

FISH: BLACK MONDAY FOR DFW SPORTS SECTIONS

Contributed by Mike Fisher
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Yet another Black Monday in the local newspaper racket. They've got announcements. We've got inter-office memos, we've got industry gossip, and we've got some well-earned perspective on the coming death of local sports coverage in our newspapers.

The DMNews is announcing the reduction of 500 jobs. D Magazine's FrontBurner has some links to shareholder and employee letters and whatnot, and Belo has its own public announcement in the paper, complete with its "it's-not-really-a-bad-thing"; nut quote: "We believe that the resultant, smaller workforce — focused intensely on products that take full advantage of A. H. Belo's local capabilities in content creation and sales — is best suited for the business opportunities that will define our future success," he said.

Yes indeed. The biggest newspaper in the region and its readers will be MUCH better served with "the resultant, smaller workforce." Cripes.

Furthermore, "Quick"; — the DMNews' hip attempt to give commuting readers a condensed. Pop-culture-y look at the world on daily basis, is peeling back to being a weekly. (The daily newspaper putting out a weekly newspaper. Ouch.)

So what can we contribute to Black Monday? Two things:

More Blackitude. With details. Sports-related. From both local major-metro-dailies.

A recent DMNews in-house memo announced to the sports staff an assortment of changes. And yeah, we got a look at it. And yeah, it's embarrassing. We won't mention the specific names of the people who are being elevated to positions for which they are clearly unprepared, but we'll just say this: The memo forgets to mention the coming departure of a certain football writer who is leaving to work for Rivals.com. The memo does "congratulate"; people benefiting from the "trickle-up"; effect, and one of the few of them who is deserving is hard-working Chuck Carlton, who will do more columnizing. But the DMNews' plan is apparently to take bad high-school writers and make them great college writers.

So the rest of the kids might want to brace themselves for joining a staff that, frankly, is already being Peter Principled. (Some of the punctuation and spelling errors on the DMNews sports blogs are grade-school-level.)

Meanwhile, over at our old rag, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, our friends inside the building (yes, we still have friends) sadly report that the paper is no longer planning on sending a writer on the road to cover the NHL Dallas Stars and will no longer have a regular motorsports writer. This, of course, despite the fact that the 2008-09 Stars may be championship-level and that NASCAR is right in the Star-Telegram's own backyard.

We won't speculate, for now, what the S-T might eventually do in blowing off the Mavs beat. (If the Stars and NASCAR mean nothing, how much can the Mavs, the Rangers and colleges besides TCU mean to Cowtown?) We will, however, note that in the last few years, the S-T sports department has divorced itself from the following names (to mention just a few): Editor Bob Hille, columnist Richie Whitt, outdoors writer Bob Hood, baseball expert T.R. Sullivan, hockey expert Mike Heika, basketball expert Art Garcia, motorsports expert John Sturbin, reporter Andy Friedlander, feature writer Steve Campbell, and a certain hairy-chested columnist who had been the paper's Employee of the Year twice in five years who got in trouble because he was dabbling in radio.

All this of course, is why Dallas is increasingly getting its snarkily-drawn news at FrontBurner, is able to gobble political takes at DallasBlog, and is learning that DFW's best sports columnist is at the alternative paper (and that to fill the void usually occupied by newspapers, the alternative-paper guy also joins blogger Ed Bark and us as only guys in town covering the sports media).

Oh, and is increasingly coming to DallasBasketball.com for Mavs coverage. … and more.

Seriously, the S-T lost guys who were considered among the country's best beat writers on Cowboys/NFL, Mavs/NBA, Rangers/MLB, Stars/NHL, and replaced them with. … well the staff now features the iconic Randy Galloway and a lot of female bosses, female editors and female reporters.

So they've got the makings for a hell of a party — babes, sports, and all the Cuervo y'all can drink. But it's another Black Monday. So nobody's in the mood to celebrate.