

Batter up!

That's right, it's time for high school baseball and softball. Time to unlace our sneakers for the basketball season, put on those cleats, and get out there and Play Ball!

As we enter this season, there are plenty of question marks facing our local teams:

Can Patrician Academy maintain their championship level programs? Can the baseball team - led by standouts Lance Gibson and Barry Meeks - regain the state championship they won two years ago now that stars Brent Bonner and Beau Meeks have moved to the college level? Can the perennial playoff powerhouse Lady Saints get back to the state finals for a second straight year on the arms of Kylie Lewis and Shayna Jimerson now that Kane Andrews and Emily Harry have graduated?

What about the Rebels? Can the storied South Choctaw baseball program rebound from a winless season with newcomer Jacob Sullivan and returning transfer Trent 'Popcorn' Gibson on the mound? Will the Lady Rebels return to their playoff ways with a group of top-notch pitchers led by Trystan Mosley, Cierra Giles and Koen Lindsey?

What about Millry? Can the Wildcats' famed baseball program continue

their playoff prowess with one senior, Taylor Owen, and a bunch of underclass talent like Dylan Whitsett and Colby Myers? Will the Lady Wildcats realize their state championship potential behind power-pitcher Kristen Skinner and do-it-all sophomore Jasmine Wells?

Can Southern Choctaw's baseball and softball programs get off the mat?

Can the Choctaw County Tigers improve even more this year after taking giant steps on the diamond last season?

All of these questions will be answered and much, much more as the Sun's baseball and softball preview gets underway starting next issue!



Cierra Giles
South Choctaw



Trystan Mosley
South Choctaw



Lance Gibson
PATRICIAN

Upcoming Games

Friday (2/23)

Millry at Bayside (baseball)
Millry vs. Frisco City (softball)

Saturday (2/24)

Patrician at Gator Invitational at Grove Hill
(Boys play Jackson at 10 a.m.
Girls also play at 10 a.m., 5:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.)

Monday (2/26)

South Choctaw at Marengo
Southern Choctaw at Choctaw County (baseball)
Millry at Tombigbee Tourney/Jackson (baseball)
Millry at Aliceville (softball)

Tuesday (2/27)

Millry vs Fruitdale (softball)
Millry at Tombigbee Tourney/Leroy (baseball)

EDITORIAL

NBA hoops better than College

Blasphemy, right?

I know everybody else is just the opposite - they like college basketball better than the NBA - but not me, I much prefer the NBA game to college.

Okay, when the NCAA tournament rolls around, that's different. 'March Madness' is probably the most exciting sporting event going. I love to watch the tournament, but prior to it, I really don't care about college ball that much.

First, think about how devoid of talent the college game is compared to the NBA. Thanks to the trend of high scholars jumping to the NBA early, the college game has suffered immensely. Watch any college game and there is probably not even a guy on the court that will be a factor in the NBA. Basically, there are only three guys in college right now that will even start or be a factor when drafted next season; Greg Oden-Ohio State, Kevin Durant-Texas, Joakim Noah-Florida. The talent is so few and far between in the college game that the NBA draft has even been cut back to two rounds.

When you watch a college game these days, you are watching a sub-par product compared to years gone by. Think of all of the talent in the NBA that either skipped college all together or went just one season. Superstars like LeBron James, Kobe Bryant and Kevin Garnett never even played at the collegiate level, while rising stars like Carmelo Anthony and Chris Bosh spent very little time in college. The big money has lured the most gifted players away from college and into the pros.

The NBA has now instituted a rule saying that a player out of high school must play a year of college or at least be 19 years of age before becoming a pro. The reason for the rule is to help the college game maintain some sort of star power. After all, it's superstars that make television ratings soar, not sound, fundamental basketball.

And that's usually the cry you'll hear from college fans about the difference between their beloved game and the self-centered NBA. Everybody loves saying that NBA'ers are lazy and don't care, while the college kids give it their all and live-and-die with each game's outcome.

Not true. Have you watched an NBA game? I've have honestly never seen a player 'not try' in the NBA. These guys are making lots of money to perform, and if they don't they won't be making that money much longer, bottom line. It's a business, if you don't produce, you don't get paid. And if you watched any of the playoffs or the finals last season, then I think you know that they do care. Especially after watching Dallas' Dirk Nowitzki destroy the walkway to the locker room after his Mavericks blew a two game lead to the now champion Miami Heat.

And the quality of play, contrary to popular belief, has never been higher in the NBA. Have you watched the Dallas Mavericks or the Phoenix Suns recently? I challenge you to find a better brand of basketball being played anywhere on the planet. These teams, as well as most in the NBA, are stocked with guys that are either seven-foot-tall or just a hair under, but play like small forward and shooting guards instead of slow-footed center.

No more lumbering seven-footers like Utah's Mark Eaton and New York's Patrick Ewing from back in the 80's. Now these agile giants don't just man the middle, they control the court. Players like Minnesota's Kevin Garnett, Dallas' Dirk Nowitzki, Phoenix's Amare Stoudemire, Orlando's Dwight Howard and Toronto's Chris Bosh have all changed the game for the better. Just watch as these guys knock down jumpers from anywhere on the court, run the point, post up, take defenders off the dribble for dunks, or rebound and defend like nobody's business. Basically, the league is quickly filling up with players that possess Michael Jordan's athletic talent and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's seven-foot stature.

In conclusion, the NBA has never been better. It has never enjoyed the overload of talent from top to bottom that it does now. So, if you like basketball at its best played by the best, tune into the NBA. If you like to watch hoops played by guys that miles and miles below the NBA talent level, check out a college game.

send comments to sports@choctawsun.com



Choctaw Sun photo by Colin Merritt

Dixie Bowmaster Mark Williams competes in a bow tournament last year at the Gilberttown Bow Range, which is located just outside of Gilberttown on the Barrytown Road. The Bowmasters have a multi-round shoot this Saturday starting at 8 a.m.

Dixie Bowmaster shoot this Saturday in Gilberttown

GILBERTTOWN -- The Dixie Bowmasters will hold a multi-round bow shoot this Saturday, February 24th.

The shoot will be held at the Gilberttown Bow Range located on the Barrytown Road and will boast three divisions: youth, hunter and open class.

The shoot is scheduled for 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the cost is \$7 per round.

For more information call Mark Williams (251) 843-2725 or Stan Boggs (251) 843-5883.

Choctaw bow hunters prepare to 'Shoot for a Cure'

On March 10th at the Gilberttown Bow Range, the first ever Choctaw County Relay For Life Bow Tournament will take place starting at 10 a.m.

All proceeds from the event will go to benefit the Choctaw County Relay For Life effort.

A \$15 entry fee is required for all entries. They will be youth, junior and adult divisions and each will receive prizes for first through third place. Door prizes and lunch also will be

included, as well as a drawing for custom made turkey calls by Bobby Lucas and Richard Downey.

Chances for the custom calls can be purchased at local businesses or from any member of the Wimberly Methodist Protestant Church.

To get to the Gilberttown Bow Range, turn on the Barrytown Road in Gilberttown and follow the signs.

For more information or questions contact Janet Downey at 205-673-2253.

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