

'Thingification,' racism invading sports

Ground-to-air missiles. Microchips that can store libraries full of information. Technology that can prolong life for years. All of these great creations, the products of human ingenuity. All of this — and yet when you turn on the television and listen to some of our greatest athletes talk, you'd think that we were still living in the Ice Age.



Matthew Stelly

For example, during the recent NCAA basketball tournament, I noticed that whenever Georgetown's Patrick Ewing was interviewed, Coach John Thompson was never very far away. When Ewing spoke, he mainly gave praise to his teammates and coach, and talked very cautiously about whatever the "game plan" happened to be.

But then it happened: Ewing appeared on camera with teammate Michael Graham and had to intellectually fend for himself. With the microphone under his chin and before millions of viewers, Patrick Ewing forgot what he was saying in the middle of a sentence! Without Thompson around, it appears that Patrick is like a rat on a cylinder — movin', but not goin' anyplace!

About a year ago, when Adran Dantley was hurt and the National Basketball Association's Utah Jazz kept winning, ESPN interviewed star guard Darryl Griffith. He talked about how everyone had picked

up the slack and the team had played better. According to Darryl, "everyone is contributing." Contributing? Is that anything like contributing, Darryl?

What about the time Leon Spinks won the Cruiserweight title and said after the fight: "Boxing ain't everything to me, it's just the most important thing in my life right now." And of course, who can forget the profound mumbblings of Joe Frazier, Muhammad Ali, George Foreman and Lester Hayes?

But such ineptitude is not solely a product of intellectual inadequacy. Sportscasters, for example, are supposed to have command of the English language and also possess enough foresight to be able to plan what they say before they say it. But such is not always the case.

Remember when Howard Cosell referred to wide receiver Alvin Garrett as "a little monkey?" Cosell later would put his foot even deeper in his mouth by claiming that such a statement was "meant as a compliment." I can understand Howard's logic: after all, black people have been "complimented" that way by whites for more than 300 years.

Who can forget the numerous subtly degrading racist remarks made by football commentator Tom Brookshire, classics such as: "man, that boy can really run that ball," "Coach Landry has a stable of wide receivers," "he's really a horse." Such terms are not necessarily intended to be degrading, but the process of "thingification" — reducing humans to animal-like attributes — also has its precedents in American history. These precedents are related to

Cosell's "compliment."

Street-wise Al McGuire has made more than his lion's share of degrading statements as well. Once, when a player travelled with the basketball, McGuire blurted out, "oh, oh — he took too many little Chinese steps."

Another statement was made when he simply said: "This team is gonna win because they have more black guys." He tried to cover the remark up, but it was too late. And I was present at a lecture he gave at Peony Park when he boasted of how he recruited some of his best players at Marquette "by just buyin' these ghetto kids some hot dogs."

Just last weekend, Brent Musberger made yet another Freudian slip. He said, "Bernard King is really developing into a human being." What he meant was that King was probably developing AS a human being, but that is not what he said. Therefore, once again we find "thingification" and some slips of the tongue that only show how truly pervasive racism and prejudice are.

In an arena where black people are so predominant and where the media is so omnipresent, it is wise that the language used be developmental, not degrading. If this is to take place, athletes and announcers, color men and "colored men" alike are going to have to do more than go through the motions: they will have to begin to think about what they are doing and the effects they are having on the nations young people.

I think that the time to start is right now.

Weekend matches to feature league's top tennis teams

By Ward W. Triplett III

Nebraska's women's tennis team, with two 8-1 sweeps of conference teams behind them, will have a home court advantage this weekend when its top two conference opponents come to town.

The 20th ranked Oklahoma State Cowgirls, the defending conference champion, and the Oklahoma Sooners, who beat Nebraska out for second last year by 31 points, will meet the Huskers at 1 p.m. Friday and Saturday on the East Campus tennis courts. In case of rain, the matches will be moved to the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Nebraska coach Kathy Hawkins said her sophomore and freshman-dominated squad is looking at a second place finish, but challenging Oklahoma State isn't out of the question.

The team has played well throughout the line up, and the fall experience freshmen Jean Halahan, Cari Groce and Jill Pisarcik got has shown through the spring season, Hawkins said.

"We've been doing just as we expected," Hawkins said. "These two teams are the ones we have to go after, and I think we have the confidence and momentum to give them a go."

Nebraska has defeated Colorado and Iowa State in white-wash this spring, and have an 8-4 dual record overall.

No. 1 singles player Jamie Pisarcik is 8-5, while the No. 1 doubles team of Groce and Jill Pisarcik is 5-2.

Lisa Brooks and Halahan make up the No. 3 doubles team. Groce and Mooney were doubles partners last fall, but Hawkins split that duo up after they failed to play consistently.

