

'Curse' tedious for all but Shepard fans

It is a peculiar quality of Sam Shepard's plays that they can be insightful and compelling one moment but opaque and disengaging the next. His is a fractured style, one that weaves together abstract, meandering monologues and ferociously witty dialogue.

Curse of the Starving Class, which opened Thursday as part of the Play-Makers Repertory Company's PlayFest '85, is, for better and for worse, a quintessential Shepard drama. PRC's rendition of it is a straightforward one that neither trims the eccentric, beat-generation playwright's excesses nor slights his more powerful moments.

Curse treads territory familiar to much of Shepard's work. It is set in a rural limbo whose inhabitants have been fully integrated into mainstream American culture but curiously forgotten by the American dream. The family at the center of this drama owns the land it lives on but derives little of value from it. The family's house is dilapi-

Frank Bruni

Review

dated; the refrigerator, empty.

As Shepard sees it and as the four members of this family demonstrate it, America is not a land of upward mobility but of lateral stasis. Mother Ella wants to get out of both the country and her marriage through the sale of the family's land, but her efforts are doomed from the start, partly because husband Weston has similar intentions. Their daughter, Emma, is a bright student, but she gets little encouragement at home and will soon grow disillusioned. Their son, Wesley, the most enigmatic and least ambitious of this quartet of dreamers, simply wants to live off the land.

The play is at its best when these well-drawn, hauntingly familiar characters interact with each other: each cruelly debunks and ridicules the other's illusions in dialogue that is crisp and witty. Left alone, however, Weston and Wesley especially become the mouthpieces for Shepard's placebo profundities and far-out allegories. Only a few of their monologues are effective.

As Wesley, Bill Goulet must evoke the passiveness with which his character

will inherit his father's undistinguished place in society. Teetering on the edge of vapidity, Goulet makes his performance work by using his entire body — almost imperceptible slouching and twitching and stretching — to convey the turmoil beneath his character's apparent torpor.

Karen Ingenthron adds the most spice to the often murky proceedings. As the groping, griping Ella, she, more than any other member of the cast, cuts to the comic underbelly of self-delusion. That element of self-parody doesn't show up as well in Kathryn Meisle's disappointing portrait of the precocious adolescent Emma. Meisle is a bit too revved-up, often reading her lines in a hysterical, hurried fashion.

Director Gregory Boyd, whose interpretations of the tried-and-true are often irreverent and fascinating, plays it pretty conservative here, perhaps because Shepard's work contains its own elements of lunacy.

PRC's production most certainly does justice to Shepard's work. But it doesn't render his work any more accessible. Shepard fans will be satisfied, and those unacquainted with his work will be intrigued. Those who have never warmed to the musings of America's most overrated playwright, however, will find *Curse* tedious and tiresome.

Curse of the Starving Class will be performed by the PlayMakers Repertory Company at 8 p.m. today, Feb. 15, 20, 26 and 28, and at 5 and 9 p.m. Feb. 23 in Paul Green Theatre. Call 962-1121 for ticket information.



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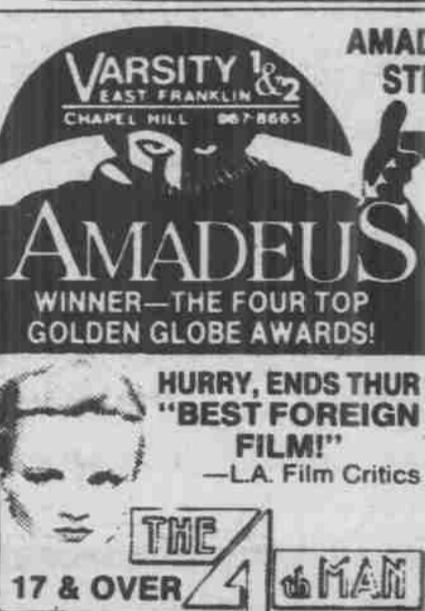
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SPORTS

When it comes to loyalty, diehard wrestling fans can't be matched

By BOB YOUNG
Staff Writer

Wrestling fans . . .

