

# Football finds alternate home

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As we enter the dog days of spring, baseball fans are excited that their season has just begun swinging. Football fans, on the other hand, are going through withdrawal just about now. The Super Bowl has been over for about two months, the NFL draft is still a few weeks away, and actual games are five months away. Gridiron fans have sunk into a deep depression, only quickly pulled out by draft weekend, and then back into their holes for the rest of the summer.

For those fans that can't bear another summer without their game, an alternative is out there. No, the XFL has not been resurrected. Arena Football, seen Sunday afternoons on NBC, is the quick fix for football fans. The AFL was signed to NBC a few years ago after the peacock network dumped Vince McMahon's football league. But the AFL has been around a lot longer than most people think.

The AFL, founded in 1987, started modestly with four teams in such football strongholds as Washington D.C., Pittsburgh, Chicago and Denver. Detroit, New England, Los Angeles and New York added franchises the following year. The league continued to grow and today has 16 franchises with teams from Philadelphia to Texas to Las Vegas.

Despite the league's apparent growth, it has remained somewhat unstable. The four original teams were gone within four years and only two current teams have been in the league longer than a decade. Although teams have moved from city to city, the league continues to live

on. This league doesn't put the same game on the field as our beloved NFL. There are no outdoor games. The frozen tundra of Lambeau Field has been replaced by the comfortable airconditioning and turf of Van Andel Arena in Grand Rapids, Mich. That nice field is also half the size of a regulation NFL field. There are no punts in the AFL and kickoffs are done from the goal line. The goalposts are half as wide, and are surrounded by a

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
The Arena Football League was started in 1987 with only four teams: Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh, Chicago and Denver.

net. Balls off the net are live and can be advanced. Most players play both offense and defense proving that these athletes, though rejected by the NFL, have some skills. One player who made the transition from the AFL to the NFL is Kurt Warner, a two-time MVP in the NFL.

As apparent by the different rules, the AFL is quite the scorer's league. Teams regularly put up more than 50 points per game so if a defensive battle is your cup

of tea, the AFL may make you gag. Some people say the game is overkill with just non-stop scoring, taking all the excitement out of the nation's most popular game.

Despite these criticisms, the AFL continues to reach out and look for ways to acquire more fans. Celebrity owners like Jon Bon Jovi in Philadelphia and John Elway in Denver have brought attention to the league.

So if the AFL isn't your kind of pigskin, go back to your holes for the remainder of spring and summer. But dry your eyes; Madden 2006 will be out soon and September isn't that far away, right?