"They were not playing as well as they could have been," Hawkins said. "They were either really on or really off. But now, with Liz and Jamie at No. 1 and Carie and Jill at No. 2, we have two strong doubles teams. Those players seem to compensate for each other better, and it has really worked out well for us."

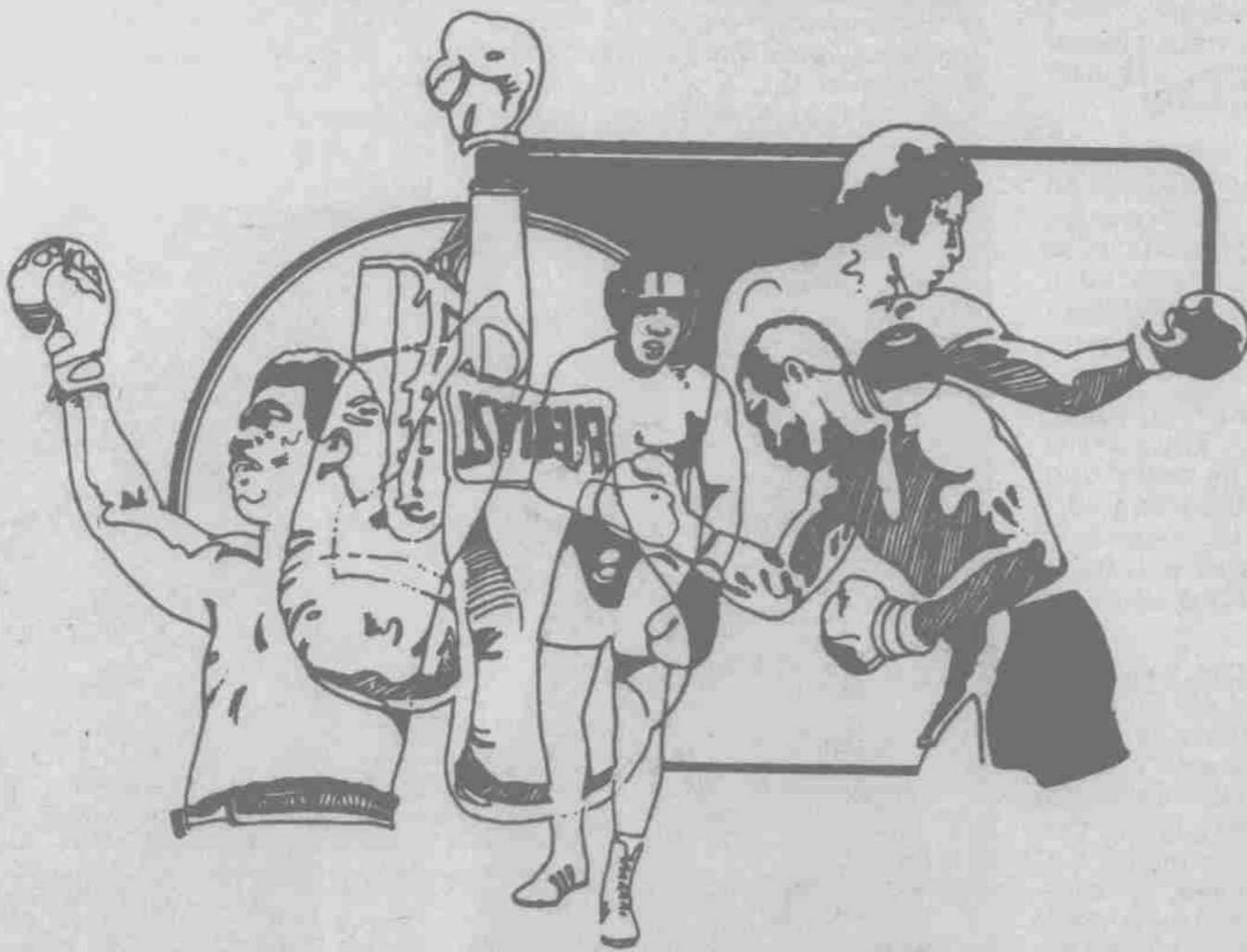
The Cowgirls are 19-5 for the season, while Oklahoma is 16-5. The Sooners lost most of their returning challengers, but the Cowgirls return four singles champions from last season. Two of those are no longer in the line-up after losing spots to freshmen. One of the other two, Grand Island native Stacy Swanson, has been dropped from No. 4 singles where she was a Big Eight champion last season to No. 5.

The Cowgirls leading players now are freshman Renata Marcinkowska of Szczecin, Poland (17-8), sophomore Mary Boudreaux of Houma, La. (14-10), Robyn Lamb of Perth, Australia (14-10), and freshman Rhona Howett of Dublin, Ireland (20-7).

"Their strength is in their depth," Hawkins said. "They are a strong team, and they should be rated higher after beating two teams ranked in top ten (Clemson and Duke) last month."

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