

## **EDITORIAL**

### *Too Cool to Have Fun*

On Nov. 24, the Washington State Cougars defeated the Washington Huskies 42-35 in the 100<sup>th</sup> meeting of the state's Apple Cup. The winner avoided a tie for last place in the Pacific 10 Conference. Nonetheless, the game was played in Seattle in front of 72,000 enthusiastic football fans.

A week before the game, Craig Smith of the *Seattle Times* wrote, "The game is such a major event on the state's athletic landscape that Boeing became the official sponsor this year."

Gov. Christine Gregoire added her sentiments: "As governor, and a sports fan, I can't imagine anything more enjoyable than the intense competition between the Cougs and the Dawgs."

After the game, Gov. Gregoire, like Gov. Locke before her, celebrated with the winning Cougars by presenting the trophy in their locker room. The Cougars may have even mussed the governor's hair during the raucous celebration.

A week later, Oregon and Oregon State played the annual Civil War, a rivalry which has gone on even longer than the Apple Cup. But for this game there was no trophy and no governor in the victorious locker room, although the winner and loser of the Civil War did head to bowl games. The Cougars and Huskies stayed home — their game was played solely for state pride.

In Washington state, despite being home to three professional sports teams — the Mariners, the Seahawks and the Supersonics — the Apple Cup is a big, big deal.

In Oregon, such celebration and homespun state pride would be considered, well, *déclassé*. Let's face it, we have come to believe we are way too cool, too progressive for that.

Instead of the locker room, it's easier to picture our elitist leaders sipping microbrews at a Portland pub or watching the Civil War game at the vineyard of a former political godfather who allegedly raped a 14-year-old girl while no one reported it. Over fine vintages, they would prefer to talk bicycling and windsurfing.

Sound bitter? Snide? Perhaps, but that is the culture creeping and seeping into Oregon's psyche.

Cultural differences between Washington and Oregon may seem slight, but add up enough of those little differences and it may explain why Washington, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, ranks 14<sup>th</sup> in per capita income in the nation while Oregon lags at 28<sup>th</sup>.

Another example of Oregon's snide progressivism surfaced in November when the Davis Cup final came to Portland, its first American appearance in 15 years.

Three days before the competition, *USA Today* ran an upbeat sports page cover story about Davis Cup Captain Patrick McEnroe, "The Quiet McEnroe — After growing up in older brother John's shadow, Patrick has found a niche in every corner of tennis." Wrote *USA Today*, "Indeed, with the USA's first Davis Cup title in a dozen years within grasp this weekend against defending champion Russia, Patrick McEnroe is in position to lay claim to one title his older brother cannot: captaincy of a Davis Cup title team."

One day later, the *Oregonian's* kickoff coverage was decidedly negative. The *Oregonian* headline read: "U.S. Men's Tennis Being Aced Out — Interest in the sport has waned due to competition and a lack of charismatic stars." The paper's inside headline read: "TV viewers, apparel firms go elsewhere." *Oregonian* reporter Boaz Herzog's story was riddled with negatives such as, "The recent futility of the United States in the Davis Cup is emblematic of the broader challenges the sport faces on American soil."

Promoters of the Davis Cup said that when the players saw the newspaper's coverage, they wondered why they'd come to Portland. Why bring such a prestigious international event to such a hostile place? Many of the 10,000 attendees, who enthusiastically bought out tickets to the event in minutes and who flew in from all over the world, were puzzled by such a negative press reception. It is a puzzlement shared by other sports promoters as well.

While the local leaders weren't concentrating on football or the Davis Cup, Portland's mayor and city council leaders were working ad nauseum to outdo each other's political correctness by naming, renaming, removing, and, finally, canceling a Cesar Chavez Boulevard, all the time complaining about the "stress of it all."

Leave it to longtime *Oregonian* writer Norm Maves Jr. to find one place in the state where sanity and common sense prevail. In early November Maves wrote a different kind of sports story. "There is much joy in Madras," celebrated the homecoming of Boston World Series hero and OSU graduate Jacoby Ellsbury.

Maves wrote movingly about Madras' feelings toward Ellsbury's homecoming parade. "As the procession passed, Glenn Price, one of the local Elks who ... helped organize the day, was moved to think of the last time Madras was so consumed by an event.

"This is better than the last time we did this," Price said. "That was when Tommy Tucker was killed.

"The memory of Pfc. Tommy Tucker, another good Madras kid, is still fresh. Most people around town who were here at the time agree that the broken heart Madras suffered when he was killed in Iraq in June 2006 has not completely healed.

"Maybe it never will, but having Jacoby Ellsbury come home helped a lot.

‘That was a sad, sad time. This helps. This helps a lot.’”

Somewhere in Oregon there are still good people who aren’t too cool to have fun. And there are those who remember why we “play the games.”

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