

# OPINIONS

## The color of our sporting blood



**Craig Lovelace**  
Columnist

Apparently, the Charlotte Hornets are not going to be around much longer. I've been told I'm supposed to care or something. In fact, it's hard for me to muster up the energy to give a flying fig.

I loved the Hornets when they first showed up. It was nice to have sports in the general area, or at least closer than Atlanta and not affiliated with Ted Turner.

For about three seasons, I tuned in to every game I could, and even attended a few in person. Then things started changing, starting with the dismantling of a fan-favorite lineup.

Instead of building a cohesive unit, management focused on star power. This opened the way for whiny, spoiled prima donnas - the Rex Chapmans, Larry Johnsons, and of course, Derrick Colemans.

These "unknown legends" (I'm still trying to figure out how that's possible) were surrounded by no-talents who work cheap, because George Shinn didn't want to outlay the cash for a real team.

He would have hired a bucket of warm drool for the rest of the roster, but the player's union was afraid that warm drool could still outplay the Clippers.

So for the past several years, the Hornets have disappointed us, overworked the Charlotte Police Department, and, in Coleman's case, bankrupted local buffet bars.

These guys made me do something I never thought I could do - miss Kelly Tripucka.

Perhaps the worst, which we'll get to later, was the stadium debacle.

I can't say I'm sorry to see the Hornets go. The Hornets I loved

have been gone for years, replaced by a farm team that keeps shipping promising young stars to New York, Los Angeles and San Antonio.

As I said, I'm most disturbed by the stadium issue. It's not like the Charlotte Coliseum is old. At only about 13 years, it's a babe in diapers compared to the tenure of the Boston Garden, Madison Square Garden or Henry Kissinger.

I've attended several events at coliseums, some being ancient venues by such standards, and enjoyed every minute of it - certainly not the same feeling I got from the more modern MCI Center in Washington, D.C.

Somehow, this cavernous structure manages to convey a feeling of claustrophobia, probably through gratuitous airplay of "Who Let the Dogs out?" (That can make you want to get out of a ninth-inning nail-biter, or the last five minutes of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest).

It's kind of silly to ask citizens to pay for an arena for the team they're already supporting with overpriced tickets, \$10 hot dogs, and watery beer (away from the eastern seaboard, anyway - that gets you riots in Irish neighborhoods).

It's even worse when the first announcement about the new venue is which conglomerate paid the most to get their logo plastered on it.

This just strikes me wrong. Merit should be more important than money when naming a stadium. Prominent citizens are great for namesakes, as in RFK Stadium.

Maybe name it for some feature of the area (Three Rivers in Pittsburgh), or even something sharing a theme with the hosted team (the

Pond in Anaheim is a great, and clever, example).

The only time I can believe in naming a venue after a company is when their histories are entwined, like Busch Stadium. Anheuser-Busch put St. Louis on the map, so why shouldn't they be recognized?

During the seventh inning stretch, everybody stands up and claps in time with an old jingle, in the hopes that some Busch family descendent will decide to provide a six-pack to every last man, woman and child in the stadium. Ain't it grand?

It's especially hard to ask such contributions out of a public that has been constantly let down by the outrageous behavior of professional athletes.

It's shameful that Pete Rose could be blasted for betting on games, but the car-crashing, fan-beating Jose Canseco didn't get drummed out of polite society. We all remember Ty Cobb, especially when somebody comes toward home plate with their spikes lifted.

Perhaps no image shows the modern spoiled brat athlete like the postgame interview, where the star who hogged the ball, cost his team the game, and got fined for trying to rip the arm off the other team's coach, shows up in a fur coat and full "Urban Entrepreneur-chic" costume, while, under each arm is a third-world hoochie mama after a green card.

It's nice to see that Charles Manson could now get a spot on the Oakland Raiders.

We've created such an environment that if you call a sports figure

a lush, drug addict and pervert, it just means you read his resume.

We can't even be proud of the sports fans anymore. When the Lakers won the National Basketball Association playoffs, the city threw a collective fit that scared visiting English soccer fans.

Suddenly, that guy with his shirt off and his flabby chest painted in team colors, sitting through a Green Bay winter seems positively sane.

