

Washburn, N.C. State's 'Troubled Child', Disappointing

For the past few months, I have been interested in watching the unfolding of a "continuing drama" in the pro ranks...out in Oakland, California.

The Golden State Warriors are coached by former UNC star George Karl. Their number one draft choice last year, which Karl had a big hand in selecting, was former N.C. State "troubled child" Chris Washburn.

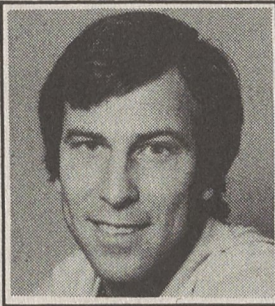
Washburn has been "disappointing from a standpoint of motivation," Karl said recently in an understatement. As I write this, Washburn is averaging 3.5 points per game, shooting 40 percent from the field and 32 percent from the free throw line, while playing 13 minutes a game. While those statistics normally wouldn't get a player much attention, Washburn is getting plenty of attention by coming late to most practices and meetings—to such an extent that even his own teammates have mostly run out of patience.

What did George Karl expect? I have known George personally since high school—we

both came from Western Pennsylvania. For anyone who used to watch him play, what you see is what you get. Karl is as intense as they come. That diving on the floor was no act. George Karl is an authentic 100 percent type. So why draft Washburn? Why not Kentucky's Kenny Walker, a guy just like Karl, maybe not quite as talented as Washburn, but a guy who is consistent, a competitor, a guy Karl could talk hoops with and enjoy being around?

It doesn't make sense. Especially since Golden State's owners, Jim Fitzsimmons and Dan Finnane have a reputation for being patient. "You don't build a team in one year," Finnane said. "It takes four or five years. We're long term guys."

With owners with that kind of attitude, why would Karl take Washburn? Is it just that old confidence—almost arrogance—that Karl always had on the court? Does he really think he can make Washburn into a responsible citizen and hard-working player? That's one problem



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with confidence. It isn't usually wise to believe you will be able to do something that three high school coaches and Jim Valvano couldn't do.

"I have trouble understanding lackadaisical effort and minds," Karl told a reporter. "I have to roll with the punches a little more. As much as we have to accept the players' strengths and liabilities on the court, we have to accept the strengths and liabilities of their mental preparation."

Sounds like "reporter talk," doesn't it? Sounds like Dean Smith saying it would be a "huge upset" if his team could beat UCLA. (He really did say that!) In private, Washburn is driving Karl crazy, and George is questioning himself over the wisdom of his choice. "We had a tough pick," Karl admitted. "Washburn fit our needs on the floor but he didn't fit what we wanted to do from the standpoint of building with good character and background and integrity...but to sit here now and

say Chris Washburn is a bad pick is not fair. The answer has to be made in two years."

At least Karl is still trying—to make up for what he himself is seeing as a mistake.

A few years back a fan called former famous coach Al McGuire and told him he knew of a kid McGuire could make into a great player.

"I don't want him," McGuire said immediately. "I don't want a kid I can make into a great player. I want a kid who can make me into a great coach."

George Karl took a project and hoped to turn him into a great player. It's what's known as inexperience.

Take it from Chris himself. Karl "is very demanding. He wants you to play hard constantly. He wants you to play hard everytime you're on the court...but some days you

might have had a rough day and it's hard to go out there and play like he wants you to."

Sounds like the perfect player-coach relationship, doesn't it?

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Christmas Gifts For Sports Fans

Headhunter lineman Charles Martin of Green Bay got a two game suspension for a low-life late hit on Jim McMahon. It's the toughest sentence that Pete Rozelle's ever handed down in his 26-years as NFL Commissioner. But Pete, it isn't strong enough. Why not suspend Martin the same length of time that McMahon's out? Then tack on the penalty time—that's a punishment more befitting the crime.

I hope it never happens, but if we ever go to war again, I want Mike Junkin of Duke and Chuck Faucette of Maryland in my foxhole. Toughest linebackers in college football. Just show the enemy some videotape of their tackles and you'll see tails between legs.

From Golf Digest this month, a list of TV cliches and their authors:

- Ben Wright (CBS) — "A watery grave."
- Lee Trevino (NBC) — "Ya know."
- Peter Alliss (CBS) — "Very good, indeed."
- Jim Simpson (ESPN) — "Leader in the clubhouse."

Next week, the Shrine Bowl teams assemble for the 50th annual event at 1:00 pm in Memorial Stadium on December 13th. One notable absentee from the roster, a little known kicker from Charlotte Country Day named Henry Adkins. Little known in his backyard, but considered a plum of a college recruit. Adkins is currently being recruited heavily by Notre Dame, Southern Cal and Penn State. And remember, the Shrine Bowl won't even consider athletes from independent schools.

If you're Christmas shopping for sports fans, check out the official NBA and NFL catalogues. \$65.00 gets you an official leather Spalding NBA roundball. For only \$59.00, it's the Wilson official NFL oblong with Pete Rozelle's autograph.

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