

## O's front office frustrations

Colin Donohue  
Sports Editor

What's both completely sickening and frustrating at the same time? No, it's not being stuck behind Roseanne in an all-you-can-eat buffet line (I think she and Ravens lineman Tony Siragusa are cousins), it's the ineptitude of the Baltimore Orioles front office management. They are so bright, sometimes I think they were the marketing geniuses behind giving Chevy Chase his own talk show. What calls for the most concern, though, is the organization's seemingly total disregard to field a winning product.

Majority owner Peter Angelos and Vice President of Baseball Operations Syd Thrift have made themselves pariahs in Charm City. How they've lasted this long is a story for the X-Files. And their most recent inability to bring a big name player to Baltimore will not only have fans calling for their heads, but lining up to take a swing.

Paul Blair, a former Oriole who won a World Series with the Birds in '66, seems to have it all figured out. "We need to acquire more talent to keep up with the Yankees and the Red Sox," he said. Well thank you, Paul for that sage-like advice. And I'm not being facetious. It is this kind of thinking that has eluded the Orioles management since the final days of Pat Gillick in 1998. Please, a moment of silence for the good ol' days when Angelos kept his mouth shut and his checkbook open.

Oh, but it is still open. Do not fret, O's fans. Angelos said, "Definitely, the checkbook is still open. I spoke to Syd today, and there are some matters he's looking into." Wait a minute, Pete. What could Syd possibly be looking into, real estate ventures in Afghanistan?

This off-season provided the perfect opportunity for Angelos to sign a big name and solve the Orioles' bulimic offense. Barry Bonds, Jason Giambi, Tino Martinez and Juan Gonzalez were all free agents this year. Guess which one the Orioles signed? Marty Cordova. Uh-oh, here come the Orioles.

It's true, Cordova does bring the potential to hit .300 with about 20 homeruns, but he's often injured. Cordova's signing is merely another example of the front office signing a safe bet. They pick up a player who isn't great but is rather a tremendous role player. In an Orioles team comprised of role players, Cordova isn't a player who will make a huge impact. So goes the Orioles off-season spending spree. What about Juan Gonzalez? He returned to the Rangers for \$24 million over two years. In fact, the Orioles did not initiate contacts between Juan Gone, his agent called the Orioles. This, of course, inexorably places the blame on the O's once again. Why they didn't sign Gonzalez is an easy question to answer. They were afraid to. The O's have been burnt before by signing aged superstars whose primes were five years ago - most notably, of course, Albert Belle.

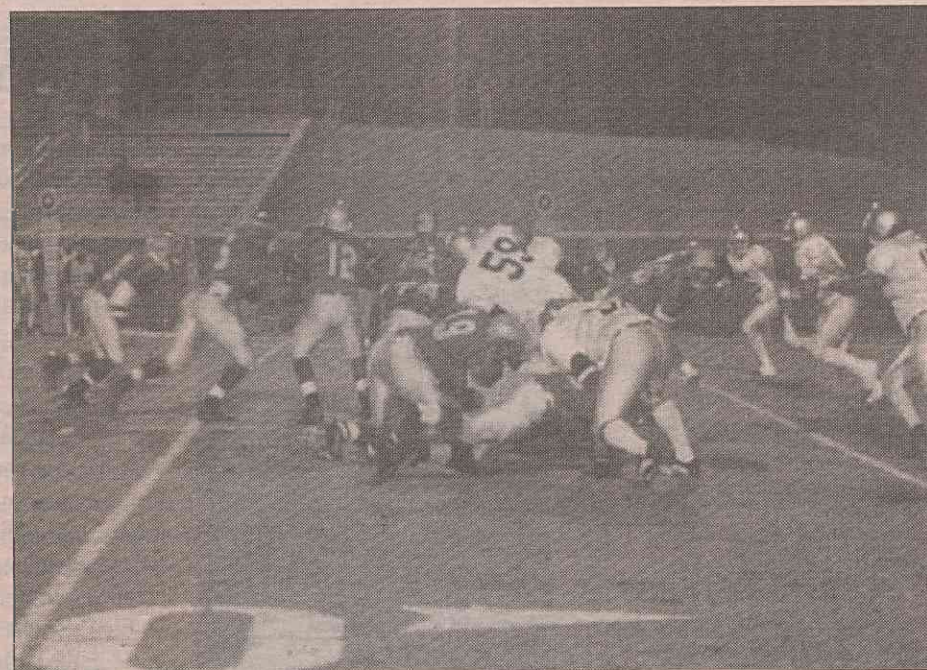
Angelos and the Orioles signed Belle for \$36 million over six years, but they signed an Albert Belle with a bad hip. They should've known full well he couldn't perform anywhere near as well as he had in Chicago and Cleveland. Not to mention the Orioles never had the protection in the lineup to which Belle had grown accustomed. So when his career ended abruptly last season after only two years with the Orioles, Angelos tightened the pocket and threw a chastity belt on the checkbook as a second line of defense.

