

Editorials & Opinion

Apology to the basketball program

The cancellation of the basketball season caused great frustration for the handful of players who lost a chance to demonstrate their skills and for Coach Cathy Mussington and Athletic Director Leon McDougle, who hoped to build a team whose quality matched the excellence of past squads.

"Belle troubled by lost season," a story which ran in our March 1 edition, inadvertently contributed to the frustration. The article, whose intent was not malicious, focused on the disillusionment of freshman Latanya Hart. The problem with the story is that it may have implied that Hart's feelings were representative of the rest of the team's.

In an attempt to give the complete picture, the BANNER has interviewed several players as well as Mussington and McDougle, and their version of events differs sharply from the observations of Hart. According to freshmen Jackie Ponder and Andrea Malone, the possibility of a cancelled season was apparent from the first practice. In addition, Coach Mussington had the players sign contracts which promised that they would attend practice.

"... we all knew from the beginning," said Ponder, adding that "when we signed the contracts, everyone knew ... When the team was cancelled, there was nothing to complain about."

Secondly, Hart expressed dissatisfaction about not being individually notified of the cancellation and getting the news from another player. Neither Malone, who got word of the end from Mussington, nor Ponder, who heard

about the cancellation and visited the coach for confirmation, was dissatisfied with the manner in which she received the announcement.

At no time has any detail in our coverage suggested that the athletic department was responsible for the lost season. As our editorial in the first issue of the semester stated, student indifference and the meager funds for grants to athletes caused the cancellation.

Ponder summarizes the plight of the players who participated from the first practice to the last. The terminated season resulted from "a lack of interest [on the students' part] period. We busted our butts. We went out and recruited people. We even promised to help them with homework. You can't beg people to play. They have to want to play. But I was desperate," she said.

"I was totally disappointed [by the small turnout]," Malone said.

Both Ponder and Malone praised Mussington's efforts to keep the team going.

"I think it's fair to say that she gave us so many chances that it's ridiculous," explained Ponder. "If there's not a team next year, it's the students' fault."

She added, "I think Coach Mussington was plenty fair."

This newspaper apologizes for any embarrassment or inconvenience caused Coach Mussington, Athletic Director McDougle or the players. In addition, we apologize for any confusion which may have befallen our readers. We are convinced that the athletic department behaved honorably and professionally in an extremely difficult situation. (Michael Gaspeny, Faculty Adviser)

Letters: article criticized; NAACP data

To the Editor:

The article "Belle troubled by lost season" that appeared in the March 1 edition of the BANNER was quite disturbing because it contained numerous inaccuracies and exhibited gross negligence in responsible journalism. That article created unnecessary controversy and placed question marks on the integrity of our athletic program. What is most disturbing is that such an article could set a dangerous precedent by allowing any member of the Bennett family who has a gripe, bone to pick, or just the urge "to get someone told," to do so in a feature story in our campus newspaper.

It is certainly not my intention or place to reprimand or rake anyone over the coals. I realize that many of us have difficulty coping with disappointments, but I also realize that many college students have convenient bouts with amnesia and verbal diarrhea.

The troubled Belle left the distinct impression that the athletic department conspired to sabotage the basketball program and didn't allow highly skilled and motivated student athletes the opportunity to exhibit their talents. Thus, causing one or more of these students to contemplate transferring to other institutions. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

This year's basketball program was doomed from the very beginning. Tryouts were well publicized and attracted only a handful of students, all of whom were "walk-ons" with no playing experience at the collegiate level. Many of these students had never played any organized basketball. To my knowledge, not a single one of these prospective players had been offered or received an athletic scholarship or award to another college or university. It is impossible to build a competitive squad around a nucleus of inexperienced "walkons." But it is also

impossible to attract highly skilled and motivated student athletes to a program that can only offer a \$150 athletic award for their services.

We cancelled the season on Nov. 1, 1984 because we couldn't put five players on the floor. The program was reinstated several days later after the remaining players and the coach literally dragged in enough students to make up a squad and after each student had signed a letter of intent to play. Almost immediately, about half of these students either left the squad or started missing practice sessions with reasons such as "My mama said I couldn't play" or "I forgot about practice" and "I had to go to a show at the Coliseum since I had tickets." Coach Mussington kept everyone involved in the program abreast of the developments and the probability of a lost season.

Collegiate basketball is a very expensive and serious venture. It

is physically and emotionally demanding for both players and coach. The game is recreational only for spectators. We cannot and will not attempt to put any team on the court or field when the majority of players view the competition as a casual recreational pursuit. The program had financial commitments and obligations to other institutions, to officials and to other campus personnel and services. Having weighed all the circumstances very carefully, I made the decision to cancel the season on Nov. 18, and the buck stopped with me and not Coach Mussington.

Student interests, needs and concerns remain a major priority and we were all saddened by the loss of our basketball season. This loss could quite possibly lead to the end of a proud and winning tradition. Nevertheless, one of our responsibilities is to protect the integrity of the athletic program and the college's investment in

that program. Given the same set of circumstances, I would again make the same decision.

