

BITTS AND PIECES

Toy with an attitude; TV diet plan

Gotta gotta bar of soap? Disney and Hasbro have joined forces to market the talking "Gotta Love Me" Baby Sinclair doll, a cloth-and-plastic version of the youngest member of ABC's *Dinosaurs* family. But will dotting *homo sapiens* moms and dads experience buyer's remorse when Baby's TV voice pipes up and teaches kids six choice phrases, including "Hello, fat boy" and "I'm gonna bite you now"?

Eat right, exercise and watch public TV. A psychologist at Memphis State University has determined that watching TV makes kids fat, because it induces deep relaxation, which lowers the metabolic rate. In a study of 32 girls, a single episode of *The Wonder Years* was found to lower the metabolic rate by 14 percent. Interactive programs such as PBS' *Sesame Street*, however, do not have this effect. Thus, food for thought helps burn calories.

With just four bat weeks to go before *Batman Returns* opens June 19, merchandising tie-ins are hitting the shelves. The new logo is already turning up on t-shirts, action figures and cereal boxes. Still to come are Catwoman-cocktail attire, Bat Happy Meals and a Coca-Cola promotion that's still, er, cloaked in secrecy.



The "Gotta Love Me" Baby Sinclair doll

Videos, Noh. ABC Sports has caught the scent of a new promotion opportunity for Father's Day. Teaming with Drakkar Noir, "the No. 1 prestige fragrance for men," ABC is offering a pair of videos with each Noir purchase of \$28.50 or more. Jim McKay narrates *The Thrill of Victory*, which features many outstanding sports achievements of the last 30 years, while Craig T. Nelson introduces *The Agony of Defeat*, a collection of famous spills. The tapes may also be purchased separately at video stores beginning May 28.

TIME OUT

Nielsen families prefer hoops to homers

By Steve Paschal

Baseball's all-American image has taken a beating this season as CBS' Major League telecasts have gone into a ratings slump. Meanwhile, they're doing high-fives at NBC, where ratings for the National Basketball Association playoffs have been impressive.

One charitable view is that baseball has been outdrawn by basketball because its season is just getting into full swing, while the NBA season is nearing its climax. Even so, ratings for CBS's coverage of the recent American Kennel Club championships were just slightly below those for a game between the world champion Minnesota Twins and the Oakland Athletics the same weekend.

At NBC, where sports announcer of the year Bob Costas is a slam-dunk favorite, the celebrating is accompanied by a big sigh of relief. With the last two NBA finals having ended in routes, there was concern that apathetic fans might tune out in anticipation of the Chicago Bulls repeating their walk through the playoffs. However, with teams like the Portland Trail Blazers, Boston Celtics and the rejuvenated New York Knicks in the equation, the ratings outlook for the finals has risen dramatically.

The NBA playoffs are part of NBC's countdown to the Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain, which also includes LPGA Golf, French Open tennis and the U.S. Olympic trials.



Louise Sorel plays wicked Vivian Alamain in *Days of Our Lives*, airing weekdays on NBC.



Howie Mandel supplies the voice of a 4-year-old boy in *Bobby's World*, airing Saturday mornings on Fox.



Alex Winter and Keanu Reeves are time-travelin' dudes in *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, Monday on Fox.