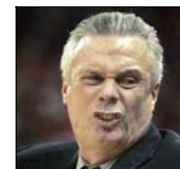


Monday Morning

"We try to get them with our charm and wit. We've lost a lot of them."

Wisconsin basketball coach **Bo Ryan**, on his inability to use text messaging to recruit players



STARTING LINEUP

BY DAN STEINBERG AND DESMOND BIELER

Folks at U-Va. are understandably excited about their new 15,219-seat arena, which made its official debut last night. We're just fired up that they chose to name it after the bass player for Led Zeppelin. John Paul Jones Arena, right? Dudes, that's awesome! And we're not the only ones who can't wait to hear them get the Led out in various ways:

"WHEN THE LEVEE BREAKS" **Dave Leitao:** Cavs' coach brags that he has a bathroom in his new office. Now Al Groh won't be the only Virginia coach able to sit in his office and watch things go down the drain.

"RAMBLE ON" **LeBron James:** Walks off court before end of game against Atlanta. Donald Rumsfeld expressed surprise at the scene, as he figured it was time for one of the Hawks to quit.

"HEARTBREAKER" **Larry Brown:** Agrees to \$18.5 million settlement after dismissal by Knicks. New York officials said that was a bargain compared to what they're paying some other people to not be of any use to the team.

"COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN" **Brendan Haywood:** Reportedly gets in a hair-pulling fight with teammate Etan Thomas. It was a pleasant change of pace for Haywood, who usually prompts his teammates to pull out their own hair.

"DAZED AND CONFUSED" **Etan Thomas:** Reports indicate he was on the receiving end of a Haywood body slam. It makes him the most famous poet to be body slammed since Leaping Lanny Poffo.

"OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY" **Gary Sheffield:** Traded by the Yankees to the Tigers. Al Roker was temporarily distraught when he heard that Sheff was leaving town.

"GOING TO CALIFORNIA" **Bud Black:** Introduced by Padres as new manager. Padre-turned-free-agent David Wells said he'd be more inclined to return to San Diego now that he knows there's always going to be a Bud in the clubhouse.

"YOUR TIME IS GONNA COME" **The Nats:** Reportedly set to hire Manny Acta as manager. Things are frosty between the D.C. Council and Nats ownership, so the team is hoping that having an Acta take charge in Washington can end the cold war.

"TEN YEARS GONE" **Heath Shuler:** Failed Redskins QB returns to Washington, this time as a congressman. Constituents in his North Carolina district immediately begin calling for Jason Campbell.

"THE BATTLE OF EVERMORE" **Buckeyes and Wolverines:** Win convincingly to set up a matchup already being touted as the game of the century. To honor the occasion, Maurice Clarett promises to again join the Century Club.

"THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME" **The Terps:** Another week, another one-point win has Maryland talking BCS. Even the Democrats haven't gotten this much mileage out of a string of razor-thin victories.

"STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN" **Rutgers:** Jersey school continues dream season with home upset of No. 3 Louisville. Delirious fans tore down the goalposts and paraded them through at least eight different rest areas.

BENCHED BCS hopefuls, JoePa, Dennis Hastert, Shea Stadium.



FRAMEGRAB



BY VICTOR FRILE — REUTERS

Some Serious Hang Time

Honda rider Maikel Melero of Spain performed a risky jump on his motorcycle during a freestyle stunt show in Madrid on Saturday.

THE CHAT

Nick Cannon is an actor, comedian, rapper, host of MTV's improv comedy show "Wild 'N Out" and owner of the hip-hop clothing line, PNB Nation. Cannon will appear in a number of upcoming movies including "Bobby", a fictionalized account of the events leading to the assassination of Robert Kennedy, which will be released Friday.

You've been acting and performing since you were young. Did you have the normal high school sports experience?
Yeah, but not like an athlete. I did the pep rallies. I was in charge of all the school spirit at the football games. I was too small to play football, so I made sure everybody was hyped. I was the announcer. I never stopped entertaining.

Before you moved to L.A., were you a fan of any teams in San Diego?
I grew up on the Chargers. Those were [Junior] Seau years. The trip to the Super Bowl. You know, San Diego Super Chargers.

