

SPORTS

REBEL
YELL

No gain from expansion

Quantity does not mean quality, especially in the realm of professional sports.

Despite this idea, league executives and team owners seem hellbent on adding as many new teams as they deem necessary to their respective sports.

In the past three years, the NHL has added five new teams in San Jose, Tampa Bay, Ottawa, Florida and Anaheim. Baseball brought in the Rockies and Marlins last season and is rumored to be adding two more teams in the near future. The NFL is going to add two more teams and the NBA has all but sealed a deal to expand outside the United States and into Toronto.

The reason for expansion can be summed up in one word, money. To secure the rights to a franchise, investors must pay a franchise fee (usually between \$50-\$100 million depending on the sport) to the league before they ever start building their team. Before signing one player, buying uniforms, or hiring coaches, these fees go straight into the established owner's pockets. If you already own a team, it's money for nothing.

Another added monetary benefit of expansion is in merchandising. In the NBA, NHL and NFL, the leagues divide up the revenue from merchandise sales evenly between every team. Although adding new teams gives everyone a smaller share, the revenue generated from sales of expansion team items more than makes up for the loss. Expansion team merchandise is always among the top sellers because it's the latest thing, and the established owners want their cut of the money.

A third plus for the owners comes from venturing into new, undeveloped markets. Hockey has successfully moved into Southern California and Florida, two areas where the sport was previously dormant. The NBA will probably reap huge benefits from a move into Toronto, just as baseball has by heading into Colorado and Florida. There is money to be made in new places - the owners know this and do their best to take advantage of it.

What does all of this expansion do to the sport?

In the short term, it's effects are terrible.

The idea of selling tickets to see a Mighty Ducks game anywhere outside of Anaheim is

far fetched. Expansion teams don't generate the interest away from home that traditional rivals would, so many fans are reluctant to come out when the new kids come to town. The fact that it often takes years for a new team to develop is another drawback.

But the biggest problem of all comes in finding players for the new teams.

There are few skilled quarterbacks in the NFL today. Do the expansionists think they'll suddenly find more good quarterbacks by adding two more teams? That's at least four more quarterbacks who don't belong in the league making an NFL roster. Expansion dilutes the quality of play on the field because there aren't enough talented skill position players to support the added teams.

The same argument can be made for baseball. There are pitchers who should be in Double A on the mound for major league teams because the sport hasn't developed enough quality arms to supply 28 teams. Expansion drafts dilute rosters even more so you can see why team ERA's were so high this past season. Offensive stats will skyrocket when two more pitching staffs take shape.

Hockey's five new teams have added room for European players who many fans in the U.S. and Canada have a hard time adapting to. How many kids do you see wearing a Darius Kasparaitis T-shirt? Although the talent pool may not have dropped, name recognition certainly has.

If any sport needs to expand, it's the NBA. Basketball has more than enough quality players to go around and the expansion teams are capable of winning in only a few years. Charlotte and Orlando, both recent additions to the NBA, are two of the league's up-and-comers.

While expansion offers some benefits, it's apparent that the addition of teams needs to be curtailed if the sports want to remain successful. Until the owners stop thinking with their wallets, sports fans will suffer.



Sportstalk

Chris Jones



"When I leave, it will be goodbye, thanks, and hopefully, we've all enjoyed each other along the way."
-Michael Jordan

UNLV set to take on New Mexico State

BY SCOTT GULBRANSEN
STAFF WRITER

The UNLV football team will take on their second Aggie in a row as New Mexico State rolls into town.

The Rebels are coming off an optimistic loss in which quarterback Bob Stockham threw for 425 yards and the



team came back late in the fourth quarter to make it close. Demond Thompkins also cashed in for 185 yards receiving against Utah State.

New Mexico State is in second place in the Big West Conference with a 3-1 conference mark. The Aggies are coming off a road victory in which they defeated Pacific, 27-23. They are 4-3 overall.

NMSU is led by sophomore quarterback Cody Ledbetter who has thrown for nearly 1,400 yards and six touchdowns. Tailback Tony Dublin, who ran over the UNLV defense for 107 yards last year, is coming off an im-

pressive performance against Pacific. Dublin gained 105 yards and ran for one touchdown against the Tigers.

Saturday's meeting will be the 10th between the two teams. UNLV leads the overall series, 8-1. The Rebels are 4-0 against the Aggies at the Sam Boyd Silver Bowl.

Game time is 7:05 p.m. at the Silver Bowl.



Crooks' decision to run at UNLV pays off

BY PAUL GUTIERREZ
SPORTS EDITOR

If it doesn't mean anything, then it's not worth doing.

