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Sports of The Times

Holding That Line Versus Crossing It

JIM MORRIS had a contingency plan that he thought he would never have to use. In December, the University of Miami's second-year baseball coach figured that by the time March rolled around, the strike would be settled, players would be in camp and his Hurricanes could play the Florida Marlins in peace. Last season, the Magic and Morris agreed to play Florida's top college team this spring. Last year, they played Florida State; this year it would be Miami, which is also the nation's No. 1-ranked team.

When it became clear that the strike was deepening and owners were making plans to use replacement players, Morris had already in the Boston Red Sox organization, revised his decision: Miami would not play the Marlins.

"I made up my mind a while ago, but I didn't think it would come to this," he said. "To me it's not a college issue. I didn't want to take sides. I tried to keep out of it, but now we're deeper in the middle of it."

In baseball's bizarre battle of money, ego and turf, there is no middle ground, no such thing as neutral. Every action is perceived as casting a vote for one side or the other. "Two people from the players union called me to say thanks for taking the players' side," Morris said. "I'm not doing that."

Morris argued, correctly, that college players should be shielded from the nasty infighting of professional labor.

John Schuerholz, the Atlanta Braves' general manager, didn't think much of Morris' remaining neutral. "It's stupid," he said. "If I

College athletes are caught between the worlds of amateurism and pay. Now they're in the middle of a labor war.

was the Marlins, I would never schedule them again." Under National Collegiate Athletic Association regulations, the coach of any sport may choose to play a professional team. Baseball is the only sport that regularly does it, although tennis players and golfers compete against professionals in pro-am tournaments.

The N.C.A.A.'s position on member schools and the baseball strike is pretty straightforward: as long as the rules permit interaction, so be it. The reality is that

with so many N.C.A.A. member institutions serving as development camps for basketball, football, baseball and hockey, the current situation is seen as a mere blip on the screen.

Miami is the only college team to express reservations over becoming involved in a professional sports labor dispute. Georgia Tech plays Atlanta at West Palm Beach, Fla., and Seton plays Kansas City at Haines City, Fla., today.

Joe Maloney, head coach of Boston College, said he had no problems taking his team South to play the Red Sox. For the last three years, the squads have played in a game that benefits local charity and the Boston College program. The game is tomorrow at Fort Myers, Fla.

"There's no hesitation at all on my part," Maloney said. "If there's a picket line, we're going through it. I sympathize with both sides, but I sympathize more with the game."

John Harrington, the Red Sox president and a B.C. alumnus, arranged for the school to play the exhibition three years ago. "When I recruit kids, I tell them we're going to play the Red Sox in Florida," Maloney said. "If we don't go, the kids are going to think we lied to them."

How safe will the college players be against replacement players desperate to make the team by making an impression? Charles Harris, the athletic director at Arizona State, said he had asked the California Angels' manager, Marcel Lachemann, to speak with his players. "I just want the manager to tell them that coming in headfirst instead of cleats first is not going to make the difference between them making the team," Harris said.

Why put college athletes in this position in the first place? Why put them in the middle of a nasty labor war?

"There's nothing positive that can come out of playing this game," said Morris.

"The pluses outweigh the minuses by far," said Maloney.

Harris said: "The people who get hurt in this are the little people — the real little people. It's a millionaire players on ESPN issue."

Meanwhile, college athletes at the highest, most lucrative levels keep being jerked between two worlds — one of amateurism and one of pay. Administrators deny them endorsements, percentages of the gate or a money portion of a contract on the ground that such concessions corrupt the amateur ideal.

Encouraging athletes to be used as quasi-strikebreakers doesn't seem much better.

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Rangers' Sergei Nemchinov is sandwiched between Whalers goalie Jeff Reese and defenseman Brian Glynn last night.

Noonan In Rare Scoring Splurge

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By JASON DIAMOS
Special to The New York Times

HARTFORD, March 1 — Brian Leetch and Brian Noonan have been teasing each other for a while now about their scoring struggles this season.

"You've got to have a sense of humor about it," said Noonan. "You can't let it drive you crazy."

Noonan had reason to smile tonight. The big right wing tallied his fourth career hat trick, equaling his season total in less than 25 minutes, as the Rangers (10-8-3) exploded for all their goals in the final two periods to defeat the Hartford Whalers, 5-2, at the Civic Center.

"We've both been struggling around the net and we certainly have had no advice for one another," said Leetch, who was held without a point tonight. "We've just been playing off each other about never scoring the rest of the year. I said to him, whatever you ate today and everything, I've got to do that next game. He's going to give me an itinerary of what he did."

Noonan's first goal came at 15 minutes 34 seconds of the second period, 33 seconds after he had assisted on an Adam Graves score that broke a 1-1 tie. Both goals came on the power-play, after the Rangers had been 3 for 37 for the season with at least a man advantage on the road.