So did you root for L.A. teams once you moved?
I'm great friends with Shaq. So when he was on the Lakers, I was definitely rocking with him there.

Is he as likable as he seems? Or is that just in front of the camera?
Shaq is the most likable person in the world. Seriously. And he is the funniest person I know, too. Some people don't realize that even in his interviews, nine times out of 10, he's being real silly. Even when he's got his serious face on.

You always have to watch your back with Shaq. We're trying to get him on "Wild 'N Out" right now because he'll pull a joke out on you real quick.
As a guy in the fashion industry, what



CANNON

do you think about the dress code? Can you help those guys out?

We've got some fly button-ups or whatever they need. Guys are wearing it. If they need that touch of haberdashery, we can make it happen with the PNB Nation line.

I think it was a good idea. My man [David] Stern said let's send these guys out there dressed to impress. We can't always look like we're from the 'hood. I'm a huge fan of putting together a nice suit and looking fly.

You've done so many sports-related movies. Do you look for those types of roles?

Absolutely. And we have some more on the horizon. You're gonna see me get it poppin' with the sports world.

Basketball. Soccer. Boxing. How do you hop from sport to sport like that?

That's the great thing about acting. You get the chance to train in some areas that most people would never get the chance. I never played soccer in my life but, there I was, running on the field with David Beckham in "Goal 2." That's the beauty of being an actor.

Did you hang with any of those soccer players?

Yeah. Beckham was the coolest dude on the set. When you see him, everybody automatically knows, that's like Michael Jordan over there. Everybody's like not looking him in the eye, looking down.

And I knew who he was. But I didn't know him like that. So I was just kickin' it with him. Walkin' up to him, like 'Yo, what's poppin'?' And he told me he was a fan of my music and stuff. So, as far as I'm concerned, Beckham is a cool cat.

— Sonny Amato

COUCH SLOUCH

Norman Chad

He Loves L.A. Hoops

From my somewhat modest Los Angeles neighborhood, through the waft of purple haze and unpublished screenplays, I can see the line of BMWs slowly streaming toward Staples Center. And why are they bumper-to-bumper to pay \$30 for parking?

Because here in Tinseltown — that's right, my friends, where broken dreams and nightmarish sitcoms are made — we are home to the NBA's Clippers and the NBA's Lakers, who just might be the best in the West.

(In Los Angeles, we have two of everything: Two NBA teams, two NHL teams, two MLB teams, two Hilton sisters and two Botox procedures per household. We used to have two pro football teams; now we just have NFL Sunday Ticket.)

At any given moment this season, the Clippers and the Lakers will sit atop the Pacific Division. The curious thing here: Staples Center will fill up, but most of Southern California doesn't even manage a yawn — yawning is clinically proven to induce premature wrinkling — in regard to the NBA before playoff time.

Then again, L.A. doesn't get excited about anything. (The only things we ever rally around are the Oscars, the Emmys, the Grammys and the annual unveiling of the new line of Bentley Coupes.)

(Boy, there's a lot of money in this town. Over at David Geffen's estate, it grows on trees.)

(Did I mention that I live in a somewhat modest neighborhood? For me to get to 90210, it takes two buses, one transfer and a reference from the late Aaron Spelling.)

The average Angelino can't name two Lakers other than Kobe Bryant, any Clipper or the current mayor. But we can tell you who's most likely to get booted from "American Idol" in a heartbeat!

(Speaking of Kobe, that tattoo on his right arm is rather elaborate and labyrinthine. From certain angles, it looks like a Hieronymus Bosch painting; from other angles, it looks like a reconfigured map of Eastern Europe.)

The Clippers are a little better than the Lakers, but the Lakers still have more cachet. The stars always come out for the Lakers — by the way, Jack, take the shades off; it's a basketball game, not a hold 'em tournament — while NBA purists favor the Clippers. You can scalp a Lakers ticket for the price of a newborn baby. You can scalp a Clippers ticket for the price of, well, a Clippers ticket.

(Incidentally, the NBA hires people to sit in Staples Center seats until season ticket holders arrive late in the second quarter.)

(Yes, the teams share the same building. The Clippers used to play at the Sports Arena, which, I believe, was home to secret U.S. government nuclear testing in the early 1960s.)

