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February 25, 1976

BELIEVE IT: DISTRICT'S TOP TEAM NOT IN PLAYOFFS

They're learning the meaning of injustice this week at George Fox College. Injustice is about the only way it figures to most on the gloomy Bruin campus with the top team kept out of the NAIA District 2 playoffs.

Even though the Bruins finished with their best season ever, an impressive 19-8, and led the district in wins, the Lorin Miller-led squad can now only sit and watch as others compete where logic says they should also have been involved.

But logic apparently was by passed as a 14-11 team made it into the playoffs on the strength of a highly-questioned selection system that Miller opposed from its start.

The "system" set up a mini-league among the four independent schools in the district, meaning only six games the entire season have any bearing on district playoff selection. That system gave the Bruins a 4-2 mark, Northwest Nazarene 5-1. They got the berth despite a mediocre season.

A backup and complicated point system devised several years ago by Lewis and Clark basketball coach Dean Semper also got his team a berth and denied it to the Bruins for an at-large position. Most Bruins have no quarrel with that system because it judges teams on their record on the basis of strengths of teams they defeated and lost to during the season.

Both District and even NAIA national officials this week expressed concern about the situation that leaves the best team out of the playoffs and questions the validity of the playoff. But they would not bend to correct the mistake.

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The matters got worse for the Newberg team as they dropped an overtime affair in Walla Walla Saturday night. The Bruins may have found out why the Shockers lost only one game in the last 13 starts at home.

It was a classic "homer" from officials. The normally reserved and soft-spoken Miller received two technicals (the first time in his coaching career) as he tried to protest the officiating by Joe Towner and Dick Cook.

"I've never had a game taken away from me like this before," Miller said of the fiasco. Whitman Coach John Wilcox said he was happy to get the win, but also called it a "homer" to Miller and his team.

Statistics prove the point. Knotted 77-77 each at the end of regulation, the Shockers produced 23 points in the overtime, the Bruins 11. Of the 23 points, the hosts picked up 17 at the freethrow line as the whistle-happy officials constantly signaled against the Bruins.

"It was a farce, the worst I've seen," Miller said. Officials called 58 fouls, 32 on the Bruins. The Shockers piled up 32 points via freethrows on 40 attempts, the Bruins went but 26 times, collecting 18.

A Walla Walla sportswriter indicated Miller might have been unhappy with his Bruins. He didn't wait to check and the opposite is true. The Newberg team outscored the Washington team by a field-goal and clobbered them on the boards 61-45. The difference was the officiating which took the wind from the Bruins sails.

"Sure we're disappointed in that game and the way it had to be played," Miller said. "We also should have been in the playoffs and had a good chance of taking it," Miller said. "We know it and most others do too, and I guess we'll have to live with that alone," the coach of the district's top squad says.

The playoffs starting Saturday night, will include Oregon Tech at 16-9, Linfield at 18-8, Lewis and Clark at 18-8, and NNC at 14-11. A 19-8 by the Bruins was not good enough!

For the last five years the Bruins have been Oregon's top independent squad and in the season-end playoffs. This year they moved to the top of the entire district--and out of the playoffs. The "sorry, but that's the way it goes" from district officials hasn't been much consolation to frustrated Bruin team members and fans.

They'll live with the memory of a team that paced the district all year, outscored opponents by the widest margin (7.5), was at the top in shooting accuracy (.477 per cent) and produced more wins than ever before in the college's NAIA history.

It was also a team with one of the district's best players-- sophomore center-forward Paul Cozens who produced points at the rate of 19.6 a game and grabbed rebounds at a 10.4 pace, near the top in both categories among district players. Cozens' .527 shooting percentage also paced the team.

After two seasons Cozens is now fourth in all-time Bruin scoring with a 971 total and his game point production of 17.65 is a record pace for any Bruin. He's also fourth in rebounding with 472 in 55 contests for an 8.85 average, the third fastest rate.

Junior forward Tim Hardie tossed in an average of 13.3 points an outing and also was second in rebounding at an even 6.0. Freshman Dave Adrian at 11.5 points was the third Bruin in double-figure scoring.

Junior guard Tom Hewitt set a new Bruin assist record for one season, collecting 138 in 27 games to top the record of 128 set last year by Ray Willis in 30 games.

Senior captain Steve Strutz wrapped up his Bruin career tied for seventh in scoring with 757 total points, a 6.94 rate. He also nailed down the fourth best rate in all-time assists, with 249 for a 2.28 pace.

Nick Sweeney, in a center-forward role also has concluded his Bruin career, averaging 6.8 points a game for the season and 4.2 rebounds.

The Bruins averaged 82.7 points a game, opponents 75.2. George Fox out rebounded foes by a 1.9 margin, 43.9 to 42.0.



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February 20, 1976

DISTRICT 2'S TOP TEAM COULD MISS PLAYOFFS

Is it possible to keep the top team in NAIA District 2 out of the playoffs for a national berth? "Yes" is apparently the answer from district officials.

A selection system that creates a mini "league" out of just four schools who claim independence from conferences is the cause for the circumstances that could prevent 19-7 George Fox Bruins from their sixth straight playoff appearance.

The Newberg team, the only one in the 13-member district with a chance at a 20-win season, will still be at the top of the district ladder even if it loses to Whitman Saturday night in Walla Walla. But that standing still would not be good enough for post-season play under a round robin system with independents that apparently will be enforced. That system will send 14-11 Northwest Nazarene to the playoffs instead of the district leader and the independent squad with the best record.

George Fox will be forced into a bid along with Lewis and Clark (17-8) for the at-large berth and fourth spot in the playoffs. Linfield College has wrapped up the Northwest Conference berth and Oregon Tech the Evergreen slot.

According to a complicated selection process George Fox would earn the final spot unless it 1) loses to Whitman; 2) Lewis and Clark beats Willamette; 3) Pacific loses one of its two games this weekend, and 4) Simon Fraser loses one of its three games. The other games figure into the process under the "Sempert System" which awards rating points on a basis of records against teams considering their win-loss records. All four things would have to occur for the Pioneers to nail down the last playoff berth.

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Should they all occur, George Fox, the team at the top of the district at the end of the season would not enter the playoffs.

Miller, in his sixth year as Bruin basketball boss, says he never agreed to the independent round robin when instituted last fall and verbally objected to the system at that time because it means only six games all season have any bearing on independent selection.

"It's unfortunate playoff policy is so unsettled every year," Miller says. He said he would like to appeal the situation if there were a way.

"Whatever happens in the playoff selection, it's been a great year and a great combination of players," Miller says of the team that has produced the best record ever in 11 years of NAIA competition. "They've given something back to me in so many ways," he said.



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4 February 1976

Exclusive to :
Don Powers
NAIA Public Relations Director

Flying a 16-5 banner, the George Fox College Bruins are in a solid first place position in NAIA District 2 competition.

"I'm pleased but not surprised," stated Head Coach Lorin Miller, "I'm particularly happy with a couple of players." Paul Cozens, a 6'6" Sophomore is averaging ^{20.1}19.6 points and 10.6 rebounds per contest. Both marks are School Highs.

Freshman Dave Adrian is blossoming with a 14.6 point per game average. Tim Hardie, a 6-4 Junior Transfer, has a 12.9 average and is shooting .510 from the field. ~~Senior~~ Steve Strutz, the Bruin's lone Senior Starter, has a 43.1% mark from the floor, and Tom Hewitt, 6'0" Junior Guard, sports a 8.7 point per game average.

Miller, however, wishes to credit the Bruin's success to the entire team. "We've gotten special help from everyone at key times," he says, "We're playing well together."

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