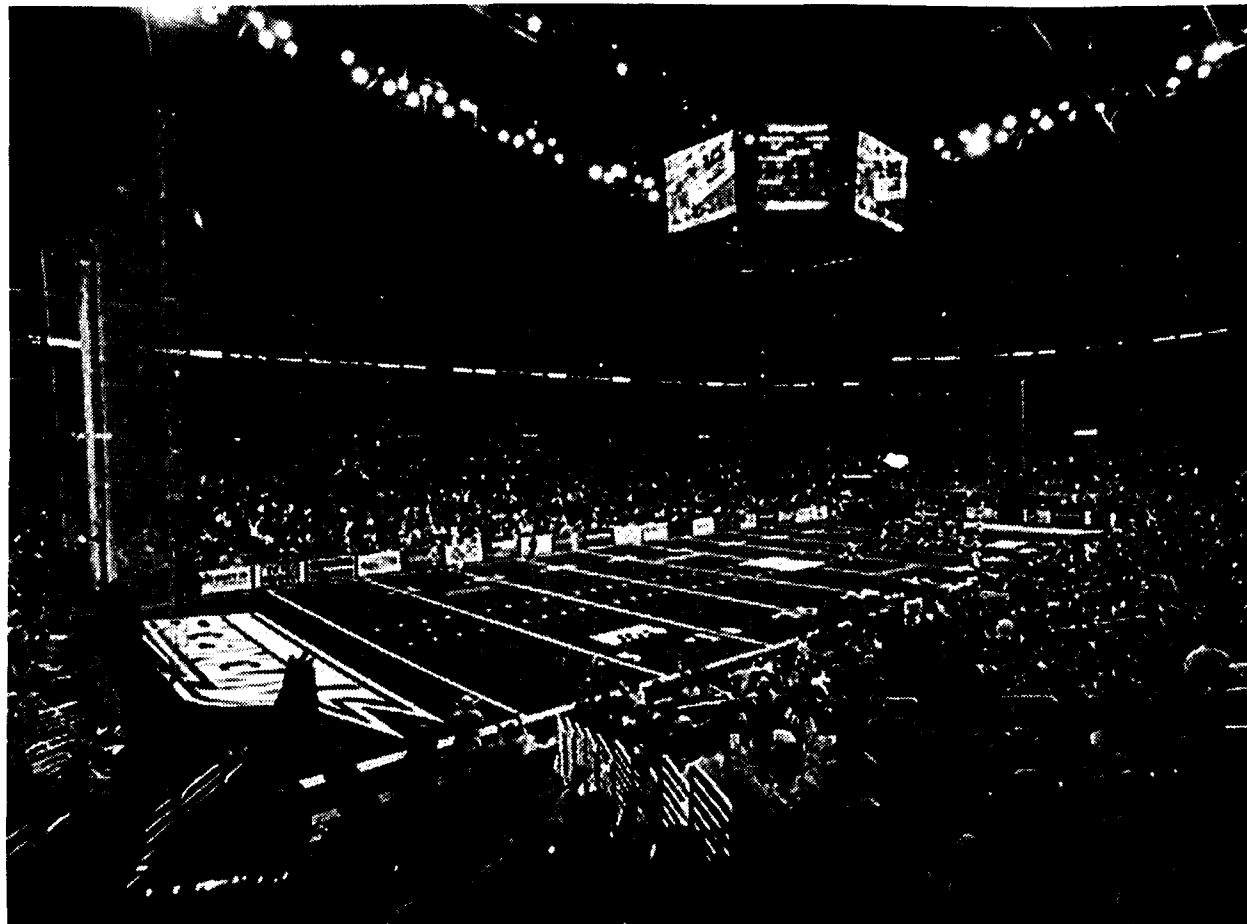


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During a Los Angeles Avengers/Carolina Cobras game, the packed arena cheer on their favorite team. For them, football is almost a year-round sport they can spectate whenever they would like.

## Intercollegiates: the big return

SPORTS cont'd from 7

fields. Smitley said interested golfers and tennis players could be eligible to play in tournaments at University Park by next school year. Smitley also said the college hopes to compete in Division III within five years.

The college will continue to offer intramural sports, which include touch football, softball, basketball and volleyball, to students next year.

The men's baseball team will play a split schedule, playing eight games in the fall and a mid-season tournament at a site to be announced. The team will come back in the spring to play six games and a double-elimination tournament to end the season in April.

The men's soccer team will play 13 games in September and October before the four-team conference championships begin on Oct. 19.

The women's volleyball squad will play seven regular season matches, six of them on the road, in addition to a mid-season tournament in late September.

The co-ed cross-country team will run in three meets, all on the road, before the conference meet at University Park on Oct. 15.

The men's basketball team will play 17 regular season contests starting on Nov. 17, when it travels to Penn St. Abington. The women's basketball team will also travel to Penn State Abington that night to kick off its 13-game season. Regional playoffs would begin on Feb. 28 for both teams if they qualify.

The women's softball team will host Penn State McKeesport on March 26 to begin its nine-game schedule, with playoffs beginning in late April.



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**Balls aren't just for boys!**



## It's Saint Joe's vs. South Carolina for NIT championship

By Ira Podell  
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) - Phil Martelli and Dave Odom have sent better teams to the floor than the ones that will meet for the NIT championship.

Martelli only has to think back one year, when Saint Joseph's reached the NCAA regional finals with future NBA players Jameer Nelson and Delonte West running the show in the backcourt.

Odom's point of reference is his time at Wake Forest when Tim Duncan manned the middle and led the Demon Deacons to the NCAA's round of eight in 1996.

Both coaches are looking forward to playing for this title Thursday night in Madison Square Garden, but it's not the tournament they wanted to be in.

"The NIT is a reward for all teams that had a good year," Odom said. "The NCAA is a reward for all those that had a great year. Winning the NIT might bring up it to a very good year, but it's not going to make it a great year."

"Let's make sure we understand that."

Martelli does. Last year he was the Associated Press Coach of the Year, an honor bestowed upon him when Nelson and West carried Saint Joe's to a 30-2 record. A two-point loss to Oklahoma State kept the Hawks from reaching the Final Four.