We, the fans, have to demand better sports for our money. If the hometown team's new line-thug continually steps out of line, on or off the field, make it clear that you're not paying to see him.

Let the big boys know, no matter

how much they're being paid, the Jeffrey Dahmer sports complex isn't going to cut it. If baseball's whiny millionaires want to sit out a season, complaining that offering so few millions insults their families, let them know we'll find other entertainment.

The great legacies built by Mickey Mantle, Johnny Unitas, and Larry Bird are threatened by the Shinn and Steinbrenners of this world. If we demand better, I might be able to watch T.V. on Sundays again.

Yeah, it's just a game. They can play their games in their Compaq, Staples, and Fleet Centers.

I'll just take my Shea Stadium, Boston Garden and Lambeau Field. While I'm at it, I'll take a Boilermaker, a three-inch steak, and an Indiana-Michigan game from Assembly Hall.

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The Blue Banner is the student newspaper of the University of North Carolina at Asheville, published every Thursday, except during summer sessions, final exam weeks and holiday breaks. Our offices are located in Karpen Hall, room 244.

Our telephone number is (828) 251-6586 and our campus e-mail address is banner@unca.edu. An online version of The Blue Banner is also available at www.unca.edu.

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The Blue Banner reserves the right to reject any advertisement on the basis of content or space availability. Advertisements represent only the interests of the paying contributors.

The Blue Banner welcomes submissions of letters and articles for publication. All submissions are considered on the basis of timeliness.

Letters should be typed, single-spaced, and should not exceed 300 words. Letters for publication should also contain the author's signature, classification, major or other relationship with UNCA.

The deadline for letters is noon on Tuesday. If you have a submission, you may send it to The Blue Banner, Karpen 244, One University Heights, Asheville N.C. 28804.

The deadline for display ads is Monday at 2 p.m. Classified ads are due at 5 p.m. on Monday.

### Editorials

#### Time for the Holidays

It's time for jingle bells, Santa smells and extra poundage and joyous holiday shoppers. It's time for screaming children ("I want THIS and THIS"), traffic jams outside shopping centers and empty wallets. And for those who work in retail, the hell has only just begun.

The staff of The Blue Banner asks all holiday shoppers to be considerate to their local retail workers. Retail employees feel the stress of the holidays just as much, if not more so, than shoppers do, so treat them with the respect everyone else deserves.

Just imagine being behind a register or on a sales floor with minimal help from co-workers, while being pulled in seven different directions by 10 different customers, as the manager of the store hands you a work list and yells at you because some customers still haven't been helped.

Imagine having to work for a measly \$6.50 an hour to do work for a corporation that does not deserve your hard work, and having to deal with angry customers that speak to you like you're a piece of dirt on the ground.

Of course, none one can avoid the stress of the holidays, but everyone can try to make it easier for each other.

The holidays, which are supposed to be joyous and full of cheer, is last thing retail workers look forward to. Treating them horrible won't make their lives any easier or the holidays any more pleasant for anyone.

#### Congratulations to...

Ed Fickle: new Features Editor for Spring 2002  
Hollie Childers: new Sports Editor for Spring 2002

#### The issue of lack of security

The theft of computer hardware and a television from Owen Hall Nov. 26 illustrates the incredible lack of security available in that building, as well as the possibility of other buildings.

UNCA's Public Safety Investigator Jerry Adams said the building remains open late at night so art students can work on their school projects, which is perfectly understandable and applaudable on the part of administration's effort to accommodate students. However, why was a room not used by art students unlocked?

The accounting and management departments hold classes in that room; art students wouldn't need access to rooms other than spaces dedicated to the art department.

Public safety should now do what they should have done before, and either lock the room after the cleaning staff has finished or have hourly patrols of the building's interior.

Students should also take an initiative to improve their safety, and stop propping open the doors out of laziness and naivete.

This should not just be done for Owen Hall; it should be implemented for every building that has students working unusual hours, especially as exam week approaches.

UNCA needs to protect its students, as well as its expensive equipment.

#### Congratulations to graduates

The staff of The Blue Banner congratulates all December graduates, and hopes that everyone has a restful and happy holiday break. This is the last Blue Banner issue for the Fall 2001 semester.