

Long-suffering student cage fans will suffer again

News item: Under Penn State's new basketball ticket policy, all public seating in Rec Hall will be on a reserved seat basis with a maximum of 3,339 seats of the 7,200-seat capacity facility available to the public.

But you thought you were going to see some great basketball this year. But you thought you'd have decent seats for it. Think again.

The games may turn out great, but it's only 50-50 your seats will. For this season, some seats will be sold in blocks to the public while students will sit in other blocks. The athletic department hopes to get a good mix of students and paying fans so that neither group gets the lion's share of good seats.



Eric Yoder

And so it begins. When Dick Harter was hired away from Oregon last spring, it was supposed to be the beginning of fist-in-the-air support

from students for his Lion basketball team. Harter, a proven winner, came here promising to stir interest among the students, who have a label of "apathetic" when it comes to local hoops. Idealists imagined an environment like Notre Dame, Marquette or UCLA, where students crawl over each other to get to the games. It would be a new, shiny era of Lion basketball.

That kind of thinking, like campaign promises and the morning dew, has vanished under the harsh light of reality.

The first insult was closing Rec Hall for three hours each afternoon so Harter could hold closed practices. A minor inconvenience, right? After all, to improve, you must concentrate, and there was plenty of improving to be done over last year's 8-19 squad. So what if it forced joggers into the golf ball filled air of the Blue Course or onto the unnavigable IM Building track?

It wasn't such a big thing to most of us who don't really mind being put out of a few hours' use of the facility we pay tuition for. The ticket policy is the killer.

The new policy shows a lack of appreciation for the student basketball fans, who sat through many years of lousy games in anticipation of the kind of team this year's edition should be. They deserve a medal. Instead, they're getting the shaft.

Let's go back a step to last season, when Penn State basketball was arguably at its lowest. I covered the team for the Collegian and often interviewed John Bach who resigned before the season's end when it became clear he was getting

nowhere. You can say what you want about his ability to win games, but one thing you can't say is that he didn't care about student fans. That is something you can say about the program now, in light of the new policy. Any number of times Bach asked me what could be done to get more students to Rec Hall on those sub-zero, three-foot-of-snow winter nights. The obvious answer was "win more games" which I never said, because while that was the way to do it, a team like that one can't be turned around overnight.

Bach openly wondered if the 7:30 starting time gave students enough time to recover from supper, see the game, then get some studying done. He wondered if students from town and East Halls were discouraged from attending because of the long walk to that corner of campus. He believed a major advantage of the toughened schedule was that it would arouse student interest, even if they only came out to see the Syracuse, Marquettes and N.C. States.

Rec Hall had an intimate, homey atmosphere, the kind you get when people spend an evening enjoying each others' presence. They came out to be there, not to expect a Lion win. Despite the team's reputation on campus as a loser, its core of support came from students. Not non-students. Very, very few paid their way into the games.

But now. Now we can expect them to win more games. Expecting a major increase in non-student interest (translate: paying fans), half the best seats have been already set aside for people who get past the gate by flashing pictures of George

Washington, not of themselves. Those who sat through the lean times with the cagers are getting pushed aside in favor of fair-weather fans.

The tragedy is that attendance — student and otherwise — will be up this year, no matter what the ticket policy. New coaches always fill the stands, until they prove they can't win, which will not be the problem with Harter. And those students and handful of paying fans who deserve to be thanked for gutting it out are being slapped in the face. And those front-runners who are hopping on the bandwagon now that it promises to go somewhere are being patted on the back.

The moral of the story? Maybe it's that going big-time has turned a lovable outfit of the 1962 Mets type into a cold organization of the 1978 Yankees type. Maybe it's that when students and money conflict at Penn State, students lose. Maybe it's that some sacrifices must be made in the name of progress. Pick one or make up your own. It depends on your point of view.

As for me, I'll miss the good old days when students could cruise into Rec Hall five minutes before a game and still sit within spitting distance of the floor. I'll miss the days when you went to a game for entertainment and fun, not demanding a win. I'll miss the days when you could jog around the track whenever you wanted.

But most of all, I'll miss the days when Penn State basketball was a sport, not for business.

Booters looking for stretch run as playoff time nears

By CHUCK RUSS
Daily Collegian Sports Writer

The end is in sight and the NCAA is dangling a playoff bid in front of the Penn State soccer team.

The 9-3 Lions play Pittsburgh, which has won just three games, tonight in Pittsburgh. Sunday, the team plays Shippensburg, another team which should be no problem. Then things get rough.

An undefeated Temple team is the next opponent. The Owls are ranked 14th in the nation and 2nd in the East. Penn State is ranked 19th in the nation and 3rd in the East. That game is right before the bids go out and could be the Lions most crucial game. Penn State will play a tough Akron team after the bids go out. "We aren't safe for the playoffs," Lion coach Walt Bahr said. "Temple is undefeated. They haven't played any nationally ranked teams, but they are

still ranked above us in the East. The first round bids have to be out a week before first round play should be completed (Nov. 15)."

Right now undefeated Textile, No. 1 in the East and No. 5 team in the nation, and Temple are virtually assured of bids. The Lions have Princeton and Penn clawing at their backs for the last two berths.

"We're ready to go," Bahr said. "We started the second half of the season this

week. We took three days off from practice from Friday through Sunday and we started fresh on Monday.

"We have no injuries and no major problems. Our starters are set and we have our reserves ready. We can change our style of play to fit a lot of different situations according to who is in the lineup at the time. We are also fortunate that we can play a tough Akron team after the bids are out to prepare ourselves for the playoffs."

"At this point in the season," he said, "I figured we would have two or three losses, because of our schedule. The only game I've really been concerned about is the Hartwick loss (a 4-3 defeat in the last second of the game), because we had it in our pocket and let it jump out." "We would come in second in the East if we beat Temple," Bahr said, "but if we lose we could be third or fourth and lose any chance of playing one of the playoff games at home."

Wooden to speak

John Wooden, the man they used to call coach at UCLA and the famed wizard of Westwood, will be the keynote speaker at Penn State's first annual basketball clinic to be held Saturday at the Keller Conference Center.

The clinic is sponsored by the University's College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, and is for the benefit of the state's college and high school coaches.

What would Socrates think of O'Keefe?

If you question long enough and deep enough, certain truths about O'Keefe become evident. It has a hearty, full-bodied flavor. It is smooth and easy going down. And, the quality of its head is fact rather than philosophical conjecture. We think there's one truth about O'Keefe that Socrates would not question: *It's too good to gulp.* As any rational man can taste.



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