been known as the villains of the NFL. With Davis' overture, the Pistons were officially christened as the Raiders' NBA contemporaries.

The focus on the Pistons' "bad guys" image is a creation of the press, Mahorn insists.

"That's just media hype," Mahorn said. "Sportswriters point people out and put a label on them. They're telling people that Bill Laimbeer and I are dirty ballplayers. That's the image we have because we've had a few confrontations.

"People tend to believe everything they read in newspapers or see on TV without looking at things for themselves. Bill and I are blue-collar types who are total ballplayers. As for what happened with Michael, everybody overreacted. It's over and done with."

Mahorn's reputation as a resident tough guy was forged years before he was traded to Detroit in 1986. With the Bullets, he teamed with Jeff "Beefeater" Ruland to form the tandem of "McFilthy and McNasty."

During those years, three of which where Mahorn was the starting center, the Bullets were renowned for their frontcourt machismo approach -- especially against the Celtics.

"That whole thing was started by Johnnie Most, Boston's PA announcer," Mahorn said. "We got the label because we beat up on the poor little Celtics."

Mahorn entered a different world when he became a Piston. The difference was as stark as night and day. Washington was strictly a methodical team, who very seldom tried to run the floor. Detroit, on the other hand, loved to play a full-court game. Mahorn welcomed the change.

"I'm more comfortable in an uptempo game," Mahorn said. "That's how we played at Hampton. With the Bullets, we didn't have that style. That team wasn't as explosive on offense as this one.

"In a running game, you don't have to worry about just one possession being so important. You have several possessions, so that means that a team doesn't become so mechanical where opponents can figure out what you're going to do each time. When a team always walks the ball upcourt, the defense has an easier time dealing with what's going on."

In seasons past, Detroit was strictly a finesse, run and gun squad. With Mahorn, they've become a much more physical team that gives ground to no one, especially in the paint. The result has been that the Pistons can play a fast-paced game or they can play patiently in a half-court set.

The Pistons ousted favored Atlanta in last year's Eastern Conference semifinals. And except for an errant out-of-bounds pass by Isiah Thomas, they would more than likely have beaten Boston to get to the championship round.

This season, the quest continues. Detroit won the Central Division and had the league's third best record (54-28) behind the Lakers and the Celtics. Getting to the league finals is the one goal on every Detroit player's mind. They know they have the machinery to break the Celtics' hold on the NBA East.

The memory of missing the league finals last year is "just water under the bridge," Mahorn said. "We'll just use that as a stepping stone so we won't make the same mistakes again."

– CRAIG T. GREENLEE