

# How long will it take the UW men's basketball program to recover after the Portland Pair are gone? Can it ever fully recover?



When Little Steven (McClain) was signed to a contract that benefited him when attendance grew, his self-interest was to put cheeks in the seats and the best and fastest way to accomplish that in any sport is to win. At any cost. Win.

Grades and graduation were secondary. "Just win, baby!" became Steven's goal and winning would put money in his bank account. Recruiting players you wouldn't allow your own children to hang around with became acceptable. A goal.

In his final season at UW, McClain's team went 17-15. 12-2 in Laramie. Average attendance was 6,069.

That wasn't good enough for the new athletic director, Tom Burman, so he hired a coach from the same college he came to UW from - Portland State. It's not like Laramie can attract highly successful head coaches. And, when the hire had been modestly successful for a season or two, like Benny Dees at New Orleans and Joby Wright at Miami (Ohio), they didn't have a lengthy track record of success. At least Steve McClain had been an assistant coach in a very successful program - TCU - under Billy Tubbs.

And, in spite of a home-heavy schedule against tomato can opponents,

Brylcream Boy is not only unsuccessful on the court, he can't put cheeks in the seats. Attendance is woeful.

After Joe Legerski reintroduced UW basketball fans to winning basketball, the men's team cannot follow suit. In spite of scheduling teams that couldn't beat their own intramural guys or a "Y" team, UW can't even be assured of wins over the likes of Monmouth and Hampton.

It's embarrassing.

And how much money is the wayward men's basketball program costing the taxpayers of Wyoming? Not just for inflated salaries of two men who should be running recreation sports programs (tee ball, etc.) in some small town but for diminishing attendance.

During the 2002-2003 season, when UW basketball fans had players they could relate to, Marcus Bailey, Josh Davis and Uche Nsonwu-Amadi, and even Jay Straight, average attendance for home games was 10,138. Last year, when UW was 12-4 at home, attendance had declined to 5,326 per game - a loss of almost 5,000 per game. In Little Steven's final year, attendance was almost 15% higher than Brylcream Boy's second season, which increased by 64 over his first.

Never during McClain's tenure did attendance dip to the levels of Schroyer's first three years. The bottom has not been reached. And the solution is not to schedule schools with culinary classes its specialty or schools who once were great but now are pathetic (Loyola Marymount).

Worst, though, is the way BB and Burman are building a team of transfers and prep school players. On the UW roster, the four Stoneridge Prep alum are shown as that being their "high school." That is not true. Stoneridge is a basketball factory that takes kids who have finished high school, either in the U.S. or abroad, and want another year or two to improve their basketball skills before entering a junior college or university.

A true high school graduate is Adam Waddell, a Cody, Wyoming product. Waddell is the most entertaining and hardest working player on this year's squad. His national exposure for the 180 dunk last year showed him coming to his feet smiling. This kid plays hard and if there were a few more like him on the current team, UW supporters would have a reason to come to the games - win or lose.

There are two other direct-from-high-school players on the team but they didn't get a chance to play until prep school

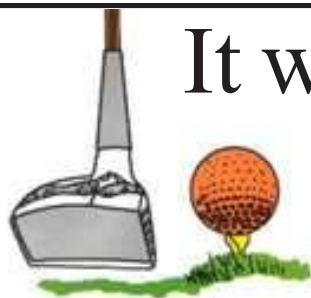
immigrants were injured or left school.

You just cannot build a program around a bunch of transfers or 23 year old sophomores (Boubacar Sylla) and juniors (Djibril Thiam) out of prep schools. And you won't be able to recruit 18 year old high school graduates who have to worry scholarships are given to 22 year old prep school mercenaries who come in as freshmen and they'll have to wait for three years to play - no matter their talent level.

An announcer said the other night that the UW men's team was "young." That it was the third youngest program in the NCAA. It is young only by class in school. By age, it is not young at all. In fact, it is much older than the women's team. Legerski reloads with young women who recently graduated from high school - in fact, three are from Wyoming high schools.

The five remaining prep school alums are: a 20 year old freshman, a 20 year old sophomore, a 23 year old junior, a 23 year old sophomore and a 21 year old sophomore who is now injured.

