



MESS UP, SCREW UPS, AND FROM BAD TO REAL SAD

By Kerry Schmidt

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Well, THE best time of year is nigh. Most NFL training camps are open and the first exhibition game is only a week away, August 3, 2008 in the Hall-of-Fame game in Canton, Ohio.

Washington vs. Indianapolis.

I already made my first payment of the Direct TV HD NFL schedule, so I can really waste every Sunday watching any/all games.

But when ESPN and other sports news stations start to talk of 2008, it's still about Brett Favre.

I won't waste much more time on this.

Commissioner Roger Goodell has told Packer management to "quickly" try to resolve this issue, so as not to make it a category 5 hurricane.

The Jets have received permission to talk to Favre, and the Pack are talking with Favre re which teams he may be interested in.

As I said last week, the best fit by far would be the Vikings. They have all the makings of a SB team, but no QB. But with them in the same NFC north division, that is unlikely.

The next step that must happen is for Favre to contact Goodell and, in writing, petition for reinstatement. Once that happens, things should go quickly. Favre has said he will report to the Packers training camp this weekend. Stay tuned.

We all should know what title IX is. It's the (college mostly) directive that men's and women's sports should be on equal footing, as far as money, teams, etc.

Well, the women took this to heart, albeit at the pro level.

CAT FIGHT!!!!

In a WNBA game last Tuesday between the Los Angeles Sparks and the Detroit Shock, in Detroit, the game was suspended near the end when a brawl broke out (you go girls!) between L.A.'s Candace Parker and the Shock's Plenette Pierson, as the two collided and then shoved each other. Game on, ladies.

Both benches emptied, several other scuffles broke out and Detroit's Cheryl Ford suffered a torn ACL.

Even the coaches were involved. Detroit asst. coach Rick Mahorn appeared

to shove Parker to the floor. A total of 10 players will be suspended for at least one game.

Pierson, who according to WNBA officials, was the "instigator" and "continued the matter." She is out for 5 games.

Mahorn also was suspended for two games.

Irony is that the Detroit coach is Bill Laimbeer, who, in his playing days, was known as the ultimate "bad man."

He was hockey's enforcer. I guess he coaches all he knows.

So why is this "equal" to the men's NBA?

Back on November 22, 2004, a real MAJOR brawl broke out. Again in Detroit.

Late in the game between Indiana and Detroit, Ben Wallace was fouled hard by Ron Artest.

Wallace then used both hands to the face to push Artest down.

Then, all hell broke loose. Players came off the benches, the fighting escalated to the announcers table (knocking everything off of it), and soon into the stands after a fan threw a cup of brew at Artest. And, fans and players ended up on the court, continuing their fun.

Now, the women can say they did not get equal treatment, since their suspensions were short.



Artest was suspended for the remainder of the season (over 70 games), while Jackson, and Jermaine O'Neal each got 25 games. Seven other players were banned for six games.

Must be something in the air in Detroit.

Fans and writers have stated that the women's suspensions were too lenient.

Hey, Title IX and all.

Well, we finally know why former Dallas coach Bill Parcells retired as coach after last season. He told HBO's Real Sports that it was because QB Tony Romo bobbled the FG snap, thus costing Dallas the game.

He said "all they had to do was kick a very short FG, the most elementary of plays, and then you just don't do it. I don't want to go through that process again. Too much blood."

I'm sure Romo loved hearing that.

It took 33 years, but someone finally discovered the screw up on the special SB ring for the Steelers. It was one that commemorated the Steelers four SB wins after the 1975 game.

Rule No. 1. Always get the score right!

The ring's decorations included the scores of all the Steelers' postseason victories. But they screwed up a wee bit. The score of the first round playoff win against Buffalo was 32-14, but the ring said it was 32-6.

And, as stated, it was only last week that someone finally noticed the screw up.

The only reason it was discovered was that one of the rings was sold on e-Bay.

Former Steelers PR man, Joe Gordon said "...it seemed impossible. So many of us checked it."

Hey Bradshaw was the QB, and you know how everyone said how dumb he was, so....

I mentioned last week re the MLB's National League's West division.

Well, past the half-way part of the season, the Arizona Cardinals (at press time) are in first place with a 50-51 record. The S.F. Giants, are in third, 18 games under .500 but only 8 games out of first.

As Joe Garagiola said, "It's like the old Phyllis Diller beauty contest. Everybody finishes third."

The NL West hosts three of the league's four worst records.

On June 28, the Dodgers beat the L.A. Angels 1-0. So, you say? The Dodgers were no-hit in that game! They scored on an error, stolen base, error and sacrifice fly! That same night, the Giants beat Oakland with a total of two hits, both singles.

And on April 17, the Rockies and Padres played a 6 ½ hour, 22 innings game, in which the first 14 were scoreless.

"You win a game 3-1, and it's a blowout," said former hitting coach Merv Rettenmund. "They should just save time and say the first team to three runs wins."

