

Statistics disprove allegations in letter on Hurskainen

Dear Editor,

I have been proud to be associated with UNC Asheville athletics since 1994. I was recently informed of the letter to the editor that you published a couple weeks back regarding a student athlete and soccer player named Lassi Hurskainen.

I've never met this young man, but it intrigued me enough to make a trip to Ramsey Library today to read the letter in its entirety. I am a proud Bulldog and fully support our athletic programs and the university, and I am ashamed *The Blue Banner* would publish such a letter. The decision and rationale to publish the letter were weak, in my opinion. Furthermore, even when published, it lacked any verifiable substance on the subject at hand; it simply was an attack on this one player for unknown personal reasons.

So, where is the merit to publishing this letter? I asked myself. Even if I don't agree with the letter being published, I would understand it better if, perhaps, there were some facts or basis to support the argument in the letter at least.

I delved into the Big South statistics on the conference Web site this evening to be my own guide (admittedly I do not follow our soccer teams close enough), as I would have hoped someone on *The Blue Banner* staff would have done prior to publishing and providing merit and space to this inaccurate letter.

From the statistics provided on that site through Nov. 5, Lassi is ranked as follows in four of the six goalkeeper categories.

2009 Season Statistics

1. **Saves** – 105 (No. 1 in the conference)
2. **Saves per game** – 6.18 (No. 2 in the conference)
3. **Save percentage** – 0.789% (No. 3 in the conference)
4. **Goals against average** – 1.64 (No. 6 in the conference)

2008 Season Statistics

1. **Saves** – 77 (No. 2 in the

The decision and rationale to publish the letter were weak, in my opinion.

conference)

2. **Saves per game** – 4.05 (No. 3 in the conference)

3. **Save percentage** – 0.762% (No. 3 in the conference)

4. **Goals against average** – 1.20 (No. 3 in the conference)

As I compare both years of this student athlete's career to get some insight as to his performance from one year to the next, I could find no significant drop-off to justify this letter's intent or meaning. In fact, it appears Lassi is having a better year individually than last year. Granted, the goals against average are up, but he's facing a greater number of shots on goal and making more saves.

So far as the team is concerned, the 2008 team had seven wins, eight losses and four ties. This year's team currently has six wins, 10 losses and two ties, with at least two games remaining to play. Both years' teams are in or finished in the sixth place position. Looking at the team's rosters the past two years, it seems this year's team is comprised of all freshmen and sophomores, while the 2008 squad had five seniors.

Young teams often struggle, but again I see no significant drop-off in play from the team angle either. Things do trickle from the top, Ben F., so criticize the coaches and question the athletics department, but there is no point in singling out one student athlete for a sport that fields 10 other players at one time unless you have a personal agenda. Lassi is a sophomore goalkeeper – give him some time, and for Pete's sake, some of your support. He's playing at a very high level in regard to his conference peers.

If you've ever played sports at a high level, you will know that athletes are ultra-competitive. We sometimes yell at each other. Does that make us terrible, ungrateful people now? Apparently so, from Ben F.'s perspec-

tive.

"*The Blue Banner* is a designated forum for free speech and welcomes letters to the editor, considering them on basis of interest, space and timeliness."

Is that really the only criteria for publishing letters in *The Banner*? Who exactly did *The Banner* feel was interested in Ben F.'s opinion of this one player three weeks after the soccer article he mentions? Additionally, whatever happened to truthfulness, accuracy, fairness and the limitation of harm?

If *The Banner* is willing to publish every negative letter received regarding any and all employees, faculty members or professors on campus from any student that has, in some small way, paid an associated fee to help support them, then what type of culture are you really promoting?

It may be free speech, but it has a toll on real people – people like Lassi, his parents, his friends, his teammates, his coaches and concerned alumni. Somewhere you folks missed that part. Nothing is free. Moreover, why would *The Blue Banner* further promote cowardice versus courage in publishing an inaccurate, anonymous account which could only further divide the campus?

This letter did not affect any real change for the men's soccer team. How could it have? If anything, it may have united them. Only time will tell if that is true, though.

All Bulldogs should be ashamed that we acted in this way and gave interest, space and time to prejudicial Ben F.

Lassi, keep your head up. Bulldogs of past, present and future are behind you and proud. Keep up the good work.

*Mark King, class of 1998,
biology student and men's
basketball player*

Athletic criticism should not focus on individual players

Dear Editor,

I feel *The Blue Banner* severely mishandled the recent letter to the editor sent by senior Ben F. dealing with soccer goalkeeper Lassi Hurskainen.

Primarily, I do not believe the mere presence of athletic fees gives students free reign to harshly critique individual players in an anonymous fashion any more than it gives them the right to callously disparage a performance at Belk Theatre or a student-produced art exhibit in Owen Hall.

Criticism regarding athletics should be directed toward the coaches and athletic directors that actually get paid for the products they put on the playing field.

The Blue Banner has a long history of giving a voice to unpopular or politically incorrect opinions and touching on issues that might not be well-received within the campus community. I hope the letter by Ben F. does not set a precedent of students using the school paper as a forum to anonymously attack fellow undergraduates involved in extracurricular activities supported by student fees. The rhetoric exhibited by Ben F. and given a voice by *The Blue Banner* does nothing but escalate the tension between various factions of the university.

Students have every right to question where, why and how their funds are being spent, but those discussions should be held in an open, honest and respectful fashion.

If you continue to abide by the letter-to-the-editor standards recently put forward, I wish you will at least only publish letters that contributors are willing to put their names behind. If you want to criticize individual students by name, you should at least have the gumption to show everybody your name as well. Unlike Mr. F., I will provide my last name and hope others will follow suit.

-Chad Mohn, class of 2006