Because the Lakers and the

Clippers play each other four times a season and, obviously, don't have to venture out of town to do so, some NBA observers consider this a big competitive advantage. For both teams, less travel should translate to better rested.

Ah, but what these travel neophytes don't understand is this: It is easier to go from downtown L.A. to downtown Cleveland than it is to go from downtown L.A. to downtown L.A.

You read that right. Speaking for my fellow Angelinos, we get rest when we leave town.

It took me 25 minutes of the other day just to pull out of my driveway.

You don't think the 405 freeway is a parking lot? Then why are there parking lot attendants standing in the middle of the 405? Heck, traffic is so slow on the 110, most new Starbucks here open on the 110.

Anyway, come playoff time, the Lakers and the Clippers will meet. It will be Kobe Bryant and Lamar Odom versus Elton Brand and Sam Cassell (they're Clippers!) — Jack Nicholson behind one L.A. bench, Billy Crystal behind the other — with the winner likely the Western Conference representative in the NBA Finals.

At least that's the script I just finished writing. Of course, I can't get anybody to read it.

Ask The Slouch

Q. Before a high school soccer game in North Carolina, the home team played a speech by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels over the P.A. system. Would you characterize this as a disturbing development? (Steve Clements; Liberty, Tex.)

A. Strangely, Goebbels listened to Pat O'Brien's "win one for the Gipper" speech in "Knute Rockne All American" the night before Germany invaded Russia in World War II.

Q. Is there any reasonable explanation for LeBron James walking off the court last week in the final seconds of overtime and his Cavaliers trailing the Atlanta Hawks, 104-95? (Michael Smith; Dishman, Wash.)

A. It's entirely possible he was running late for a dinner date with Randy Moss.

Q. Whatever happened to the Oakland Raiders' famed vertical offense? (Corey Massick; Glendale, Wis.)

A. It is a victim of horizontal integration, otherwise known as "sacking Andrew Walter."

Q. If Heath Shuler turns out to be only a so-so congressman, can Nancy Pelosi replace him mid-term with Gus Frerotte? (Alan Zimmerman; Charlottsville)

A. Pay the man, Shirley.

You, too, can enter the \$1.25 Ask The Slouch Cash Giveaway. E-mail asktheslouch@aol.com and, if your question is used, you win \$1.25 in cash!

THE POLL

Turns out, you were right. You knew exactly what last week's big victory over Dallas meant. That'll teach us to doubt you.

It means nothing. 31.2 percent
This is the kind of victory they can build on. 13.8 percent
With this team, who knows? 55 percent

THISWEEK

[visit www.washingtonpost.com]

An offseason of great expectations and Super Bowl aspirations has morphed into a 3-6 season. Who is most responsible for the Washington Redskins' failures?

1. Daniel Snyder
2. Joe Gibbs
3. Vinny Cerrato
4. Al Saunders
5. Gregg Williams
6. The players



7 Days

WEDNESDAY

GEORGETOWN AT VANDERBILT
The 2006-07 version of Hoya Paranoia kicks off in earnest as Georgetown travels to Nashville to face the team that handed the team its first of just 10 losses last season. [MASN, 9 p.m.]

at Buccaneers Sunday, 1



THURSDAY

MARYLAND VS. ST. JOHN'S
The Terrapins and guard D.J. Strawberry travel to Madison Square Garden for the semifinals of the Coaches vs. Cancer Tournament and their first test of the season. [ESPN2, 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.]

vs. Falcons Sunday, 1

FRIDAY

HURRICANES AT CAPITALS
Washington faces off against division rival and defending Stanley Cup champion Carolina. The Capitals won three of the eight games between the two last year. [Comcast SportsNet, 7 p.m.]

at Knicks Wed., 7:30
at Pistons Fri., 8
vs. Cavaliers Sat., 7



SATURDAY

MICHIGAN AT OHIO STATE
The top two teams in the nation face off in what many college football fans consider this year's national championship game. Michigan Coach Lloyd Carr, left. [WJLA-7, WMAR-2, 3:30 p.m.]

at Panthers Today, 7:30
vs. Bruins Wed. 7
vs. Hurricanes Fri., 7
at Bruins Sat., 7