

MD hate week bordering on offensive

By Stephen Hennessey

You would've thought Penn State fans would've learned their lesson.

It's now Maryland hate week — or #MDHateWeek if you're on Twitter — leading up to tonight's Big Ten/ACC Challenge clash with the Terrapins at 9:15 at the Bryce Jordan Center. Nittany Lions basketball fans have blown up Twitter and college basketball forums with unbridled hatred toward Maryland. After an interracial couple donning Michigan clothes was harassed by fans in Beaver Stadium during the Oct. 30 game, with the wife being called a "n— loving bitch," it's apparent some Lions fans haven't learned from a classless act. The beginning of the week started with some simple back-



MY OPINION

and-forth between Terps and Lions fans. (Not to mention that Maryland knocked Penn State out of the NCAA men's soccer tournament for the second straight year Sunday.)

Then, things turned in an unnecessary direction. Justin Casavant — or "CasaNoVapsu" — is a 2007 Penn State graduate and is the founder of the Penn State student section, Nittany Nation.

He tweeted about a death that reaches far beyond the borders of College Park.

Former Maryland basketball player Len Bias died from a cocaine overdose after being drafted as the No. 2 pick in the 1986 NBA Draft, never playing a game in the NBA. It's one of the most tragic stories in the history of basketball, showcasing the consequences of cocaine use, which wasn't entirely known at the time.

The founder of Nittany Nation apparently thinks that Bias' death is worth making fun of, making a play on a line from the movie Wedding Crashers.

His tweet: "CRAB CAKES AND COCAINE... THAT'S WHAT MARYLAND DOES! #Mdhateweek."

Another one: "Len Bias wishes #FourLoko were around back in his day as a nice alternative. #MDhateweek Too soon?"

It hurt me to copy and paste both these comments.

Casavant wouldn't comment on any specific tweets when reached by telephone Tuesday evening, and wanted to make it clear that his comments are not indicative of how anybody in Nittany Nation thinks.

The efforts of Nittany Nation attempting to make Penn State's fan section relevant are worthwhile. School spirit is always a laudable effort.

But what happened to Success with Honor, the Penn State athletics motto?

Posting ignorant comments about a kid who died, while exposing the culture of cocaine around all college campuses in the United States, is not OK.

Michael Weinreb, a 1994 Penn State graduate, wrote a long-form E-TICKET article titled "The day innocence died," on ESPN.com, about Bias' death.

In this age of Twitter and the Internet, Weinreb knows that people can post things that are ugly, without much thought going behind the effect of these messages.

When told about these tweets, he called the comments "reprehensible."

"That doesn't really reflect well on Penn State basketball fans," Weinreb said. "I assume most of those kids weren't alive when Bias' death happened and don't know how big his death was. It extended far beyond Maryland, too."

There's a lot more to rip on Maryland about, so why was it necessary to bring Bias into play?

The four-year graduation rate for Penn State men's basketball players is 82 percent, compared to Maryland's eight percent rate. Penn State football is 35-1-1 all-time against the Terps.

To be fair, Maryland students rebutted the hate week with their own hashtag against Penn State, but their comments haven't carried nearly as much weight.

There are some funny ones: "#mdhateweek I'm kinda mad that that Bering PSU will do nothing for our RPI."

Although Casavant didn't see anything wrong with his tweets, those with a little more foresight know this is not a good reflection on Penn State.

Basketball fans should encourage school spirit by showing class.

Some of the biggest and best basketball schools, Duke and North Carolina, have intense fan sections, but they conduct themselves properly.

These Penn State fans, apparently for football and basketball alike, need to take a class in showing class.

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James on Cavs: 'Lot of thanks to those fans'

By Tim Reynolds
ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI — There's not much LeBron James can absolutely say about what awaits when he returns to Cleveland as an opponent on Thursday night.

Fun, weird, tough, draining. James cites them all as expectations.

He's likely right on each count, and who knows how many more ways the emotional gamut will swing on Thursday when the Miami Heat visit Cleveland, the city James scorned on July 8 when he announced in a nationally televised special that he was "taking my talents to South Beach."

It'll be James' first time back as a visitor, and Cavaliers fans have been waiting months to not welcome him home.

"It's going to be tough, but I'm there to win a basketball game," James said after Tuesday's Heat practice and preparing for Wednesday's game against Detroit — almost forgotten given

the magnitude of what looms Thursday. "I understand, I understand how passionate fans are about sports. I'm ready for whatever response that I'm going to get. It's going to be very emotional."

True, for all parties involved. But the NBA might have helped James out a bit with this trip.

Because Miami plays at home Wednesday night, the Heat will not arrive in Cleveland until early Thursday morning. The team won't practice that day, just have meetings and a walkthrough at its hotel, which will be teeming with security — like always. They'll bus to the arena, play the game, head to the airport and leave for Miami.

No time to visit old haunts or old friends. A business trip, nothing more, nothing less, and James seems relieved by that.

"I think it's going to be very emotional for myself," James said. "I've got a lot of great memories in that city. So many times, from ups and downs, and a lot of things that I've done in my life. I give a lot of thanks to that city, lot of thanks to

those fans for giving me the opportunity to not only showcase my talent but grow from a young boy to a man."

He's not from Cleveland, but Akron, about 40 miles south. The Cavaliers franchise was reborn when they won the right to pick James No. 1 overall in the 2003 draft, and together, they soared. Cleveland won 349 games during James' seven seasons, second-most in the Eastern Conference over that span, and the Cavaliers' 127 wins in 2008-09 and 2009-10 — James' MVP years — topped the NBA charts.

So when he became a free agent, there was angst in Cleveland understandably.

Wade turned to anger at 9:27 p.m. on July 8, when James revealed his decision.

"I think it's going to be something that none of us have ever seen before," Heat guard Dwyane Wade said of what's coming on Thursday. "If we can be a fan and watch it from afar, we all would, and not go. I would love to watch it and see as a fan, but I'm involved

"It's going to be very emotional for myself."

LeBron James
Miami Heat forward

in it. It's going to be entertainment for everyone to watch."

Some Heat fans will gather to watch, at a team-sponsored event known as a "road rally."

Of course, it'll happen at the Cleveland — on South Beach. At least the Heat will be cheered somewhere on Thursday.

"I'm sure a lot of people are going to show their support for the Cavaliers in their own kind of way," Heat forward Chris Bosh said. "I don't think we know what to expect, but I'm sure it's going to be something like we've never seen before."

He'll see something like it on Feb. 16, when he returns to Toronto, his former home, for the first time as an opponent.

"I'm glad LeBron breaks the ice first," Bosh said.

It's a Cleveland homecoming for former Cavs center Zydrunas

Ilgauskas as well, and while he said the trip will be "a unique situation," he's almost certain not to face the level of venom that'll be directed at James.

Wade said he'll give James simple advice beforehand.

"The only thing I would say to him is not try to go out to get 100 points," Wade said. "Play the game. Let the game flow to you. I know he wants to play great, but sometimes you can force it too much. Just play basketball like LeBron James."

Which is what James says he'll do.

He won't break from his normal routine for this game, though he noted that he remains "very respectful" of the people who cheered him for seven years.

"It's one game," James said. "I know everyone is making it a huge deal, but it's one game."



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