

Piston loyalist can wipe away the tears

THIS ONE IS for Gus, the fat man who used to shake, rattle and roll, dancing in the mezzanine during those dark Piston days. I can still remember him hanging over the railing at Cobo Arena, spewing "Hoo, hoo . . . hoo, hoo

Even long-suffering basketball fans like Gus, who bitterly stayed downtown when the Pistons headed north, have to feel vindicated this week.

The heck with Kareem's storybook finish. The heck with Pat Riley. The heck with Chick Hearn and "show-time." The hell with "Three-peat."

Some of those LA-LA fans have no idea what anguish we've been through. I'm talking about the chalkers: Dyan Cannon, Lou Gossett Jr., Chevy Chase, Ryan and Tatum O'Neal, the ones who have jumped on the Lakers bandwagon of late.

They have no idea what it was like for guys like Gus and me, and what we endured through all these years.

I can't go all the way back to Fort Wayne, but I saw a Zoller special when I was only 7. The date: Feb. 8, 1963.

My dad took me to Cobo to see my first Pistons game, primarily to catch a Bradley University man, a fellow alum named "The Jet" Walker, who played for the Syracuse Nationals.

THE ONLY THING I remember about that night was how many points the Nats scored, 161, which at the time was an NBA record.

Ironic, isn't it? This Pistons team now yields about 162 in two games.

The other thing I remember about that night was the skinny turnout, sparse enough that my dad escorted me into the Syracuse training room afterwards to say hello to "The Jet" himself.

"Come on in," smiled one of the ushers. If you walked now into the visitors training room, you'd be arrested for trespassing. Security would haul you away.

But this championship certainly makes up for all the mistakes, all the heartbreak and all the disappointment during my formative Pistons fan years.

Had bad were the Pistons way back when? Bad enough that a couple of high school buddies of mine beat Butch Kominics and Erwin Mueller in a game of two-on-two in a shopping center parking lot during a Strohs Ice Cream Clinic in Plymouth.

This makes up for 1970-71 when the Pistons opened the season with eight straight wins, finished above .500, but didn't have a good enough record to reach the playoffs.

This makes up for 1968 when the Pistons won their first two playoff games in Boston, then dropped four straight.

This makes up for Game No. 7, 1974, against Chicago when Bob Lanier was more interested in renegotiating his contract than winning a title.

THIS MAKES UP for the drafting of Reggie Harding, Terry Driscoll, Bob Nash, Earl Tatum, Roy Hamilton and Walter Luckett. It almost makes up for trading DeBusschere for Bellamy and Kominics, never getting Rudy LaRusso, swapping draft picks to take Kelsey Pierce. It makes up for taking Marvin Barnes in the ABA draft instead of Moses Malone. It makes up for Ron Lee's three-point bricks.

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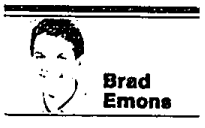
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It makes up for Herb Brown's lax and bagels sessions with Kevin Porter, Bob McAdoo's malignering and Eric Money's tantrums.

It makes up for Kelly Tripucka getting scorched by Bernard King, Antoine Carr's fleeing to Italy and Dick Vitale's screaming, "I'm a failure," when the Pistons couldn't execute a strong in-bounds play to clinch a victory.

It makes up for that dreaded pass against Boston in the sixth game of the 1987 playoffs. This also lets us forget Dennis Johnson and Danbury smashing heads. Dennis Rodman's ill-advised comments and Rod Thorn's fines.

Someone else thinks Adrian Danley deserves a ring, but I can't feel sorry for AD. He had his chance. It was Game No. 6 in LA, a wide-open turn-around jumper on the baseline that could have clinched the championship with just over a minute to play.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for somebody to feel sorry for, how about Terry Tyler? He and John Long were the plus, the players who held this franchise together until Jack McCloskey brought in fresh troops. Somehow, I wish Terry had a piece of that ring.

I feel sorry for Dave Blag, the classiest Piston of all time. Certainly I wish he was standing on that podium, accepting congratulations from the commissioner.

Or how about Don Adams? He was the man they called "Smart," not very good, but a team player all the way. Or Willie Norwood, John Mengel, Otto Moore, Cliff Levingston, Joe Strawder, Bob Quick and Eddie Miles? And Jim (forget) George Trapp, the man they called "Instant Heat?" Or "The Geezer" — Howard Porter?

These were the good guys and now we have the "Bad Boys," which has to be the most overblown tag or label ever stuck on an NBA team.

Remember, of course, the NBA of the '80's is Hollywood and Broadway all wrapped into one, following a script by Adams and Brent Musberger and Boston-baked reporting.

Funny as it may seem, the Pistons were never the "Bad Boys" until they beat the Celtics.

Light up a cigar for me, Red Auerbach.

I KNOW THE Pistons still be longed downtown and they've catered to a different type of clientele to fill their plush arena.

But this week I can overlook all those negative things. I can overlook that a guy named "Brow" is now the team's official cheerleader.

Remember Gus when you think fondly of this championship season. The man who chanted "hoo" from high atop Cobo was simply ahead of his time.

What Gus was "hooing" for was Vinny Johnson, the modern-day "Hoo."

Vinnie seems to epitomize what this franchise starved for and what it has become.

Thank you, Bad Boys, for giving us this long-awaited moment. We deserve it.

Sinking ship?

Whitlow tenders resignation at Madonna

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

Just when it seemed Madonna College's athletic department had its direction determined, the course has been altered.

Bob Whitlow, hired only one year ago to guide the Fighting Crusaders' men's basketball team as it entered the NAIA, is expected to tender his resignation by the end of this week because "they don't have any scholarship money."

