

Sports

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Monday, August 18, 1986 O&E

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City boy whips rapids, sort of

MY STOMACH was thick with apprehension. I was fearing the worst. From the minute I told my brother-in-law, "White water rafting? Pennsylvania? Sure, I'll go. It might make for a funny story," I regretted it.

I'm a city boy. I've got no business in the mountains of Pennsylvania. I don't belong there. I don't know how to function there. I can't get a Tigers score there. I can't even get a quarter-pounder with cheese there.

I'd been camping once before and hated it. I don't know how to pitch a tent, build a campfire, co-exist with an assortment of pesky insects or any of those other pleasures associated with camping. I wear contact lenses, for chrissakes. Where do I disinfect my contact lenses in the middle of nowhere?

On top of that, I'm going to spend two afternoons in a rubber raft on a raging, rock-filled river.

Yeah, I'm into life-threatening sports.

BUT THERE I was. In a car with my brother-in-law Rick, his wife Andrea, (who was perhaps the smartest one of the group; she stayed far away from the raging, rock-filled river) and my wife Susan. In another car were the leaders of the expedition: Dave Roszel and his wife Linda. These are the experienced white-water people in whose hands I placed my future. Rebounding our rather motley crew were Dave Starrin, Vaerten, Jan Hesselbacher and Mr. Hockey himself, A.J. Baker.

It was only mildly comforting having A.J. along. He was as out of place as I was, but he's a crazy man. Crazy people know no fear. I was going to be in a rubber raft, on a raging rock-filled river alongside A.J. "Crash" Baker.

AS WE were driving up through the mountains — when I say up I mean up, we're talking ear-popping, nose-bleeding, ascent — I couldn't get the movie Deliverance out of my mind. You remember that movie, right? Not exactly a public relations release for a white-water rafting outfit.

The images from Deliverance greatly increased my apprehension. I had visions of ugly, toothless mountain men eyeing me with bad intent. "How y'all doin'? Sure are a long ways from home. Hee hee."

It got to the point where I wanted to hum a strain from Dueling Banjos out the window to see if anyone would answer.

But the beauty of the place quieted my fears. For the moment, I've never seen real mountains (Mount Pleasant and Mount Clemens are real mountains, are they?) I suppose if I was Thoreau I could come up with the right words to make you see and feel the power of those Pennsylvania mountains. But then, if I was Thoreau I'd be dead. Six of one, half dozen of the other.

Let me just say that they were breathtaking, awesome in the true sense of that overused word. And we pulled off the road at a clearing marked "scenic view." It was about



Chris McCosky

a mile from our camp sight in the Ohiopyle State Park. Mountains, lush green mountains, were below and above us. They formed something of a V-shape. At the very bottom on the V, barely visible, was the Youghiogheny River (pronounced Yaka-galney). A few short hours from then I would be risking my life on that stupid river.

WHITE-WATER RAFTING, I found out later, can be both simple and scary depending on such river variables as water level, number and size of rocks, steepness of falls, maneuverability and rapid intensity.

Rivers are rated in classes from one to five, class five being the most perilous. There is a class six. Class six is like dead man's curve; you don't walk back from it.

I knew none of this as I was strapping on my life jacket. A ranger with Youghiogheny Outfitters, Inc. — the people who police the river, give tours and supply the equipment — gave us some pre-rafting instructions.

"Try to stay in the raft. If you fall out the rocks can do serious damage. If you fall inside the boat, get up quick because the rocks will still get you. If you should happen to fall into the river, lay on your back and keep your feet out in front of you and let the river carry you to safety. The life jacket should keep you mostly above water."

"Four" miss most of the rocks. Now, if you get turned around and go under, and you happen to hit a steep fall, you're done. There's nothing anyone can do for you at that point."

Excuse me? You're done? You mean done like history. In the archives done? How many people do you lose on this river?

"We lose about three or four a year."

I'm going home, forget this.

HE WAS kidding, of course. The Yough has never had a fatality. But the ranger wants people to know that if you fool around you can get hurt.

The first day, they have you raft a short course called the loop. It takes about an hour. It's just to give us novices a taste of the Yough.

I was in a boat with A.J. and Dave Starrin. Dave Roszel went in his kayak and acted as our guide.

Piece of cake. We had very little trouble. We were like pros. Just zipping through those rocks. The hardest part was carrying our raft back to the outfitter. We had to carry it up this steep and slick rocky mountain-side, no steps, then through about a half-mile of woods. We also made the mistake of deflating the raft which made it twice as bulky and twice as hard to carry.

Our first-time success served only as a false sense of security.

WE DECIDED to run the loop a second time. Disaster. Jan was aboard with me and A.J. The rapids spun us around and tossed the raft. Suddenly, Jan was in the water, clinging onto the side of the raft.

I panicked. I envisioned her going underneath the boat and never resurfacing. I just stared at her. A.J. calmly suggested that I might want to help her get back into the boat. Good idea, why didn't I think of it? Jan thought the whole thing was extremely funny. "You should have seen the expression on your face," she said once I dragged her back in. Real funny, the woman could have drowned.