The announced attendance at men's game is inflated. It will drop below an honest 4,000 before Dab'll Do Ya is gone.



## It was never about Tiger. It was about us.

Apparently, the PGA continues to hold golf tournaments.

But who cares?

Men's golf for the past decade has been all about Tiger Woods. And, when he doesn't play, no one cares and no one watches the televised tournaments. It would seem that attendance WT (without Tiger) will be way off as well.

The women have a different problem. While the loss of Annika Sorenstam had an effect, the fact that the other best women's golfers like Lorena Ochoa and Paula Creamer were brought down to earth by the skills of the South Korean contingent that now dominates the women's tournaments, has hurt viewership and sponsorship on the LPGA tour.

Tiger's late father was his Colonel Parker. He cultivated Tiger as a golfer from a very young age. The little boy went on the Mike Douglas Show to display his skills. At two years of age! He went on to dominate college golf so his success on the PGA tour came as no surprise.

Unfortunately for Tiger, his father died.

Whether the father's influence on the son's life would have changed Tiger's behavior is arguable. Earl Woods had, himself, had an extramarital affair that hurt Tiger and his mother greatly. But, that misstep by his father did not influence Tiger's adult misbehavior positively.

From early childhood, Tiger Woods was in the spotlight. Like the Colonel did with Elvis, Earl Woods controlled Tiger's every move. To the end, the father was beside his son at every success. Tiger's ethnicity is one quarter Chinese, one-quarter Thai, one quarter African American, one eighth Native American and one-eighth Dutch. He refers to himself as "Cablinasian."

Tiger started to win golf tournaments at the age of eight. He won the Junior World Championship six times. As a high schooler in Anaheim, California and 15 years old, he became the youngest player ever to become U.S. Junior Amateur Champion.

Born on the next to last day of 1975, by 1991 he was garnering national awards. He enrolled in Stanford University in the fall of 1994 and won his first collegiate event and was named Stanford's Male Freshman of the Year (an award that encompasses all sports) in 1995.

After two years at Stanford, he left school and turned professional. He had already played in one Masters and tied for 41st, the only amateur to make the cut.

Upon turning pro at 20, he signed endorsement contracts with Nike for \$40 million and Titleist for \$20 million.

Tiger Woods was on his way.

He also adopted his practice of wearing a red shirt on the final day of tournaments. First, in recognition of his time at Stanford and also to symbolize "assertiveness and aggressiveness."

His success on the PGA tour is well-known.

He was named PGA Player of the Year after his first year, the first time that had happened - that a rookie was so honored. He has won 14 majors and been PGA Player of the Year ten times, as well as PGA Tour Money Leader nine times.

Tiger Woods has been an incomparable golfer. A lousy husband and father, though.

And those of us who tuned in on Sundays to watch the final round of a PGA tournament as likely as not did so because Tiger Woods was on the leader board and might win or at least make a run at the leader(s).

Now that he is on hiatus, who bothers?

Are most golf fans mad because Tiger misbehaved? Because he turned out to be a louse when it came to fidelity? Why would so many overlook the immoral or unlawful behavior of a president or presidential candidate and then hold a golfer

to a higher standard?

Tiger didn't break any laws. He's a creep and took his marriage vows with a grain of salt but if every person who is guilty of that were behind bars, there would be few jailors. Me, my wife and who else?

No, we're mad at Tiger Woods, not so much because he cheated - REALLY cheated - on the beautiful Elin, but because he took away our enjoyment of watching him dominate golf as no other has. You can talk about your Tom Watsons and Jack Nicklaus but, when they competed, the talent pool was very shallow.

When Tiger comes back, golf fans will be embarrassed to pull for him. Many will secretly be glad he's back winning tournaments, and he should be doing that for another dozen years of so, but can't admit it without looking supportive of his unforgivable behavior.

Why did he get married in the first place? That came as a surprise. Knowing, as he did, that he liked to be a "player," both on the course and in the boudoir, why didn't he just stay single? Then, he'd be respected instead of reviled as he is now. How many professional athletes and celebrities have numerous children they don't acknowledge or provide for? Tug McGraw denied his singer son Tim was his until after Tim became famous. Tiger knew his father was unfaithful.

Maybe it's genetic.