

We've found the "giant sucking sound" that Ross Perot spoke about

It's coming from where UW basketball fans fondly call the "Double A." The Arena-Auditorium in Laramie, Wyoming. When the men's basketball team coach, in all his "wethead" splendor, makes an appearance. You can hear it from here.

To be a good Cowboys fan, you must have a short memory or a faulty one.

You have to remember that Steve McClain had a terrible final year as coach of the Cowboys men's basketball team and you must remember Wyoming as a school with a great football tradition.

Both are wrong but if that's what gets you through the night, cling to those memories. As has been pointed out on these pages, except for the Paul Roach years, the UW football program has not been consistently "good" for decades. And Joe Tiller had one "great" years among the several he coached in Laramie. Memories may recall differently but them's the facts, folks. Them's the facts.

Back to the Brylcream Boy (BB).

At the time his pal from Portland State decided to release McClain and bring in a friend to coach the men's team, Little Steven had led his final team to a 17-15 record and were 12-2 in Laramie. Still, his act had grown stale and attendance languished at an average of 6,069.

That attendance was more than 4,000 a game less than he had produced five years earlier. In the 2002-03 season, when UW was still playing "real" teams like Kansas and North Carolina instead of the culinary school Johnson & Wales and Houston Baptist, average attendance was 10,108 with several games exceeding 10,000 - including 15,418 for BYU on February 5, 2003. Seven years later, after destruction by Team BS (Burman and Schroyer), fewer than 5,000 attended the CSU game. There were no 5,338 at the TCU game. More like 2,338 attended.

During McClain's tenure, the team was generally competitive and didn't schedule just pre-conference tomato can opponents to try to pile up a winning record. It worked last year for Schroyer but not this year. Teams the UW women's squad could have defeated pounded the UW men's squad this year.

Losing is bad enough. But losing to schools who have to walk around the campus during the week leading up to playing UW, asking tall teenagers if they had ever played basketball and how they'd like to suit up and play against the University of Wyoming - now, that's worse.

Coupled with several players this faux coach recruited quickly leaving the team, there should be nowhere to go but up but you just can't count on that with the Portland Pair at the helm. There will be those who defend Burman on the strength of this past football season. Not so fast.

Please be reminded one more time - the 2009 UW football team did not defeat any team with a winning record during the season - only winning MWC games over teams below them in the standings (plus Weber State and Florida Atlantic) and losing to every team above them in the standings. The final two wins over CSU and Fresno State came on the toe of an unwanted, unrecruited place kicker whose father pleaded with UW to allow his son to "walk on." It wasn't exactly by design or good recruiting that the team won a so-called "Bowl" game.

Schroyer just does not have a clue. He is remindful of Benny Dees. When BB was assessed a technical foul recently, he spent the rest of the game in a funk - pacing in front of his bench with his arms folded across his ample chest. Reminiscent of Dees in the NCAA game against Loyola-Marymount. BD also had no clue.

The current team has two good players (Afam Muojeke [injured] and Desmar Jackson), four fair players (Adam Waddell, Djibril Thiam, Amath M'Baye and Daylen Harrison), three mediocre players (JayDee Luster, Arthur Bouëdo and Ryan Dermody), one stiff (Boubacar Sylla), two guys who don't know where the court is (James Dean and Rob Watsabaugh) and one very poor coach.

What has this mediocrity cost the State of Wyoming? Attendance is below 5,000 a game (4,861 through the UNLV game - UW's most lopsided home loss in over 50 years) compared to 10,108 eight years ago. At \$20 per ticket, the per game loss to UW (and Wyo residents) exceeds \$100,000 - just for ticket sales alone, not including concessions, programs, etc. The home-heavy schedule this season had 18 home games, 11 away and 1 in Casper. The rotten play this year, then, will cost UW coffers about \$1.8 million.

There are five games remaining (this is being updated on Wednesday night after the TCU loss) - at New Mexico, Utah and UNLV. No chance for a win among those games. The two remaining home games are against BYU and Air Force. Possibly one more win 9-22 with pigtail game loss.

Team BS went 19-14 last year and bought a post-season tournament game which 2,407 loyal fans paid to see UW lose in Laramie. 12 of the first 15 games this season were played in Laramie and Casper. Yet, 9-16 now? This program is definitely on the skids. It is so obvious even the shillers at the WTE have taken notice. It will get worse before it gets better.

Footnote: Yes, yes. I know. Don't end a sentence with a preposition. If I were a real journalist or pretended to be one, I probably wouldn't. But I'm not and I don't. So, I plant an occasional grammatical or spelling error so those who read the Cheyenne Herald then post anonymously to local internet forums can believe they are smarter than I am. They're not.

The daily is sending out small children to sell subscriptions?

Crewing, they call it?

Hasn't it been determined that sending children out door-to-door for any purpose is unwise, ill-advised and sometimes even unsafe?

So, the local daily has become so desperate to get subscribers that they're soliciting parents to serve up young children to work the neighborhoods trying to sell a paper they cannot even give away in the grocery stores?

It has become increasingly difficult to buy Girl Scout cookies these days because the Troops don't want, and parents won't allow, the young girls to go to houses unaccompanied. Rightly so, I'm afraid.

Are the national and regional advertisers finally realizing that the saturation level of the WT-E has dropped to the point that it has become a concern to them if it's worth it to insert their flyers in the Sunday newspapers? If it's economical? Large retailers want as close to full penetration in a market as they can get. Cost is of less importance to them than circulation. A daily paper, like Cheyenne's, that offers far less than 50% coverage, concerns those retailers. At some point, they will do what department stores have done in regional malls - band together to attract business - accepting that advertising with your competitor is wiser than missing more than 50% of the market by using a diminishing newspaper.

When unrelated businesses circulate their advertising in a common piece via the USPS, it is called "marriage mail." While postage is costly, so is missing more than half of your potential market.

The traditional newspaper business is sucking air right now. The loss of huge amounts of classified advertising is crippling some. Even to the point of seeking government aid. For the supposed watchdog to accept financial aid from the dog being watched is just flat wrong.

One alternative to declining ad revenue is to try to increase subscriptions. Talk about your Catch 23, as a former mayor called it. Today's young people feel they can get all the news they want, and to many, that is very, very little, by reading it on the internet. In this market, if the daily newspaper lost the inserts, they'd be toast. Many subscribers pay for home delivery and even newsstand purchases are solely for advertising material. Without those flyers, the daily newspaper's circulation would drop precipitously.

Asking children who they hope residents would sympathize with to pitch newspaper subscriptions to homeowners at their door is a highly questionable practice.

By virtue of the continuous pleading for "crewers," it appears there have been few takers. Parents should not be so desperate as to allow their children to go door-to-door hawking newspaper subscriptions. Remember, most couples now work during the day so the only time children could find buyers at home would be in the evenings - much of the year after dark. Kids can't even go Trick-or-Treating alone anymore and there are usually throngs of other children out there with them. Parents are far too protective and concerned to risk children approaching a stranger's door alone. They've tried everything to sell their paper. Nobody's buying. Children can't do what you can't.

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