Told you I wasn't right for this type of thing.

THE SECOND day was the big test. Four hours on the Youghiogheny. Surprisingly, I was eager to start.

We began with A.J., Dave Starrin and myself in one boat, Dave Roszel, Linda Roszel, Su' and Jan in the other.

While the four-person crew was cruising effortlessly, we were finding every rock in the river. We got stuck in the first three rapids and in other parts that weren't even listed as rapids. A.J. was yelling at me, I was yelling back and poor Dave Starrin was looking for help. This was going to be a long, long day.

Luckily, Dave Roszel came aboard to rescue us. Had he not, we would still be out there.

The river's trouble spots have names. I remember three of them.

• Dimple Rock. The river teases you here. It lulls you to sleep with calm waters, but the calm waters quickly draw you into a speedy pocket.

The pocket grabs your raft and puts you swiftly on course for a huge rock. You really have no control of your raft as the water rushes you toward this rock sticking about eight feet above the water. My reaction was to drop my oar, cling to the raft and hold like a banister.

The water pushed us up to the rock and around it so fast that it felt like we went right through it. From that point, we were traveling backwards into all kinds of trouble. Then, just as we were about to make it, the water stopped. And we were in calm water again.

We then watched the three-woman crew scout past Dimple Rock without a problem.

• **WHALE'S ROCK:** This was the ultimate in potential danger. Dave Roszel kept shouting to steer into the eye of the whale. There was a rock carved to look like a whale. Well, to me, in my agitated state of mind, there were about four rocks that looked like whales. Dave Starrin and I steered toward one whale-like rock, Dave Roszel and A.J. toward another.

We were in big trouble. The raft went sideways into the rapids, a cardinal sin in white water rafting, they tell me. We came up hard on a high rock. A kayak was resting against the rock, and we almost knocked him off. The raft was thrown perpendicular to the water. A.J. and Dave Starrin

were at the bottom, Dave Roszel and I at the top. I immediately abandoned ship for the security of the rock. Roszel, laughing his head off, suggested that I return to the raft unless I wanted to remain on the rock the rest of my life.

Somewhat all four of us got to the top of the raft and managed to slide it away from the rock. The raft was completely filled with water and we had to trudge off to the side of the river and dump it.

Meanwhile, the three-woman crew calmly passed us by.

• **DOUBLE HYDRAULIC.** A.J. and I almost were ejected from the raft by this bit of turbulence. We



Where to white water raft

There is no facility in Michigan for white water rafting or kayaking, but that hasn't stopped Michiganders from pursuing the thrilling sport.

Folks from Michigan have sought to conquer swift rivers in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Canada, Wisconsin, Colorado and Idaho, to name the more popular areas.

Shaun and Sheila Devlin of Birmingham, officers with the Farmington Hills Canoe and Kayak Club, have helped put together a list of some of the more accessible white water outfitters and sites.

• The Youghiogheny Outfitters Inc. services both the Youghiogheny River in Ohio, Pa., and the Cheat River in Albright, W. Va. Rates range from \$22-\$48 per person per day. For more information, write to P.O. Box 21, Ohiopyle, Pa. 15470 or call 412-523-4549.

• Appalachian Whitewater Inc. services five rivers: the Upper Youghiogheny in Pennsylvania, Cheat River, New River, Gauley

River and Tygart River, all in West Virginia. Rates vary. For information, write to P.O. Box 126, Albright, W. Va., 26519 or call 1-800-624-8880.

• **WILDERNESS TOURS** services white water rivers in Canada, the Ottawa and Hudson. Write to P.O. Box 89, Beaufort, Ontario, Canada K0J1C0 or call 613-646-2291.

• The Menominee Restoration Committee services the famous Wolf River in Wisconsin. Write to P.O. Box 397, Keshena, Wis. 54135.

• The Western River Guides Association (894 Denver Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111) and the Idaho Outfitters and Guide Association (P.O. Box 95, Boise, Idaho 83701) both service the Salmon River in Idaho.

• The Colorado rivers are serviced by three outfitters: Griffith Adventure and Travel, Inc. (5335 West 48th Avenue, Denver, Co. 80212, 1-800-332-2439), New Wave

Rafting Company (107 Washington Avenue, Santa Fe, N.M. 87501, 1-800-552-0070 ext. 265) and Echo Canyon River Expeditions (620 Valley Road, Colorado Springs, Co. 80904).

SOME SITES require special permits, and the degree of difficulty varies within each river. Some require a trained guide to be present in the raft; some make guides optional.

There are several locations in the Observer & Eccentric service area that specialize in supplies, equipment and training for white-water excursions: The Benchmark in Farmington Hills, Great Lakes Kayak Touring-Great River Outfitters in Bloomfield Hills and Wilderness Adventures in Northville.

For more information about rafting, kayaking or canoeing tours, call the Farmington Hills Canoe and Kayak Club at 474-6115 or the Devils at 851-1963.

— Chris McCosky

Livonia team's joy short-lived in series

One thing is certain: Livonia Adray went out swinging.