Sincerely yours,
Leon J. McDougle
Athletic Director

To the Editor:

The top ten black-owned businesses in the United States today and the chief executives are as follows:

Motown Industries, Berry Gordy Jr.; Wallace & Wallace Enterprises Inc., Charles Wallace; Johnson Publishing Co. Inc., John H. Johnson; Fedco Foods Corporation, Samuel Berger; H. J. Russell Construction Co. Inc., Herman Russell; Vanguard Oil & Service Co., Kenneth Butler; Smith Pipe & Supply, Inc., George Smith Sr.; Johnson Products Co. Inc., George Johnson; Grimes Oil Co., Calvin Grimes Jr.; Chioke International Corporation, Christopher Chioke.

Bennett NAACP

Learning from Chisholm: lessons from the master

a column
by Vicky Dunn

I really appreciate the variety that columns add to a paper. My limited, recent experience as a columnist for the BENNETT BANNER has made me appreciate the work of William Raspberry, Jim Jenkins, Bob Greene and Erma Bombeck all the more. They are only a few of my favorites; the list goes on and on.

I have begun to think that the tie that literally binds us is one of humor. The recent appearance of former Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm evokes both a humorous and a serious response from the writer.

On such an occasion as the appearance of an important person at the college, one has been instructed to act, speak and dress correctly. Given my

usual eloquence, I was rather shocked at my behavior. Having learned of Ms. Chisholm's fluent Spanish, I thought that she might use a familiar phrase or two. So, after receiving a short, signed note on the back of my program, I innocently inquired about its contents.

"Is this Spanish?" I asked earnestly, squinting to look all the more authentic. Ms. Chisholm tactfully replied, "No, it says 'aim high'." Well, at that moment, high would have been about two feet below the belly of a snail. I was never so embarrassed, but recovered quickly with a question I'd been pondering all morning.

I wondered why Ms. Chisholm had only expected 10 great women to emerge from Bennett. I also wondered what I was to do to keep the

momentum of what she's said alive and well. I mean, here she was — a troublemaker, and here I was—a newly incited local Negro ready to risk all for liberty, equality and sorority!

Anyway, her response is a major concern today. I am concerned that too many of us are misinterpreting our part in the struggle, just as I misinterpreted the words "aim high." As a first step, Ms. Chisholm directed me to continue becoming educated. If I may elaborate on her suggestion, I might say that we should not just robotically attend classes, but revive the the long lost art of wide reading.

As well, she encouraged me to become active in community affairs, thereby forming a network for the future. Unfortunately, however, the current campus climate might be expressed in the statement, "I doesn't do nothing that ain't about to help me."

I am not insinuating that all of us feel this way, or that more than a few would express the sentiment so ungrammatically, but I do feel that we are lethargic enough to warrant this address. I have no pat response to the question a black woman asked so frantically in *Gone With The Wind*. She screamed, "What we's gon' do, Missy?" I do know that we's gon' begin by really educating ourselves.

Hopefully, the ethical and spiritual consciousness of the entire campus will escalate at the same rate.

Looking for adventure? Try a sea cruise

a column
by Dee Evans

With summer coming up, and classes ending, new plans will be made. Now if you're a school-aholic, you can attend summer school and sit in a classroom for three hours a day or so. Or if you're money hungry, you can work at the job of your choice if you get hired.

But if you're just out to "bum around" and enjoy these hot months, find something memorable to do.

One suggestion I might make is take a cruise. You always see it on TV, so for once make it a reality.

First you make a choice of what cruise line you want to sail with. You can choose from several such as the Holland American Line, the Cunard Line, Eastern Line, the Norwegian Caribbean Line or the Carnival Cruise Line.

Next, prepare yourself by going out and buying the most exotic wardrobe you can find. Surprisingly, you will find that your taste will in no way match the person next to you who is wearing a tiger-skin swimming suit.

Pack light! The less you have the less you lose.

Now you're ready to go. Oh, by the way, if you've chosen a cruise which goes out of the United States obtain a passport and take your birth certificate.

Be prepared for a long wait in order to get on the ship. Customs likes to fuss over new luggage.

Once you go aboard the boat, luxury is in store. Glass after glass of champagne will be served while you're meeting new people

and touring your temporary home. The boat will finally take off and it's like you're on the "Love Boat," waving goodbye to friends and family, throwing confetti up in the air and drinking the bubbly.

Enjoy the beauty of the blue waters and the entertainment that the cruise director will have planned for you. Take advantage of everything. Caution! When a storm comes along, beware, especially if you have a weak stomach. Seasickness is almost a contagious disease and quick to be caught too. You might suffer from nausea and a case of wanting to jump overboard in order to relieve yourself from the constant swaying and rolling, but don't worry because the illness won't last more than a couple of hours. A quick shot in the side and several dramamines will do the trick.

The real excitement will begin when you dock at the ports. See everything you can possibly see. Buy everything you don't have and take pictures of things you've never seen before. You'll know when you've seen it all. Your feet will start to tremble and burn. That's a sign of an adventuresome tourist who's on top of it all.

The last place you dock should be your best. Go all the way. Spend the rest of your savings and come back with too many bags.

The trip home should be a non-stop party. Keep partying after the sun goes down and comes up again. Even keep going when the band packs up and the crew members go to bed.

If by this time you're ready to go home, you've had an enjoyable cruise. Remember, a cruise is a once - in - a - lifetime experience.

The Bennett Banner

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