Whitlow, who assisted Lynn Reed at Oakland Community College before taking over at Madonna, criticized the school's administration for its lack of support. "I'm disappointed with what's happening over there," he said. "They keep jerking (me) around. I can't sign anyone. I don't want to promise them something and then not deliver it."

WHITLOW'S RESIGNATION could jeopardize Madonna's upcoming men's basketball season. He said he has already contacted several of the colleges he had on next season's 35-game schedule and cancelled.

Ray Summers, Madonna's athletic director, would not comment on Whitlow's pending resignation "because he hasn't submitted anything. I can say it would be unfortunate for Madonna if we were to lose coach Whitlow."

Summers also refused to speculate on the future of Madonna's men's team should Whitlow resign. "At this point, the jury's still out on whether or not men's basketball will survive," he said. "We're still on hold."

Asked if a search would be conducted to find a coach and save the program for next season, Summers said, "I think the administration would try and do that."

FOR YEARS, the Madonna administration has vacillated on intercollegiate athletics. The commitment last year seemed genuine and, after Whitlow guided a makeshift team to a 13-17 season, the future looked bright.

But Whitlow claims the lack of financial support stymied his efforts this season. "You can't play good teams with pick-up guys out of the hallways," he said. "I had some good guys lined up, but they're not going to come here now."

"Ray (Summers) said last year they were going to give me a little bit of help and keep increasing it every year. He talked one way, but when it came right down to it he didn't have the authority."

According to Whitlow, Summers had no control of the athletic budget. Instead of receiving funds to work with, Whitlow said he was promised "\$4,000 if I could raise \$4,000 first. There was no money until I went out and raised it. They wouldn't give me anything until I raised \$4,000."

Whitlow, who coaches part time (he works full time for an air freight company), said he was hired to coach, not fund raise.

Asked if his resignation was certain, Whitlow replied, "It's a done deal."

SUMMERS DISPUTED Whitlow's contention regarding fund raising. According to the Madonna AD, all coaches were hired knowing they would have to raise money for their programs.

"(The coaches) were made very aware of it," said Summers of the fund-raising responsibilities. "Our scholarship endowment for athletics

basketball

has increased every year. It still hasn't been able to match that of other colleges, it's true. We got financial disclosures from several other colleges. The administration is well aware what we're up against."

Madonna's NAIA District 23 opponents have budgets as large as \$100,000 (at Siena Heights). Whitlow said he submitted a budget to Madonna for \$20,000. "We were by far the least" in the district, in terms of money available for basketball, said Whitlow.

"I could have gotten by with \$15,000, but they wouldn't even talk to me (directly) about it," he added. "I would talk to Sister Nancy, then she'd take it in to (Madonna president) Sister Francis. But they never made a decision, until they told me I would have to raise the first \$4,000."

MIKE GEORGE, the Crusaders' baseball coach, said he knew from the beginning (he was also hired last year) he would be expected to raise money for his program. "Bob's situation was different than mine," said George. "He doesn't have the resources to raise money I have."

"If we hadn't raised \$12,000 last year, we wouldn't have had a program. There wasn't any money budgeted for baseball last year."

George added he did not receive any matching funds a year ago. He will this year.

Summers said the administration has guaranteed a maximum of \$17,000 in matching funds for athletics.

"Coach Whitlow hasn't the time nor the resources to fund raise," said Summers. "I think he's frustrated. He cannot compete in the recruiting wars with colleges that have budgets in six figures."

Whitlow said he wanted to coach somewhere this year, if possible. He has talked briefly with St. Mary's College coach Glen Donahue about an assistant's position.

OCC pulls pivot move with big recruit

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

FOR ONE, Reed returns. It was in 1987 that he guided OCC to the NJCAA II championship. Last season's disappointing 13-14 campaign can only make him more determined than ever to rebuild the Raiders.

Also, six players — 6-foot-5 Mike Bailey, 6-6 Toine Murphy, 6-4 Tim Robinson, 6-2 Tim Marfield, 6-2 Ed Pasque and 6-2 Bobby Dinges — will be back, giving Reed an experienced nucleus to build upon.

THEN THERE ARE the redshirts — players in the program last year who didn't play. That includes 6-4 Fred Crumey ("An explosive jumper," said Reed), from Florida; 6-0 Starling Stevens, from Saginaw; and 6-0 Mike Shelman, from Detroit.

Now for the rest of the good news — the recruits. Freshmen certain to be part of OCC's program next season are Earl Mack, a 5-11 guard, and

Pedro Ellis, a 6-3 forward, both from Pontiac Northern; Wayne Paris, a 6-4 forward from Walled Lake Western; John Bonner, a 6-8 transfer who didn't play for Northwood Institute and will have two years of eligibility remaining; and 6-0 Roger Sheldon, from Rochester 6 Oakland Christian, from Detroit.

The size of the newcomers makes it obvious OCC should have no trouble rebounding next season. But it doesn't end there. Reed has a few sizable transfers who could contribute heavily.

LEADING THAT list are Derrick Groce, a 6-8 center from Detroit Northern who played a year at Odessa Junior College in Texas, and Cor-

nelius Woody, a 6-8 center who played a year at University of Michigan-Dearborn. However, both must pass several classes this summer to be eligible in the fall.

One transfer who has no such stipulation is 6-9 Ross Fuller, who played a year at Yakima CC in Washington. Fuller will be eligible this fall.

Reed has most of his players competing in a summer league in Flint. In spite of their talent, some of the freshmen may be redshirted. But that's not so bad. Tim Forfinski, a 6-4 Farmington Hills Harrison guard who didn't play his first year at OCC, has been offered a scholarship at Urbana College in Ohio after a solid 1988-89 season for OCC.

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