Chris Pronger, who scored both Whaler goals, cut the deficit to 3-2, 2:04 later, giving the two teams three power-play goals in just over two and a half minutes.

"We thought we'd keep it exciting a little bit longer," said Rangers Coach Colin Campbell, referring to his team's inability to break open close games for much of this season. "We didn't want that luxury."

They didn't get it until 6:11 of the third, when Noonan stole the puck from Robert Kron, who was being held up by Stéphane Matteau at the Hartford blue line. Noonan skated in and let loose just along the hash marks of the left circle. The shot found the right corner of the net just beneath the crossbar, when you give Mike Richter (21 saves) four goals, more often than not you are going to win. For extra measure, Noonan added an empty-netter with 58.7 seconds left.

"In the minors, I was always able to score a lot, so that helps," said Noonan, who was acquired by the Rangers from Chicago at the trading deadline last season for the run to the Stanley Cup. "But I'm not real sure if it's my scoring that's kept me here."

The Rangers, who have fared well on the road so far, are 4-1-1 in their last 6 games. They received an early break tonight when Hartford goalie Sean Burke was scratched before the game. Burke, who made 32 saves in the first meeting between the two teams, a 2-1 Whalers victory at Madison Square Garden last Friday night, has been one of the hottest netminders around the league as of late. But he injured his groin in a 6-3 victory at Ottawa on Tuesday night, and backup Jeff Reese started in his place.

That did not turn out to be much of a break, however — at least not for a period.

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ON PRO BASKETBALL/Clifton Brown

Time to Wake Up and Sense the Magic

PURCHASE, N.Y.
The Orlando Magic has become to the Knicks what the Chicago Bulls had been for years: their biggest obstacle in the path to a championship.

The Knicks continue to insist they are better than Orlando, yet the Magic continues to beat them. That could change in the playoffs. But for the Knicks to advance to the National Basketball Association finals, they must come to grips with a Magic act that won't vanish into thin air.

New York was clearly outplayed during Tuesday's 118-106 loss in Orlando, where the Knicks are 0-3 this season. Not only have the Knicks fallen a distant seven games behind — they also have a better chance of catching the flu than catching the Magic — but Orlando sounded unfazed, even eager, about the prospect of facing the Knicks in the playoffs.

How the Knicks handle that reality may decide how far they go in the playoffs. Starting with tonight's home game against the Bulls, a more immediate concern for

SOME THOUGHTS ON PENNY
Orlando's Anfernee Hardaway adjusts and excels each night. Page B11.

the Knicks is not whether they can overtake Orlando but whether they can stay ahead of Indiana, Charlotte and Cleveland.

Should the Knicks falter down the stretch and finish lower than second place in the Eastern Conference, their road back to the finals may reach a dead end before they even get to Orlando. For the Knicks to win a championship, it is imperative that they finish strongly and establish momentum heading into the playoffs. If not, what happened Tuesday may only be a prelude of things to come.

"The Magic are coming," said Charles Oakley, whose return to the starting lineup made little difference to Orlando. "They're anxious to play us. We're anxious to play them. But when the game starts, we have to do it as a team. We tried

to match them at the offensive end. Everyone on this team has to look at themselves and say that we have to play the way we did last year. If we don't, we're going to end up with an early break."

Oakley knows what most of his teammates readily admit: that the Knicks have not played championship-caliber basketball this season. It is not too late. Having the best regular-season record is often irrelevant. Atlanta and Seattle were the top-seeded teams in each conference heading into last year's playoffs. Neither team made it past the second round. And two seasons ago, the Knicks had the best record in the East, only to have the Bulls beat them in the playoffs.

But those who expect Orlando to crack in the playoffs because of lack of experience are overlooking some key facts. It now seems almost laughable to compare this year's Orlando team to the one that

Score Now, Ask Questions Later

New York State's Leading Scorer Plans to Conduct Her Own Interviews Someday

By GRANT GLICKSON

With a smile, Caryn Schoff, New York State's career leading scorer in high school basketball, recalled some of the silliest questions she has had to answer. She is approaching the end of a brilliant career at St. Johnsville, a tiny school in Canajoharie, N.Y., a small town of 1,500 people 60 miles west of Albany.

"I've been asked: Do I sign autographs? Do I sleep with my basketball? Have I ever named my basketball? Why did I decide to play basketball?"

And she has dutifully answered: yes, no, no, because my father played the game.

Even though she has fielded even sillier questions, Schoff admits she finds the interaction between the news media and its subjects intriguing. Next year she will pursue a broadcasting career in sports as a communications major at Syracuse University on a basketball scholarship.

"I think it's interesting that when they approach you they ask you not just about basketball, but about your personal life," Schoff said. "I think that it's important to ask about other interests that a person has because that brings out the character of the person."

Schoff is certainly not lacking in character. She is ranked No. 1 in her class academically, is the student president, the goalie of her soccer team, the first baseman on her softball team, the first trumpet in the school band, a sportswriter on her school newspaper, and a prom queen candidate.