This season was much different. Saint Joseph's carried a 3-6 start into the New Year, and Martelli was miserable. He felt he was letting everyone down, and his ever-present optimism was gone.

His wife Judy and Saint Joseph's athletic director Don DiJulia told him that the season still had a few months left, and it would only

get worse if he didn't snap out of the funk.

Martelli gathered his players and told them things were broken in the program that was the toast of Philadelphia a year earlier.

"It was more like the State of the Union from me," Martelli said Wednesday. "It was depressing, and I am a glass half-full all the time guy. But I didn't know how it was going to get fixed. We made some technical changes in the way that we played, we changed the tone of our practices."

Suddenly, it all turned around. Since Jan. 1, the Hawks are 21-5 and enjoying the longest postseason run in school history. The opinion is Martelli has done a better job with this club than he did last year with his stars.

"People didn't listen correctly when they heard the awards last year," he said. "I wasn't the coach of the year, I was the coach of JAMEER last year."

"When I look in the mirror, I can say I put this team in the best position to be successful. It's the players who have responded to that."

Odom has South Carolina (19-13) in the NIT championship game for the second time in four seasons, and has been quite comfortable in the tournament. He has a championship, a runner-up finish and a 15-3 record in five trips.

He went three times with Wake Forest and won it all in 2000. He's trying to duplicate that with the Gamecocks after falling short in 2002.

"There is not a coach in the country who aspires to have his legacy be 'He was a great NIT coach,'" Odom said. "But I'm not ashamed of that."

If Odom is going to add another NIT title to his resume, he'll have to figure out how to stop 3-point

specialist Pat Carroll.

Carroll is 96-32 in his four years at Saint Joe's, and the Atlantic 10 co-player of the year has shot his team into the final.

He is averaging 20.6 points in the five NIT games and has made 18 of 44 3-point shots.

Odom plans to guard the middle and force Carroll to beat him from behind the arc.

"I think it's more of a tease," Carroll said. "They're not going to be giving me any open looks."

Odom has known about Carroll for years, he thinks even longer than Martelli has.

"Pat Carroll is as fine a 3-point shooter as there is in the country," Odom said. "To dismiss that would be inappropriate on my part."

When Carroll was a high school underclassman, Odom recruited his older brother, Matt, to play at Wake Forest.

Odom offered Matt a scholarship, and got on Carroll's short list. He lost out to Notre Dame, but exacted some revenge by beating Carroll and the Irish for the 2000 NIT championship.

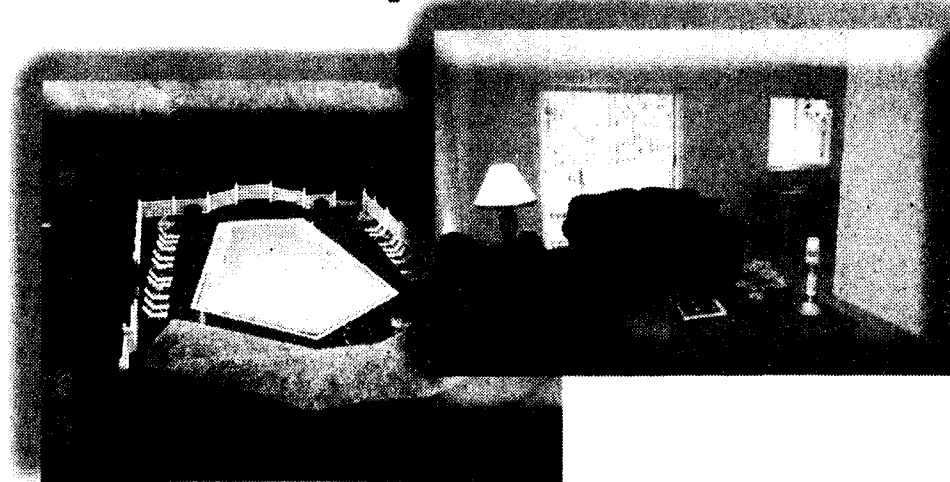
Now he'd like to win another so his star senior Carlos Powell can go out on with the first title of his career.

Odom and Powell agreed they are having more fun with this NIT run than they did last year when they reached the NCAA tournament and lost in the first round.

Powell recorded his 10th career double-double in the semifinal victory over Maryland on Tuesday. He's sixth on the school's scoring list and has played the most games in Gamecocks history (131).

"It's something I don't want to end," he said. "But I would like for it to end with a championship."

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