Juan is far from Gone in the game of baseball. He hit .325 last year with 35 homeruns and 140 RBI. The Orioles were the perfect fit. And what did they do? They offered him three years just to say they were the only team that did - to make it appear as though they made an effort. However, they really didn't because they offered Gonzalez an incentive laden contract; the Rangers tendered hard cash up front.

Now the Orioles head into spring training with Cordova as their addition. It's going to be a long year for the Orioles again. Pitcher Pat Hentgen will not play this year due to Tommy John's surgery. Pitcher Scott Erickson is back, but his effectiveness is yet to be seen. Outfielder Chris Richard will be absent for half the season. The law of averages says that first baseman David Segui will go about week before getting injured, if he even gets out of spring training healthy.

Gonzalez may not have caused a huge turn around for the Orioles, but he would've brought star power back to Baltimore, as well as a sense of efficacy to the fans. He will still lose in Texas; they signed more bats instead of much-needed pitching, but the Orioles remain in a tougher position.

It appears Angelos' checkbook may be open, but he forgot the pen.



Amy Cowen / Photographer

Right guard Scott McLain (74) earned First Team All-America honors for solidifying an offensive line that allowed Phoenix backs to rush for 212.6 yards a game.

## McLain rewarded for outstanding play following disappointing 2-9 season

Holthouser returns to coach defense, Banks also honored

Kristin Simonetti  
Reporter

Two months removed from a sub par 2-9 season, the Phoenix football team remains in university headlines. Individual accolades began rolling in for the Phoenix on Jan. 5.

Don Hansen's National Weekly Football Gazette released the members of its NCAA-IAA All-America teams, and appearing at right guard for the first team was Phoenix senior offensive lineman Scott McLain. The honor was McLain's second consecutive recognition.

McLain entered the season a Football Gazette preseason All-American, largely in part to his status as a 2000 third team All-American.

As the only senior offensive starter, McLain anchored the Phoenix line in his final season, helping Elon average 212.6 rushing yards per game. The Phoenix rushing offense ranked 18th among 123 NCAA-IAA teams.

McLain will graduate as a three-year starter, a two-time captain and recipient of the 2000 John Frye Award for best offensive lineman.

Punt returner Arketa Banks and offensive lineman Josh Rowan were named to the 2001 First Team All-Independent.

Banks averaged 14.7 yards a return, an average that ranked 15th in the nation. McLain received second team honors.

Phoenix head coach Al Seagraves also announced the return of former defensive coordinator Will Holthouser to his coaching staff. He is replacing Morris Starr after two years on the staff.

"Will Holthouser brings a wealth of experience and great chemistry to our staff," Seagraves said. "He is an outstanding football coach, and he did a magnificent job when he was here back in 1998 and 1999."

Holthouser, who served as the defensive coordinator and linebackers' coach at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, will hold the same position with the Phoenix staff next season.

"Will and I have known each other for the past 15 years," Seagraves said. "It is great to have him back."

Prior to his tenure at Tennessee, Holthouser spent three years at Elon, two of which were at defensive coordinator. In 1999, under his tutelage, the Elon defense finished 9-2, allowing only 276.1 net yards per game.

The defense held opponents to 114 rushing yards per game and 17.5 points per game.

The 1999 Elon defense finished 21st in run defense and 16th overall in the nation.