

Party Mardi

Diary of a trip reveals memories of Frisbee, beads, and oh yeah ... drinking



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Today, I really wanted to use my allotted space to show that the hole in the ozone layer could be repaired by using duct tape crafted from a new space-age polymer I invented.

But alas, I went to an Ultimate Frisbee tournament at Louisiana State University last weekend, which happened to be during Mardi Gras, and now I can't remember how the polymers fit together.

So, in lieu of saving the world, I'd like to rot your minds with selected highlights from the aforementioned weekend as recorded in my official UNL Ultimate Frisbee team log book.

Maybe one of y'all can figure out where my brain went bye-bye.

Thursday, Feb. 11

2:45 p.m. Rup picks up the van!
4:35 p.m. Everyone is here but Munson.

5:14 p.m. Depart one minute ahead of Rup's E.T.D.

5:15 p.m. Munson already startin' trouble and spouting words o' wisdom while munchin' Krispy Kremes.

5:47 p.m. All-van chat: Why are there spoons in Lunchables? Don't those kids know how to do Jell-O shots?

6:01 p.m. Van captain reads Hustler while navigator steers.

7:25 p.m. A debate ensues on whether the DeLorean in "Back to the Future" really needed a speedometer in order for the flux capacitor to work.

8:11 p.m. Scheming for chicks has begun. Will Munson elevate his status from Snapper to Toro? Not likely.

8:26 p.m. Why does the youngest player have a whole seat to himself?

10:04 p.m. A successful on-the-fly driver switch is completed, and

Jud anoints himself punk-bitch.
10:18 p.m. Boozer ignites a testosterone battle over how to crush a can. Is he a closet meathead?

10:43 p.m. Must stop soon. Several well-hydrated ultimate players are going ballistic anticipating a bathroom.

Friday, Feb. 12

12:23 a.m. Backwoods county sheriff pulls us over moments after Fishbone realized he was doing 61 mph in a 45. Could spell trouble, but he lets us go. This is a good sign.

2:17 a.m. Gas. Sean logic: Isn't it great that a nonrenewable resource costs 83 cents a gallon, while a gallon of milk costs \$2.25?

8:38 a.m. Todd says, "Maybe the van is out of gas."

9 a.m. Van 797 is a big-time P.O.S. checked for comfort (unless you're over 6'1"), safety (who's driving?) and convenience (stalled at backwoods Texaco).

10:37 a.m. Van back in order for an hour. The yell and swerve prank is executed. Everyone except Boozer (go figure) sits up quite startled.

11:24 a.m. Swamp, swamp and more swamp.

12:15 a.m. Arrive at LSU.

5:17 p.m. Get into a showdown with some junior-high gangstas for playing disc on their turf. We hold our ground, dodge rocks and then The Man comes along. Not just any man, but Max Power, sheriff of Baton Parish. The Man with the tan car.

5:38 p.m. Start the festivities early and take advantage of two-for-one daiquiris at Lakeside Daiquiris. Good thing they have All-Sport ones, because as UNL representatives, we shouldn't drink.

7:15 p.m. Meet the man, the myth, the legend, "Voodoo Dave." He invites us to stay on his land, where we can start a bonfire, carouse with 15

hookers and shoot bats out of his trees. Voodoo blows our minds by throwing a Frisbee across the parking lot with his foot. Wow! And that's before we watch him grind his old lady.

11 p.m. Party going full steam. Rupert is named the official king of Mardi Gras. Todd pimps Junior out and the little freshman shows poise beyond belief as he makes out with not one but four, yes four, women from George Washington University. Sean Van declines a visit to the ladies room with a fly biddie because he's a boy and boys can't go to the ladies room. With that, he earns a nickname: D.I.G.

12 a.m. Party's over. Andy just puked in a broom closet. One too

many crawdads. We set off to find lodging and decide the parking lot of the Baton Rouge Horse Activity Center is a mighty fine place to sleep. Sean and Lawrence cuddle. D.I.G. professes his love to us all.

Saturday, Feb. 13

9 a.m. Time for disc. Aww, yeah, it's gonna be a good day indeed.

11:50 a.m. Boat race revenge complete. UNL-13, Maryland-4.

1 p.m. A successful working of the party crowd nets a Nebraska groupie.

1:08 p.m. Todd = master of massage, erotica and sports.

4:30 p.m. A glorious day of Ultimate Frisbee. UNL is 3-and-0.

7:45 p.m. After poaching showers at an RV park, we pick up the George Washington U. ladies and head to Mardi Gras.

10:15 p.m. We hit Bourbon Street, where the boobs start a-floppin'. We score some All-Sport hurricanes, and the GWU ladies get a bit feisty and earn tons of beads. GWU women rule!

Sunday, Feb. 14

1:30 a.m. Leave Mardi Gras scarred for life. D.I.G. becomes a man, and we head back to home sweet parking lot.