They're the most biased, most loyal, loudest, rowdiest, hardest-on-the-referee fans in the world. They'll shout U.S.! U.S.! at the mere sight of red, white and blue. Bruce Springsteen sings about wrestling fans.

Fans at UNC home wrestling matches are taken from the same mold. Although it's a little tougher to get a little U.S.! U.S.! out of them (unless N.C. State visits Carmichael Auditorium), they are still the epitome of sports fandom.

"I like the action and excitement," said David Stone, a sophomore from Mt. Pilot. "I wrestled when I was in high school and once you're involved in wrestling, it's hard to stay away."

Marc Greenberg, a UNC graduate and Chapel Hill resident, agreed.

"I just love wrestling," he says. "I come to every home match that I'm in town for."

"We're just out looking for a little sports action to start the night off and we're big Tar Heel fans," say Bennett Cole and Al Gorry, freshmen from Chapel Hill and Hickory, respectively.

But Gorry has another reason to be a wrestling fan. Like many of the fans, he is linked to the Tar Heel wrestling program by family ties.

"My brother, Tom, was a senior on the team last year and my family and I would come over and watch him wrestle a lot," he said. "I still like to come out and watch the team."

"This is the second match I've come to this year," said Steve Purich, father of Todd Purich, a backup wrestler at 126 from Johnstown, Pa. "It gives me a chance to leave the snow for a couple

of days."

Carol Richards, wife of the Tar Heel assistant coach Dean Richards, is also a migrant from Pennsylvania, where her husband was a high school coach and led the Pennsylvania team in national high school all-star competitions.

"I just love it down here, I come to all of the matches," she said. "The area is just so positive. C'mon ref! Where are the back points? And wrestling is really starting to catch on down here."

Other fans come because they have friends on the team.

"I was roommates with Stacey Davis my freshman year," says Stanley Brown, a junior from Lillington. "So I really got involved in wrestling through him. I've been to most of the home matches since then."

Whatever their reasons for going to the matches, all the fans are extremely biased towards the Tar Heels. One fan refused to be interviewed, saying he was "too biased" to say anything worthwhile.

"This team is very young and very talented — just an excellent team," Purich says. "I'm very happy my son came to school down here."

"This year's team is the most outstanding one I've seen here," Greenberg says. "They're definitely one of the better schools in the nation and what's more, they put together a top-notch Division I schedule. They're very young and in a couple of years they're going to be contending for the national title."

And what about the losses to N.C. State thus far this season?

"Just flukes," he says. "But UNC will definitely take the ACC tournament (being held in Carmichael). I'll be here cheering them on."

SCOREBOARD

Calendar

Today

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL vs. Duke at Carmichael Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.
MEN'S SWIMMING at N.C. State, 7 p.m.

Wednesday

MEN'S BASKETBALL at Maryland, 7 p.m.
MEN'S FENCING at N.C. State, TBA
WOMEN'S FENCING at N.C. State, TBA

Thursday

WOMEN'S SWIMMING at ACC Championship in Clemson, S.C.
BASEBALL at Stetson, 3 p.m.

Friday

MEN'S BASKETBALL at N.C. State, 1:30 p.m.
MEN'S FENCING tournament at Fetzer gym TBA
WOMEN'S FENCING tournament at Fetzer gym TBA

FRIDAY NIGHTS vs. Jacksonville State and Southeast Missouri at Jacksonville, Fla.

BASEBALL at Jacksonville, 1 p.m.

MEN'S GOLF at Central Florida, 1 p.m.

WOMEN'S TENNIS at Indiana Invitational, Bloomington, Ind.

MEN'S TENNIS at Tennessee, 10 a.m.

WRESTLING vs. Appalachian State and The Citadel, 2 p.m.

