

'Coming out' of the locker room

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Staff Writer

Sometimes I wonder if the Washington Redskins could boost team morale by giving manicures at halftime while listening to *The Immaculate Collection*. And then return to the field for the second half, dressed in drag. I'm sure they would still lose, but at least they'd be looking fabulous.

The problem with this vision is that homosexuality and sports don't mix.

Consider former San Francisco 49er lineman, Esera Tuaolo, who came out in an interview. His teammate, Garrison Hearst, quickly responded by saying, "Aww, hell no! I don't want any faggots on my team. I know this might not be what people want to hear, but that's a punk. I don't want any faggots in this locker room."

The problem is not that I don't support Hearst's opinion

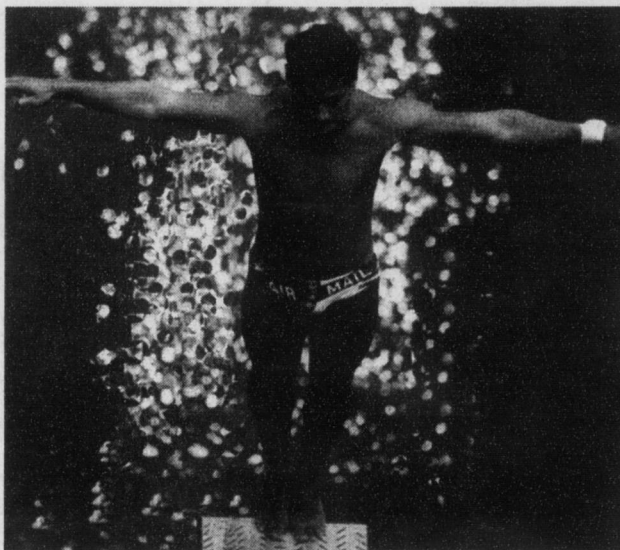
- the problem is that it sucks.

Hearst's comments are not any different from racial slurs.

In May 2002, New York Mets catcher Mike Piazza said, "I'm not gay, and I'm heterosexual," before a game against Philadelphia in response to accusations about his sexuality.

Any hint of unfamiliar masculinity has to be addressed, because the locker room isn't exactly a friendly place. "Coming out" on a professional team, hell, even on a college or high school team, is career suicide.

Hearst and Piazza must be reminded that some of the greatest athletes of all time were gay or lesbian.



Greg Louganis came out of the closet in 1994

Case in point number one: Billy Jean King. With six Wimbledon titles, she is arguably the greatest tennis player of all time. Gay or straight, male or female.

Case in point number two: figure skater Rudy Galindo came out of the closet in 1996

and general consensus was, "well ... yeah. And?"

Because anyone who performs to *West Side Story* and points their toes so easily during a triple lutz has to have a little extra sugar in their bowl. I mean Tonya Harding was plotting her next attack on Galindo out of jealousy alone.

Case in point number three:

Greg Louganis, a four-time Olympic gold medalist in diving at the 1984 and 1988 Olympics in Los Angeles and Seoul came out of the closet in 1994, talking about the homophobia he experienced at meets from other divers.

I want to meet these divers.

If they are homophobic, fine, but then why would they choose diving as their sport? Plummeting head first into a cold pool of water, wearing a thong - diving is the second most homoerotic sport around, trailing only doubles luge.

Despite what King, Galindo and Louganis have done, they are still athletes competing in individual sports. The only way to overcome the locker room politics is to do so by example. The more athletes, coaches, sports writers, judges, referees and towel boys come out, the more the ice of prejudice will thin.

And after all, sport should not be consumed by sexuality. Gay or straight, black or white, two arms or eight, nothing is more awe-inspiring than watching the human body displayed in fine athletic prowess.

Unless it's curling. Because how this sport got into the Olympics leaves me at a loss.

National Sports Briefs

Kurt Cavanaugh
Sports Editor

GRAMBLING, La. - Grambling head football coach Doug Williams resigned from the university and will take a front-office position with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

His resignation came as a surprise to the program, but he sees his exit as a great opportunity for the next coach and the team for the 2004 season.

"We're scared of change," he told his team at a meeting Feb. 13. "But you can't be afraid of opportunity. This is not something you will probably understand now,

but you will one day. In the meantime, you've got an opportunity to graduate - that's your next opportunity," said the former Super Bowl MVP.

Grambling quarterback Bruce Eugene was visibly shaken by the announcement. "No one is taking this harder than me. We've got mixed emotions. But we're happy for you."

Williams was 52-18 in six seasons with his alma mater. *Quotes from sportsillustrated.cnn.com*

BOSTON - The Boston Celtics are attempting to release veteran Vin Baker. If successful, the Celtics would

not have to pay the four-time all star \$36 million over the next two seasons.

Boston is attempting to drop Baker because he has violated his alcohol abuse rehab program.

Baker missed two months during the 2002-2003 season because of problems with alcohol abuse. If the Celtics are successful in releasing Baker they would not be active in the free-agent market, but the savings could keep the team out of the luxury tax bracket.

In a statement released Feb. 11, Baker said, "I am surprised and disappointed that I have not been cleared to play as of today, but I

remain optimistic knowing I have gone above and beyond what has been asked of me during my absence."

Quote from foxsports.com

ROME - Cyclist Marco Pantani was found dead in a hotel room in the Adriatic resort city of Rimini Feb. 14.

Pantani, 34, was the last cyclist to win the Tour de France before Lance Armstrong. Several bottles of medicine were found in his room, but suicide has been ruled out. The early information suggests cardiac arrest, but an autopsy has not been done.

Pantani was the first Italian to win the Tour de France and

the Giro d'Italia in the same year, 1998, since Fausto Coppi did it in 1952.

Accusations of blood doping followed Pantani's career but he denied them. He was kicked out of the Giro in 1999 for failing a random drug test, and in 2001 syringes filled with insulin were found in his room. He was suspended for six months.

"He certainly made some errors ... He fell in with the wrong crowd," said Eddy Merck, long-time cyclist who won five Tour de France titles from 1969-1974. "It's very sad."

Quotes from espn.com