

EDITORIAL

Three and out for Mendenhall

More of the Illini football team's dirty laundry got a little aired out last week and it not only put a stink on last year's campaign, it may do harm to future seasons and undeservingly, head coach Ron Zook.

Rumors of former Illini Rashard Mendenhall's disapproval of his head coach came full circle last week when he was quoted by the News-Gazette saying "as long as Ron Zook is there it will be hard for me to support the University of Illinois football team" and that he won't be in Champaign for Homecoming this fall, despite the weekend overlap-

ping with his new team's bye week.

The Pittsburgh Steeler running back dismissed longtime speculation that he was upset with his brother Walter's playing time and that the elder Mendenhall — who is transferring to Illinois State for his final year of eligibility — had much to do with why he was "ready to start walking out." But his vagueness and willingness to denigrate the program that made him successful came off as classless and baseless without more details.

His complaints not only put a smear on the team's recent success, it jeopardizes its future because oth-

er coaches will use the comments to woo recruits away from Illinois. Never mind the effect it may have on team morale on top of losing vital components of the team's Rose Bowl run like himself, J Leman and Kevin Mitchell.

What makes this particularly galling is that Mendenhall got everything he needed to make it to the NFL; a strong group of players around him, a system that played into his abilities and a dream season that skyrocketed his stock to first-round value. Considering this season's success, Zook should be given the benefit of the doubt in usual

Our Opinion

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coach-player disputes about strategy, playing time and discipline. An unwillingness to treat one player as a prima donna would indicate he's doing his job well.

If Mendenhall thinks his snub of Illinois football will cause a rift between the Illini faithful and Zook, he's very mistaken. We wish him well in the NFL and will miss his contribution to the University, but we'll still support the team each weekend this fall.

More flagrant fouls on Obama

Sometimes when I run into an African-American man over the age of twenty, I have a knee-jerk reaction to talk about the basketball game last night. It's a stupid urge, rooted in my own excitement and the racial stereotype that all black people like basketball.

In light of this and in fear of engaging in the "fear of hope," or what "The Daily Show" calls "Baracknophobia," I'd like to steer clear of speculating on whether Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama enjoys shooting hoops.

If we can be certain about one thing this election, it's that you don't mess with the Obama. While Obama isn't a Mossad secret agent with a thick Israeli accent (an unconfirmed rumor), the Democratic presidential candidate has suffered a wave of race-based attacks.

During a Fox News segment about conservative attacks on Obama's wife, the graphic on the bottom of the screen read "Outraged liberals: Stop picking on Obama's baby mama!" As other networks noted, baby mama is an urban slang for an unmarried mother. This myth was quickly busted, since Obama is happily married to his, ahem, babies' mother.

"The Sock Obama" was meant to be a cuddly presidential toy, made after an "affectionate...and charming association between a candidate" and a sock monkey. Instead, many thought the monkey with black hair, a suit, and big red lips made a horrible comparison of African ancestry to primates. The anti-monkey-slander Obama squad was quick to deflate the toy, prepared by a Curious George (in T-shirt form) whack at the senator earlier this year.

A Fox News anchor took her own jab when she suggested that an on-stage celebratory fist pound Obama shared with his wife could be a "terrorist fist jab." The segment dissected



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what the fist "thump" may have meant. A body language expert said the fist "pump" may be akin to how her husband squeezes her hand three times to say "I love you," and she squeezes back four times to dispatch an undisclosed message. She added with a wink that young people are going to like the Obama's "kind of representing a little bit."

While the baby mama, sock monkey, and fist thump/pump/jab/pound may not have been intentional racist attacks, they are all obvious examples of poor judgment given the colorful political climate. But as November nears with the possibility of our first black president, we'll be faced with stories that aren't as clear cut. It'll be our choice to decide whether to blow the race-whistle or not.

On a side note, it turns out that the flashy, free-wheeling ball player, nicknamed "Obomber" for his jump shot, felt that while shooting hoops he made his closest white friends "on turf where blackness couldn't be a disadvantage."

Oh. So Obama does like basketball. With five months left on this election game clock, there may be hope for a buzzer-beating shot to send Obama off the bench and into the White... (whistle) I'll stop with the basketball references.

Sujay is a senior in biochemistry and wants to stress that "Obomber" does not = terrorism. Go Celtics.

EDITORIAL CARTOON

RJ MATSON, THE ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Green Street not Garcia's problem

Whenever my parents or the parents of my friends return to Champaign for the first time since they attended U of I in the 70's or 80's, the first thing they want to do is go to Garcia's Pizza.

The next thing they want to do is go to Papa Del's for a decent slice of pizza. In Wednesday's DI (6/11) article discussing the beautification of Green Street between 1st and 4th streets, a Garcia's manager was interviewed to complain about how their restaurant is not well known anymore, and

that this is partially due to how unappealing the area has become.

Like a man with a limp handshake, Garcia's has lost the respect of anyone who gets close enough to try their pizza no matter what previous impressions they had.

I don't know if its the rotten tomatoes these days or what, but the lack of curbside appeal around Garcia's is not what's losing them business.

JEFF PEARL
Senior in engineering