Caryn Schoff, who has more than 3,000 points, leads St. Johnsville into a New York State final.

Off the court, Schoff is hard to miss at 6 feet 1 inch tall with sandy brown shoulder-length hair and blue eyes.

"Kids are always coming down for her autograph and I think that is great because you couldn't find a better role model," said her father, Phil Schoff, who played at Syracuse in 1962-65 with Dave Bing, who became a National Basketball Association Hall of Fame guard, and Jim Boehem, now the Syracuse men's basketball coach.

"She doesn't drink," said Phil Schoff. "She doesn't smoke. She doesn't even eat fatty foods. She's just a real fine example for kids."

Schoff's basketball record speaks for itself. She will lead St. Johnsville (21-1) into the Section 2 final tomorrow against Salem (19-3) as the nation's eighth-leading scorer with a career total of 3,500 points, as well as 1,882 rebounds and 843 steals.

Over the last four seasons, she has led St. Johnsville to a 146-6 record, en route to four sectional titles, four regional, two state and two federation championships. And during a two-and-a-half year run, St. Johnsville won 84 consecutive games.

Schoff became the state's career leading scorer with 2,872 points on Dec. 21, 1991, and she became the first New York State player — male or female — to

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Stephen Weaver for The New York Times

Caryn Schoff will pursue a broadcasting career in sports at Syracuse on a basketball scholarship.

Score Now and Ask Questions Later

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go over 3,000 points. Gina Runco of Adelphi Academy in Brooklyn holds the girls' New York City record with 2,578 points. Kenny Anderson of the Nets, who played for Archbishop Molloy in Queens set the boys' state record with 2,621.

Last Wednesday, she scored 37 points and made her first career buzzer-beater shot in a 58-57 victory over Northville. Schoff scored 33 points in the Lady Saints' 45-27 victory against Argyle (18-4) on Tuesday to climb into eighth place over one of women's basketball's greatest players, Cheryl Miller, formerly of Riverside Park High in California.

But Schoff's hardwood accomplishments only begin here. She has also been an all-tournament selection in every tournament that she has played in since the eighth grade. She has won seven tournament most valuable player awards. She was the Class B player of the year last season.

Although Schoff has been recruited for the college game as an off-guard, her size has made her a post-up player for St. Johnsville. She is a natural right-hander who shoots mostly with her left hand, and she is virtually impossible to stop inside because she can take the ball to either side equally well.

"In the open court, I don't think that I've ever seen a better player than she is," said Coach Pam Macek, the women's coach at St. Johnsville for 14 years. "She just runs and handles the ball so well. One of her

biggest assets is that she's right-handed, but I bet she goes to the left 75 percent of the time."

Since Caryn's sister, Wendi, who finished her career with 2,285 points, graduated in 1994, Caryn has been the one who has had to contend with the box-and-one and double teams on a daily basis. She has responded by moving outside a bit more, consistently hitting jump shots and adding the 3-point shot to her arsenal.

"She's seen a box-and-one in just about every one of her games," said Phil Schoff. "Pushing. Shoving. She's taken a lot of abuse out there. But

For the Schoff family, basketball has become a way of life.

she's still managed to average 36 points per game."

Phil Schoff, who retired last year from coaching the St. Johnsville boys' varsity team after 20 years so that he could better follow Wendi, now at William Smith College in Rochester, and Caryn at St. Johnsville.

"My dad was the first one to introduce me to the game," Caryn said. "If he was a baseball player, my love probably would have been softball. He's been my hero. Every move that he made I tried to copy."

Phil Schoff, who was a forward at St. Johnsville High, graduated from

Syracuse in 1965 and made the last cut with the Atlanta Hawks in 1969.

In addition to not missing a single one of his daughters' games, Schoff still keeps the score book for the boys' varsity games, referees the girls' junior high school games, keeps the clock for the boys' junior high games and coaches the biddy basketball team that his 10-year-old son, Phil Joseph, plays on. His wife, Marcia, also a school teacher, balances her busy schedule to make all their games too.

"I guess you could say that our family is a lot like Bob Hurley's," Phil Schoff said. "I was never the college player that Bobby Hurley was. But I know that they had a strong father-and-son relationship just as our family is very tight.

"I've never missed one of their games. It would kill me if I had to miss one."

Caryn, whose graduating class is expected to have about 40 students, said: "Everybody knows you and that's good and bad. I'll be walking down the street and they'll say, 'Great game last night.' We get a lot of support from the fans. And I think that it's great that we've been able to do so well because maybe we could put our town on the map."

Schoff, whose valedictorian speech will cover how to achieve one's goals, says she wants to play for the Olympic team and compete in the European Special League.

But for the 17-year-old Caryn Schoff, her vision doesn't stop there.

"Right now, I'm on the other side of the interviews," she said. "I find it really interesting and I want to follow the sport as long as I can."