

Squirrel went bald from acid, not motherhood

Jim Wall, a Muncie reader of this column, called the other day to tell me about a strange physical characteristic of fox squirrels that he had observed.

Wall, incidentally, lives in the Muncie boonies, so he has good opportunities to see wildlife at fairly close range.

"I was stopped at a stoplights near a little park," he said, "and there was this squirrel there (on the ground) that seemed to have bare patches on his shoulders and back ... ever heard of that?"

Somehow, I seemed to sense that he, like I, thought we were dealing with a thoughtful and kind act of motherhood or maybe parenthood, that the squirrel was preparing a cozy, warm nest for young in the near future. It is, or will be soon, the mating season for squirrels, you know, as late winter and early spring roll around.

"A nice thought," said I, explaining to Jim that the sympathetic veins of my system were happy, even revealed, that a so-called dumb animal would somehow harbor such a magnificent urge, motherhood at its level best.

But it is totally untrue.

It is, says Dr. Harmon P. Weeks, Purdue University professor of wildlife, just a case of gibberellic acid. He says it seems to develop in shelled field corn, probably at this time of year.

Gibberellic acid also is used to make plants grow better and produce greater yields.

So I can offer no warm stories of parenthood. Nor can I give squirrels the ability to think (still, I catch myself wondering about that at times). But I can help set the records straight, maybe.

The reason I have such great faith in Weeks, wildlife generally; George Parker, plants, and the work of Russell E. Mumford, mammals, is that they have never failed in helping me solve problems of identity and some wildlife questions.

Once, while investigating scratch marks on a large tree in the rugged hills of Brown County, a female Eastern Towhee flitted out of a brushy spot 75 yards



'Bayou' Bill Scifres

OUTDOORS

ahead, and Weeks immediately identified the bird. En route to the site, Weeks added that there would be cowbird eggs in the Towhee nest. The eggs were there.

Venison hash

If you occasionally find yourself burdened with cold cooked venison — or any other leftover meat, for that matter — think in terms of a dish of hash in your old iron skillet. Putting it together and cooking requires about an hour but the final product will be worth the time and effort.

The ingredients: Half a cup each of celery, cabbage, onion, potato, green pepper or any other relatively dry veggies found in the refrigerator; one cup of meat (more if you like) and the leftover gravy (optional); also 3 to 4 tablespoons cooking oil (I recommend olive oil).

Place the veggies (all diced very small) in iron skillet at medium heat and add the cooking agent and two ounces of tap water. Stir often to cook veggies uncovered until water has cooked away. Add diced meat (leftover gravy, if you like), salt and pepper to taste, and cook until veggies and meat are mixed and well browned.

Serve as a side dish, or top it with fried eggs of any style and shredded cheese of your choice as an entrée with green salad or pineapple ring with cottage cheese. Gravy or sauce is optional.

Then throw your bathroom scales in the river.

"Bayou" Bill Scifres' outdoors column appears Saturdays in the Daily Journal. Comments can be sent to P.O. Box 699, Franklin, IN 46131.



A dispute about changing the Cingular logo on Jeff Burton's car is pitting team owner Richard Childress against one of NASCAR's biggest revenue sources.

Nextel, Childress face off over AT&T

By CHRIS JENKINS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WELCOME, N.C.

A sponsorship dispute is pitting one of NASCAR's most respected team owners against one of its biggest revenue sources, leaving officials hustling to work out a compromise two weeks before the start of the season.

Richard Childress' No. 31 car, which is driven by Jeff Burton, is sponsored by cell phone service provider Cingular. But that company has been bought by AT&T, which is phasing out the Cingular brand name.

Under normal circumstances, that wouldn't be a problem. The team would just slap a few shiny new logos on the car and hit the track.

But when it comes to selling cell phones to race fans, it's not that easy.

When Nextel signed a 10-year, \$700 million deal to become the title sponsor of NASCAR's top series before the 2004 season, it lobbied NASCAR to ban rival telecommunications companies from becoming sponsors. An exemption was granted for existing telecom sponsors such as Cingular and Alltel, which were allowed to remain in the series.

But with Cingular changing its name, Nextel officials say Richard Childress Racing isn't allowed to put AT&T logos on its car.

"If the name changes, then that changes the game," said Dean Kessel, Sprint Nextel's director of NASCAR Nextel Cup series marketing. "Cingular and Alltel

were grandfathered in, and everybody knew the rules of engagement early on."

But even if the name changes, isn't it still the same company? Nextel, after all, has merged with Sprint since signing on as NASCAR's sponsor. The series name remains the Nextel Cup, at least for now.

"We are still working closely with the folks at RCR," said Steve O'Donnell, NASCAR's vice president of racing operations. "We are in the process of working with them. They understand the rules that we have in our partnership with Nextel. We are positive we will be able to come to an amicable relationship with those guys and look forward to 2007."

When NASCAR struck its deal with Nextel, team owners complained the telecommunications sponsorship ban was far too restrictive. O'Donnell said NASCAR is sensitive to owners' needs.