Speaking of worst, which big city is often referred to as the "Worst Sports Team in America?"

Not an exact science, but a number of sportswriters agreed.

Atlanta, the nation's eighth largest TV market.

Terrence Moore, a columnist for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution (AJC), says "This clearly is the worst sports town in America."

The Falcons, now sans Doggie Boy Vick, are next to last in value, according to Forbes, at \$796 million.

Since Vick's problems, the Falcons can't give tickets away.

In 2001, the Falcons played in the National Football Conference Championship game for the right to go to the SB.

They did not sell out. Last year, every game was blacked out. They have had 19 sellouts in 10 years, most of them coming within the first three years of Vick.

The Falcons are spending over \$30 million this year on advertising. So far, only 31,000 season tickets are sold. Even with the drafting of top QB Matt Ryan, it's ho hum.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Jeff Schultz, also of the AJC, says “It’s the NFL version of marketing 101.”

Moore says it’s not just the Falcons. He noted that beginning in 1991, the Braves won a record 14 consecutive division titles. Over that span, less than half of their games were sell-outs.

Same with the Hawks, he says. “You only get sellouts when big name teams and players come to town. It’s pitiful.”

USA/TODAY had a major article last week on David Beckham. The headline was, “In year 1, Beckham on target for MLS.”

Must have been a very small target because when you read the article, you scratch your head. Yes, along with his wife, Posh Spice or something, they are followed by paparazzi like, well, movie stars.

But look at the attendance figures. Started out strong, then he was injured, and for the year, attendance (and TV, if they had it), were down 4%.

And on the road, it was worse. A game at Giants’ Stadium drew 46,754 on a Saturday, compared to 66,237 last year. In Washington D.C. they drew 35,979 on June 29, vs. 46,686 last year.

Let’s face reality. He and wifeeee are here because Hollywood is here. Her music career (such as it is) can be front and center, and with his charm and good looks, he is treated like a rock star.

Only Tiger Woods gets more endorsements, and he, well, he didn’t help golf, he IS golf.

Beckham signed a 6-year contract for reportedly around \$140 million. The average salary of MLS players is \$127,000.

The article made no sense at all. Sort of like my columns.

O.J. Brigrance was a LB for the Baltimore Ravens for just one year, 2000-2001, but in 2001, he earned a SB ring. Previously, he spent four years with Miami and four in the CFL. He then spent two years in St. Louis, all of his career mostly on special teams.

But “he was an amazing person,” said OT Jonathan Ogden.

“He was not very talented, but he was so dedicated and professional about his job. And a wonderful person. If anyone had a problem, trouble with a girlfriend, family or depression, they went to Brigrance. They

knew he wouldn’t give them the answer they wanted to hear, but the answer they needed to hear.”

He was a 6’ 236 pound pack of muscle.

Today, he weighs “somewhere near 130.” In May, 2007 he was diagnosed with ALS, Lou Gehrig’s disease.

He must be driven to work because he can’t lift his arms. He needs to sit on the bed to put his pants on because he loses his balance.

His job is that of Director of Player Development. “It’s not a job for O.J.,” says his wife of 13 years, Chanda. “Just like football, this is another passion for him.”

He is in the office every morning, early. His job is to help players, young, old, et al in any way possible. He even started a “back to school program,” for players to finish their college. Seven out of the 13 have done so.

“The things O.J. does are really priceless,” said linebacker Terrell Suggs. “He was the reason I went back to school.”

The NFL has recognized Brigrance as having the best overall program in the NFL for the last two years.

Those ripped muscles have disintegrated - his arms sag to the side of his body, his fingers can no longer wrap around a football.

Some 5.600 people every year are diagnosed with ALCS, and virtually all of them die within 2-3 years.

“No one has beaten this thing, but I am going to be the one who does,” he says, smiling. Always smiling.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

He is a devout Christian. He says, "I'm not afraid. I still have plenty of time to help others."

He puts in a full day. As Suggs said, "when he was a player, he would always work longer and harder than any other player. He still does."

LB Bart Scott, who wears Brigance's No. 57, says, "If can be half the man, player and husband he is, I think I will accomplish a lot in my life."

In 1996, right out of Rice University, 28 of 30 teams rejected him, so he went to Canada.

"By working harder than anyone I ever saw," says Scott, he has succeeded in everything he has done."

While the stats say he will not live much longer, he just smiles and says, "God will take care of me."

Besides God, he has a sign in his office, given to him by former teammate Harry Swayne. It says, "A man with an outstanding attitude makes the most of it while he gets the worst of it."

"He does not plan day-to-day," says Chanda. "He makes his plans long term"

So, a virtually nobody as far as great football skills, he is definitely a great somebody in life. I personally do not know of anyone who would have the attitude he has given his situation.

He truly is an inspiration to us all. Brigance is but 38!