At least that's Julie Crooks' philosophy - in life as well as when she's running for the Lady Rebel cross country team.

"I always think confident and strong," Crooks said. "You have to for anything in life. Because really, the only thing you have to fear is fear itself."

"But everything has to mean something for me. If you don't have to work for it, then it's not really worth it."

Being the No. 1 runner for the Lady Rebels has certainly been worth it for Crooks. She has been the top UNLV finisher in five of the six meets the Lady Rebels have competed in this season. But her biggest achievement came two weekends ago when she won the UNLV Invitational at Sunset Park in 18 minutes, 20 seconds.

Her success really does not come as a surprise to some. She was, after all, a junior college All-American in both cross country and track, taking ninth place overall at the 1991 NJCAA Nationals with her team coming in second. She also placed third at the 1993 NJCAA Track Championships.

But what was surprising was her decision to attend UNLV - known more for its sprinters than distance runners.

"There is a lot of snow in Oregon," Crooks said, matter-of-factly. "I just got burned out on the cold."

Crooks, who is majoring in women's studies, was also eyeing Boise State and Nevada. But the fact that her grandparents live in nearby Green Valley influenced her decision to come to UNLV.

"That and I liked the workouts

In fact, Crooks' grandmother may have played a part in her winning the UNLV Invitational. As she was in the stretch run, her

grandmother let out what was described as a llama call. You see, Crook's father, Guyron, is a llama rancher in Oregon. The 40-acre spread,

which includes 78 llamas, horses, and pot-bellied pigs, is in the process of being turned into a petting zoo attraction.

"At feeding time, my dad gives a loud high-pitched call that attracts the llamas to let them know it's time to eat," Crooks said. "I guess my grandmother gave that same call at the race."

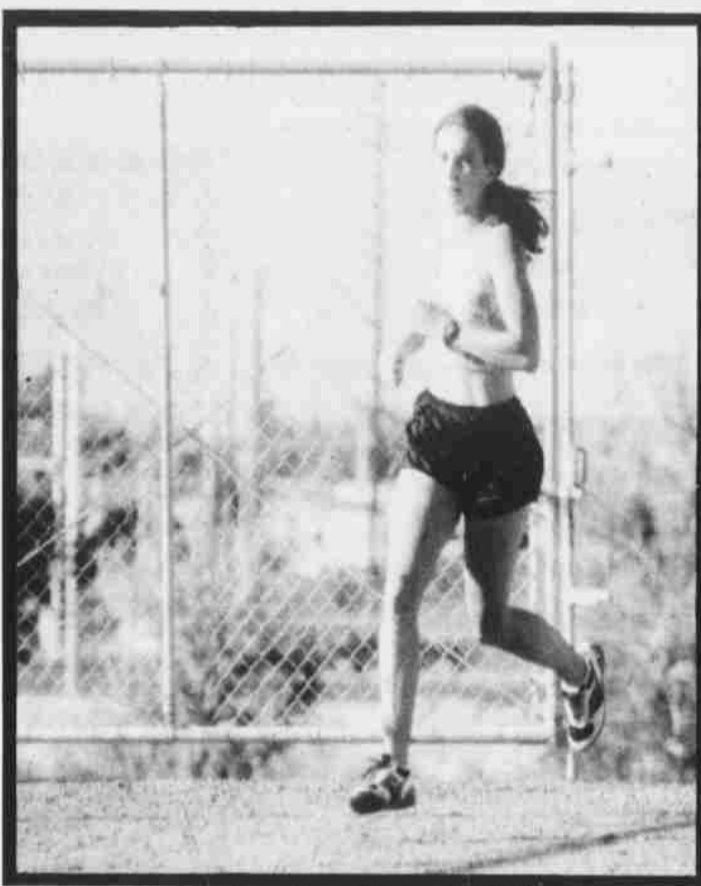
Crooks, 22, says that though running has always been a major part of her life, only lately has she come to realize the aspects of competition.

"Now that I'm older I appreciate it more," she said. "It's just a natural high because it's just you and the road. It's elite thinking, not selfish. It's a personal challenge to improve on myself."

"With school and running, all I can possibly do is the best I

"There is a lot of snow in Oregon. I just got burned out on the cold."

- Julie Crooks



Julie Crooks was junior college All-American in Oregon.

here," she said. "I knew they were the Sprintin' Rebels, but I liked the low quantity, high quality workouts. They improve your speed."

ning, all I can possibly can."

Read *The Rebel Yell* sports section for the latest on UNLV athletics.