"At the end of the day, we need team sponsors," O'Donnell said. "The team realizes that, and NASCAR realizes that."

Childress, a longtime friend of NASCAR's ruling France family and former car owner for the late Dale Earnhardt, isn't one to air his dirty laundry in public. But he doesn't want to be left scrambling to find a new sponsor on short notice, either.

"All that's being handled right now with NASCAR," Childress said. "I can't really comment on it. It's just (up to) NASCAR right now. Nextel's a great series sponsor, and we can work this thing out."

But they haven't told you no, right? "All I can say is they're working it out now," Childress said.

CG wrestlers aim to topple Grizzly Cubs

By MATTHEW GLENESK
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From 1989 to 1995, Center Grove owned the area wrestling sectional.

Since then, Franklin has worn the crown 11 consecutive years.

The Trojans want it back. "Our goal is to go win this tournament," Center Grove coach Cale Hoover said. "We got the Johnson County (Tournament), and this is the next step, the next expectation."

"We definitely have a lot of respect for the other teams, but we've really tried to get the kids to have that as an expectation, not a goal."

Heading into today's sectional at Mooresville High School, Center Grove seems to have an advantage over the competition.

In Hoover's first season, the Trojans have gone 6-0 against sectional opponents, with Monrovia being the only team they haven't wrestled.

Winning last month's Johnson County meet, which ended a lengthy streak of county titles by Franklin, has given Center Grove confidence that this is the year they break through.

"Our kids definitely believe," Hoover said. "I think our kids ... firmly believe we've improved more than anyone, outworked everyone, and now it's time to go out and get it done."

In order to do that, Center Grove is going to have to overtake Franklin. The Grizzly Cubs, last year's sectional and regional champions, were ravaged by graduation, losing four wrestlers who qualified for the state finals.

It seems the sectional is primed for a transfer of power.

"I wasn't here for the last 11 years, but I've been around to know a lot about Franklin," Hoover said. "We look at this as our opportunity to start a run of our own, go take this one and not look back."

IF YOU GO

What: IHSAA wrestling sectionals
Who: Center Grove, Franklin, Greenwood, Indian Creek, Whiteland, Martinsville, Monrovia and Mooresville
Where: Mooresville High School, 550 N. Indiana St.
When: 9 a.m. today
Top individuals to watch: Center Grove's Matt Milton (103 pounds), Blake Harvey (130), Tony Zubia (145) and Shelby Mappes (160); Whiteland's Matt Fields (119), Ronnie Pecina (152) and Travis Thomas (215); Indian Creek's Kyle Horton (152), Justin Cave (171) and Evan Lattimore (285); Franklin's Jae VanHorn (130), Stuart Riessen (152) and Calvin Johnson (285)

Challenges await as season winds down

Behind a good team there are always good coaches. Our excellent coaching staff has been the backbone of our success this year and previous years.

Coach Joe Lentz has been the girls' varsity coach for 13 seasons. He boasts a record of 226-67 during that time, proving that he must know the game pretty well. He has won a state championship and has coached many talented players throughout his coaching career.

Our other coaches, whom I will talk about in a later article, include varsity assistant Kenton Brown, junior varsity coach Anthony Mann and junior varsity assistant Jenna Wagner. Together, our coaching staff is one-of-a-kind.

The managers of the girls basketball team also are important members of the team. With them, practice and games flow much more smoothly.

Our managers know everything. They are in charge of getting basketballs, filling water bottles and



Lydia Feldman

WINTER SPORTS DIARY

running the clock during practices. On game nights, the managers have dozens of responsibilities; so many that I'm not even sure what all they do. I know they are in charge of filming the game and helping out the coaches whenever needed.

Our final regular-season home game is Tuesday against Carmel. Every year, the final home game is Senior Night.

On Senior Night, the varsity senior players will be introduced and acknowledged for being Trojans for four years. It is an honor, but also stressful. For most

of us, our basketball careers will be ending soon, and that is not a happy event since we have played for most of our lives.

With a loss against Ben Davis and a close win against Greenwood last week, the Trojans needed a big win Friday against Lawrence North to return to the winning path.

Only three regular-season games remain, so sectional time is near. Of the three remaining teams, two of them are rated in the top 10 in the state.

We need to be ready. We need to come back together and play as a team. The sectional draw will take place Monday.

Hopefully we have some luck on our side and receive a draw that will help us make a long tournament run.

Lydia Feldman is a senior on the Center Grove High School girls basketball team. Her Winter Sports Diary entries appear each week in the Daily Journal.

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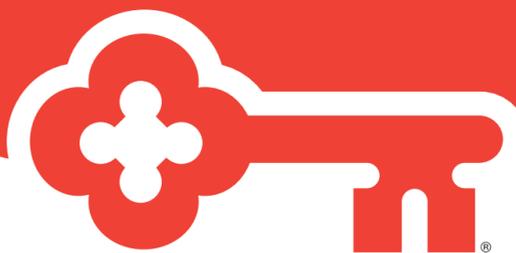
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