

## OP/ED

# Harrisonburg's version of 'Hoosiers'

If you were to create the perfect basketball fable, it might begin in a small town in Indiana (or possibly Virginia), where young boys grow up with a ball in their hands and dreams of glory in their hearts. Daniel Stern (of "Wonder Years" and "Home Alone" fame) would most likely narrate the fable.

Anyway, there'd be one boy who would continue to practice, with a girls' ball, long after the others had gone home. And in those lonely hours, as he honed his skills, he'd find the essence of the game and, in many ways, himself.

That young boy was me, or I'm him now. Anyway, I'm a certified basketball lunatic. I've watched basketball on every level, played and coached basketball, refereed basketball and I've even seen obscure basketball films like "One on One," "The Pistol" Pete Maravich Story" and "Soul in the Hole."

Currently, I'm infected with the same madness as hundreds of JMU basketball enthusiasts, and it's not even March. I'm talking about intramural basketball, where you might see teams like Los Borrachos (translation: the drunkards) play Team Fleener (and I'm not making that up). Or you can watch Team Chunky Soup get slaughtered by teams with former JMU varsity players. But what intramurals lack in parity, they make up for in zany names and sweaty jerseys.

The word intramural comes from the Greek, with intra- meaning war and -mural meaning without referees. I play in the Co-rec division, which means I play worse than most guys do and only slightly worse than most women. Co-rec basketball is basically made up of two kinds of people: 1) People playing basketball to have fun and 2) Guys who take co-rec basketball way too seriously.

Some people have accused me of being the latter, but I'm telling you that girl pushed me first. Besides getting roughed up by a female wrestler with a weak crossover, I also got a bloody lip from a member of a Christian team.

As you can tell, many people do take intramural basketball very seriously, which is why there is so much pressure on the referees (etymology: Latin for underpaid, blind zebras).

Having reffed my sophomore year, I know how difficult it can be to referee football players and other large animals. In one game, Macey Brooks actually "shushed" me as he handed me the ball.

Luckily, the intramural staff prepared me to ref big-time intramural basketball

in their referee clinics, where I learned such valuable skills as the "no-call" and the "no-call." By my 10th or 12th game, I was competent enough to make the rare "fake no-call."

When it comes to referees, everyone has an opinion, but they're doing the best they can do. I'll let you in on a little secret; due to the same limited budget that keeps jersey numbers restricted to the number four, only one referee per game actually has a functioning whistle.

With so many complaints, an astute reader might wonder why players burden themselves with playing. It's simple: We play intramurals for the love of the game, to entertain others and to win that T-shirt.

This is my last shot at a T-shirt, and although I've had a rewarding career, I feel it would be incomplete without a championship T-shirt. My freshman year, I was a player/coach for the Nads (loyal fan cheer: GO NADS!). We were a talented young team, but we fell a little bit short. The next season the Nads were decimated by free agency and the \$20 forfeit deposit.

After a brief retirement from reffing, I began playing co-rec for the Strangers.

Over the history of the franchise (the past two seasons), our roster has changed virtually from game to game so that during lay-ups, we literally introduce ourselves to one another.

Last season our roster was 11 and a half deep. We went undefeated in the regular season before finally losing in the semifinals, which I attribute partly to one of the referees, who was busy watching another game on an adjacent court.

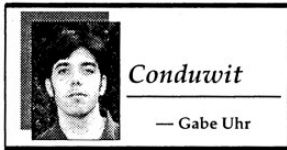
This season the Strangers have had trouble getting enough players to start the games. Mashona Council, last year's player/coach, is "playing" overseas and some of our squad graduated. So last week, we dropped our first regular season game in franchise history to the aptly named Lucky Ducks.

The Strangers' problem this season is that some of our players put class and drinking (not me, as you might think) ahead of basketball. I can understand putting one in front of basketball, but the other is ridiculous.

Maybe I'm getting too old for this; I'm thinking about retiring after the season, but I don't know what I'll do if I don't win that T-shirt.

Maybe I'll come back for one more year.

*Gabe Uhr is a senior English major with skillz.*



Conduwit

— Gabe Uhr