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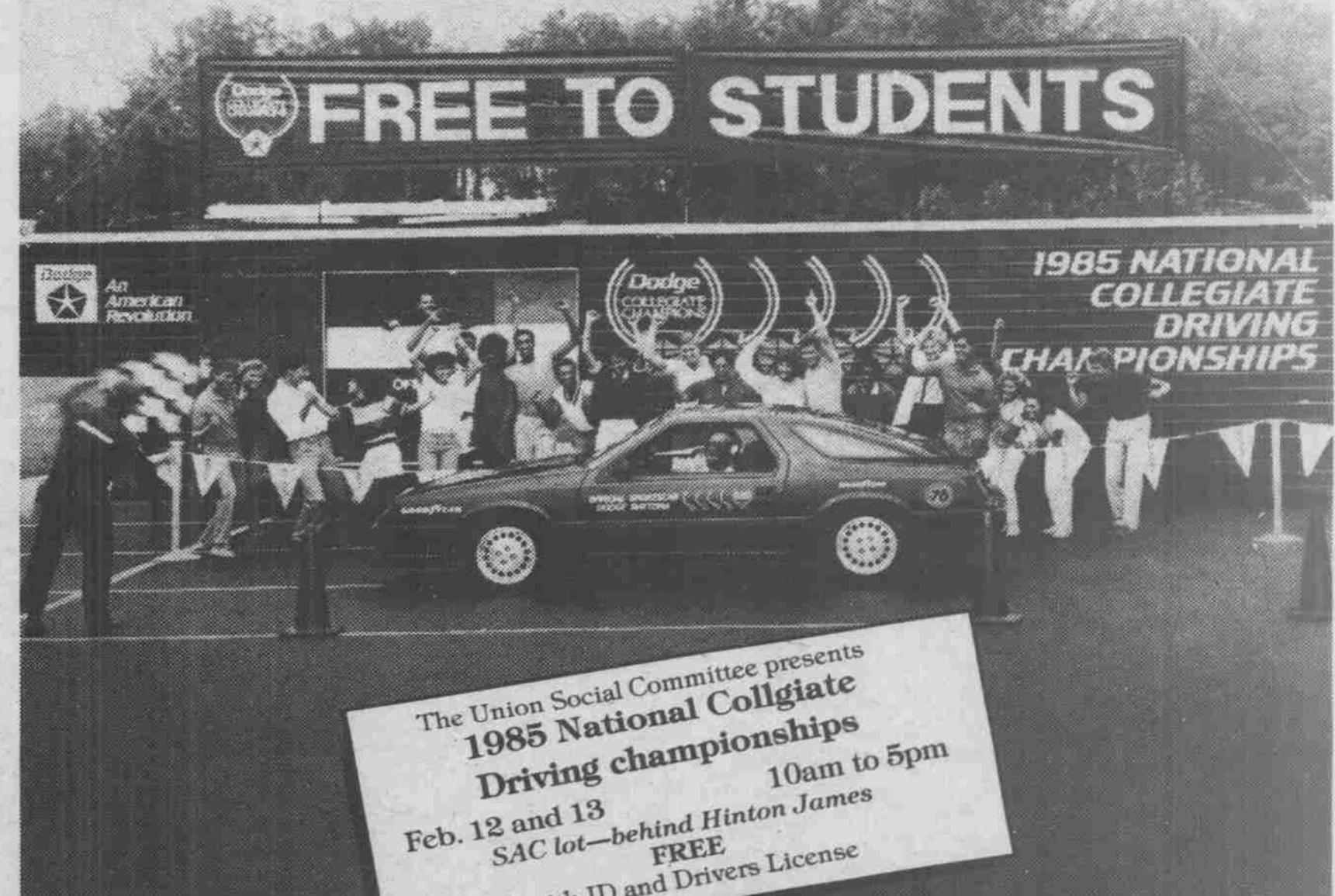


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