12 p.m. It's high noon, and UNL's reign of dominance ends at the hand of Winona State University. See where Bourbon Street gets ya? We finished 11th out of 38 college teams. The trip back to Nebraska is moments away.

4:30 p.m. Watch the couple in the car in front of us make out for 30 miles before they exit the highway.

6:35 p.m. Poop declares anyone who just bought a foot-long tuna at Subway is dumb. A six-inch was \$1.99, but a foot-long was \$4.19. Munson bought a foot-long.

9:15 p.m. Junior dreams of the GWU ladies and has pleasant thoughts of becoming a living legend.

Monday, Feb. 15

12:38 a.m. The home stretch. Fishbone hits a skunk. That hoser.

2:26 a.m. Sean is dubbed "team ho-bag" as he cuddles with Rup.

7:45 a.m. Almost home, but the worst is yet to come. Andy just got behind the wheel.

9:30 a.m. With the penis of the plains in sight, Rup tries to rally the troops for a trip to the Canadian border to get the most use from the van. There are no takers.

10:05 a.m. The Ultimate gods must love us. We arrive in the Star City just in time for class - or for Old Style, disc golf and reflecting on the mamarries - uh - memories of the weekend.



SHAWN BALLARIN/DN

Pay-per-screw

Cable deregulation should not be considered until industry is competitive



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Last month, I had cable installed in my apartment for the low, low price of \$24.79 - a bargain considering a cable guy had to come to my home, shimmy up a pole, flip a switch and hook a coaxial cable into the back of my TV ... all of which took about 10 minutes.

As a follow-up to this costly house call, I received a thank-you letter from Sharon - I'm not sure who she is, but she signed her name and, according to the send-off, was being sincere - thanking me for choosing her cable company as my "entertainment and information provider."

Unfortunately, I never really had a choice in the matter.

In most small to mid-sized markets like Lincoln, cable service is an institutionalized monopoly restrained by government regulations. Indeed, the cable industry has operated under the largely indifferent eye of the Federal Communications Commission for most of cable's 30 years.

In larger markets, telephone companies - the only other industry with a comparable, hardwire network - have given cable a run for its money, driving prices down and quality up.

But in this college town, where the telephone company is satisfied with its own monopoly and the viability of mounting a satellite dish on the porch of an apartment is unrealistic, cable has an effective stranglehold on TV service.

The FCC has found the regulation of an industry with such rapid growth and changing technology to be a daunting task. Quality and growth are often compromised through regulation, and considering the fact that the regulated company has better access to information on costs and demand than the regulators, this task may well

be impossible.

But against the public's better interests, the FCC took the place typically reserved for open-market competition, maintaining rural cable service through urban subsidization.

By the end of next month, however, cable's less-than-vigilant watchdog will move on to the next hydrant, and the industry will be deregulated.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 set the deregulation date for March 31, 1999, anticipating that competition would provide a better restraint on cable prices.

But competition is hardly pervasive, and deregulation should not be considered an option until it is economically viable for other companies to enter an already well-established market. Any self-respecting capitalist will argue that encouraging competition through regulation is an oxymoron, but such action is a necessary evil in this case.

Twenty years of regulation have precluded competition in most markets. After a year without government regulation, cable prices could skyrocket and rural service could become obsolete.

Proponents of an open market

would argue that communications technology is rapidly advancing and should not be stifled by regulation. Integrated telephone, cable and Internet service could be a reality within a decade.

But deregulation will put cable and telephone companies in an ideal position to control that digital future; the Telecommunications Act also repealed the ban on cross-ownership between telephone and cable companies.

I would like to believe that cable and telephone companies would be unwilling to share the plunder through merger, and the developing rivalry between these two industries, which now offer many of the same services, seems to affirm this reluctance.

But once the competition these industries pose to each other is eliminated, the door is open for mass-media cartels to completely control prices and, more importantly, the dissemination of information.

This is a doomsday premonition, to be sure, and if such a threat is posed by cross-ownership, the government is likely to simply reinstate ineffectual regulation and, thereby,

continue to stifle the telecommunications industry.

Aside from declaring cable and telephone lines public property like radio and TV airwaves, the solution is to encourage competition and reinstate the ban on cross-ownership.

Because an upstart cable company can't afford to lay down 100,000 miles of fiber-optic lines in order to compete with an established company, the next phase of regulation should dictate cooperation rather than constraint to promote competition.

Perhaps the government could consider subsidizing the construction and encouraging the co-ownership of networks, allowing new companies to piggy-back the fiber optics of established cable companies.

Considering the rapid advancement of this industry, however, any solution would have to be transitory in nature, and a whole new bureaucracy might be necessary to coordinate the effort.

To think, it could have all been avoided had competition rather than regulation been the policy in the first place.

The mistake will cost more than 10 minutes and \$24.79 to remedy.