

Keep the cheerleaders, but toss out the exploiters

David Condon

Chicago Tribune (1963-Current file); Sep 27, 1978;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers Chicago Tribune (1849 - 1987)

pg. E3

Keep the cheerleaders, but toss out the exploiters

CHEERLEADERS ARE A traditional part of the football scene. They have been since the era when old grads tucked flasks of bootleg nectar into pockets of their raccoon coats before heading to the stadium.

The cheerleaders who pranced and yelled for Illinois, during Saturday's invasion by Stanford, were apple-cheeked, wholesome, well-scrubbed youngsters who reflected credit on the type of feminine scholars attracted to a great state university. Nor have I seen any cheerleaders at other Midwestern schools who didn't look like your sister, daughter, or the girl next door.

On the postgraduate level, we have the Honey Bears. They are those gals who try to liven up the crowd when action gets dull at Bear games, an assignment that often has the girls working double-time.

I've never seen the Honey Bears behave in any manner that was out of keeping with the dignity of the Bear organization. The young ladies are out to help provide enthusiasm and since their organization have done so, decently.

THE HONEY BEARS, to be honest, are a refreshing diversion when you have watched football as long as I have watched it. There are dozens of different ways for a football team to advance the bag of wind into the end zone, not many of them known to the Bears, and when you have seen

In the Wake of the News

By David Condon



them all it's nice to have young ladies stomping and yelling and trying to revitalize your interest in the spectaculars of the gridiron.

Marching bands have the same effect. So it's not a matter of me being a girlwatcher rather than a football addict. It's just that girls and bands and Jack Frost all are attached to the football world that I have known since cheering for the Albuquerque Bulldogs to beat the Tucumcari Rattlesnakes.

Unfortunately, there are those who try to capitalize on anything that commands public enthusiasm in sport. Gamblers someday may ruin pro football if brawling fans in the stands do not beat them to it.

Proselytizing, big money games, and the mania for a super

conference may be preludes to the demise of college football.

THE COSTS OF providing equipment, and a rash of injuries, may mean that we're near the day when high school men will not readily find the opportunity to play varsity football.

The greed for money, the lack of concern, the lust to win at any cost, the demand for violence on the gridiron followed by violence in the stands, can destroy the great physical competition we have come to enjoy on the football field.

Similarly, there are those who have been exploiting the cheerleaders and inviting the possibility that such avenues of activity may become closed to healthy, vigorous young women who want to fringe the football scene as much as aging sports writers want to be on the football fringes. You have guessed, of course, that I refer to those who would exploit the cheerleaders as sex objects.

Those exploiters finally have become so brazen that pro football teams are taking long looks at the increasing emphasis on cheerleading squads. This is no surprise.

IT HAS BEEN building up. Not long ago my friend. Take the Points Nenos, whose last known address was "somewhere on Wells Street," was dickering for loan sharks to finance an idea that he guaranteed would make millions.

"What I want to do," said Take the Points, "is present

National Football League games during intermissions of shows at the go-go dance spots."

If you wonder where he got that idea, you haven't been awake since some football clubs have apparently become as interested in promoting shapely bodies as in signing bulky, muscular bodies. Some pro football clubs have reached the daring stage in promotional posters of their cheerleaders. So it was only one step further for the girlie magazines to try to capitalize.

A pox on the skin mag hustlers for not staying in their own racket; three cheers and a tiger for the pro football leaders who evidenced respect for the dignity of women.

SOMETHING WOULD be lost if girl cheerleaders were banished from the football scene. The girls decently reflect the joy and abandon and vigor of youth; a pleasant contrast to the violence that seems to be epidemic at times.

The Honey Bears are the ideal cheerleading group and certainly are properly costumed: They do not show as much as the Dallas gals, but a bit more than the Bear offense shows us.

Cheers for the Honey Bears. Let's hope they're around when there's reason to also cheer for something imaginative and effective in that Bear offense. Otherwise, I suggest we keep the cheerleaders and forfeit the football game.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.