The Livonia Collegiate Baseball League team was knocked out of the All-American Amateur Baseball Association World Series Wednesday, losing a 12-9 slugfest with the Columbus, Ohio, All-Americans at Vo-Tech Field in Johnston, Pa.

Adray had opened the tournament with a surprising 2-1 win against Detroit. Adray next pitched before losing to Philadelphia Arzee 7-2 on Tuesday.

Adray's Philadelphia was still alive in the series, having beaten Pittsburgh 8-7, Buffalo 11-2, and Columbus 4-2. The team advanced to the quarterfinals on Friday.

"We had a good season," said Livonia Adray manager coach Ron Heller. "This is a great bunch of guys to coach; just a bunch of overachievers. But pitching is the name of the game out here, and we just didn't have enough."

JEFF DEPORTER staked Livonia Adray to an early lead over Columbus with a three-run homer in the first inning. The lead was short-lived.

Redford Union product Pat Miller got the mound assignment for Adray Wednesday but didn't finish the first inning. Columbus rattled him for five runs.

Columbus touched reliever Rick Spence for four more runs over the next 4½ innings. Adray kept battling. Martin Eddy hit two solo homers. Don Vestling hit a two-run shot and Dennis Bushart rapped out a pair of singles.

But Columbus' 15-hit attack proved insurmountable. Livonia Stevenson product Rob Ogilvan was the only hurler to blank Columbus. He worked two scoreless innings.

Eddy, who will play at Dallas Baptist College this year, had three hits in 11 at-bats in the series. Livonia Adray, managed by Stu Rose, finishes with a 28-12-1 record.

Defense is key to Albion title bid

By C.J. Rieck
staff writer

History and football in the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association (MIAA) go hand-in-hand, so it should come as no surprise that the most obvious of lessons to be learned from last year's season is an old one.

Basically, numbers are nice, but the only one that really matters comes under the win column.

In other words, stats don't mean a thing.

That was most apparent last year as two of the most prolific quarterbacks in league history piled up impressive numbers. A pair of Rochester graduates — Alma's Dean Ulrich, who set an MIAA total yardage mark last season, and Adrian's Bruce Crosthwaite, who busted Ulrich's record last year — were simply outstanding.

But neither was able to guide their teams to the championship of the MIAA. The Britons' conference in the country (founded in 1888). That distinction went to a pair of quarterbacks who shared the position at Albion.

THE OFFENSIVE numbers sen-

ior Ken Kish, a Farmington Harrison grad, and Dave Yaw combined to accumulate for Adrian were not impressive. Kish completed 32 of 71 for 334 yards and four touchdowns, with five interceptions. Yaw was 53 of 114 for 583 yards and four TDs, with one interception.

Yet Albion went 7-2-1 overall and won the MIAA with a 4-0-1 mark. Adrian was second (4-1), followed by Hope (3-1-1), Alma (2-3), Kalamazoo (1-4) and Olivet (0-5).

Albion's success a year ago was a surprise. The Britons selection as MIAA preseason football favorite at Thursday's media meeting at Alma was not.

"All of us know from the past you don't want to be picked first," said Pete Schmidt, who is entering his fourth year as Albion's coach.

"I want to thank all of my fellow coaches for this honor," he added sarcastically. "When you don't finish first and you're picked first, everyone knows that you're a loser."

Despite Schmidt's protests, Albion deserves its ranking. The Brits return 23 seniors, including all 11 defensive starters. And it was defense that won the title for Albion last

year, surrendering just 126 points in 10 games and 41 in five MIAA contests.

LEADING THAT stalwart group is Ed Ewald, a 6-foot, 205-pound All-MIAA pick at linebacker. A senior, Ewald topped the team in tackles with 115 and tied with four others for the team-lead in interceptions with two.

There's plenty more to help Ewald. Like junior linebacker Charlie Waszeski (6-4, 212) from Garden City, who paced Albion with 15 tackles for loss and seven quarterback sacks, and senior defensive back Jim Hall (6-2, 190) from West Bloomfield, who had two pass interceptions. Both were second team All-MIAA.

Others to be counted on are junior middle guard Dan Strehl (5-10, 215) from Westland John Glenn and sophomore outside linebacker Steve Freiler (6-2, 205) from Garden City.

"They are the key players on our defensive football team," said Schmidt. "That's what we try to build our football team on — defense. And that's what we're relying on this year."

On offense, Kish and Yaw are again battling for the starting quarterback spot. "They've alternated the last two years — I think one started four games and the other started five games last year — and they'll battle it out again this year," said Schmidt.

Mostly they'll try to get the ball to MIAA co-offensive player of the year Lance Brown, who gained 997 yards rushing and caught 11 passes for 144 more, scoring 12 TDs.

IF THERE is a team that can unseat Albion, the coaches think it will be Hope, which won three of the previous four titles.

"Our prospects at this point are probably far better than last year at this time," said Ray Smith, coach of the Flying Dutchmen, who return eight offensive and seven defensive starters. "Our depth is good. And the fact that we were not league champions last year is a great motivational factor."

The Dutchmen will be relying on senior Ed Coniff, from Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook, to handle the kick-