

## LIFE IN THE U.S.

## SPORTS

# Duke basketball: the men prosper, the women suffer

By Barry Jacobs

DURHAM, N.C.

A HANDMADE SIGN ON THE wall in Debbie Leonard's cramped office in Duke's Cameron Indoor Stadium explains the smile on her face. "Nothing great," it says, "is ever achieved without enthusiasm."

Leonard, in her second year as head coach of Duke's women's basketball team, is nothing if not enthusiastic. Yet, as she readily points out, all the spirit in the world won't help you in big-time college athletics unless it's backed up with money.

Title IX of the federal Educational Amendments Act of 1972 mandated that schools receiving federal funds provide equal opportunity in athletics for both men and women. But the deadline for full compliance—July 21, 1978—came and went without much notice. In the absence of definitive guidelines or direction by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the agency charged with enforcing Title IX, the nation's colleges and universities set their own pace toward equality, and were free to define "equality" itself.

As a result, all-too-familiar men's standards were applied to upgrading women's programs. Basketball, one women's sport with the potential to produce revenue, received the most attention.

Some schools began pouring funds into their women's basketball programs as soon as the impact of Title IX became clear, to get the jump on other schools in exploiting the market. Many of the small colleges that ruled the women's basketball roost were shouldered aside by free-spending major colleges like North Carolina, UCLA, and Maryland.

At North Carolina State, an early financial commitment to women's basketball brought impressive results. Boasting 12 scholarship players (the maximum allowed under women's rules), a full-time coaching staff and a large budget for recruiting and travel, State was ranked in the Top Ten the past two years and is right up there again this season. It is not uncommon for the Lady Wolfpack to draw 4,000 fans to home games. They have their own pep band and cheerleaders and their own fundraising wing of the school's alumni booster organization.

So when State travels the 25 miles to Duke, a longtime rival on the men's level in the Atlantic Coast Conference, it's like stepping back in time.

The Duke women have no cheerleaders, no pep band. They're lucky to draw 100 fans to their 8,564-capacity home arena, in part because Durham's major newspaper doesn't cover their games.

## Men with money.

According to coach Debbie Leonard, the Duke women make do on under \$20,000, "enough to just get by." The basketball team travels to away games in vans with U-Haul trailers attached. With enough money last year for four partial scholarships, three went to players Leonard conceded "couldn't have played on many high school teams." No wonder Duke posted a 1-19 record last season in its first stab at Division I women's basketball, losing to Maryland 103-39 and to North Carolina State 125-43.

Women's coach Debby Leonard gets by with \$20,000, while Bill Foster has \$500,000 to play with.

Meanwhile Duke's men's squad, with a budget of approximately \$500,000, was the toast of college basketball last year, rising from four consecutive last-place finishes in the Atlantic Coast Conference to a 27-7 record and a shot at the NCAA championship against Kentucky. While Leonard was getting an ulcer, her male counterpart, Bill Foster, was being acclaimed coach of the year.

Foster, a perceptive man whose interests extend far beyond the basketball court, is well aware of the gap between men's and women's basketball at Duke. He has tried to help Leonard, providing advice, equipment, and joint scheduling opportunities that enable the women to share the larger crowds and jet travel.

"She [Leonard] just has to hang in there," he said, "keep working. That's how she can improve her program—not getting impatient, and building. It's like building a house. You don't do it all at once; you do it room by room."

Foster, a past president of the National Association of Basketball Coaches (men's), questions whether women are wise to pursue big-time athletic programs. "Unfortunately, they're taking the thing and heading it in our direction," he said. Critics contend Foster worries about competition with the women for Duke's athletic dollars somewhere down the road. But the concern in his voice was genuine when he said of women's basketball, "Before, it was fun to play. Now it's fun to win. I'm not sure that's the best idea."

## HEW's Califano calls for equality with exceptions

Until HEW Secretary Joseph Califano recently announced proposals for equalizing financial support for male and female athletes, the American collegiate sports establishment wondered whether the government would mandate equal expenditures according to the number of men and women engaged in athletics, as most women hoped, or would recognize the status quo and be "sensible" in applying Title IX.

The men need not have worried. Califano said that intercollegiate football probably merited an exception. So, too, apparently, will intercollegiate basketball. The exceptions, Califano explained, were based on "sex-neutral" factors such as the level of competition in a sport and costs peculiar to that sport. Thus football earned an exemption because, with 90 players to equip and care for, and a pack of coaches to train them, it obviously entails exceptional expense. And basketball probably merited a dispensation because most major college teams play national schedules.

Califano accomplished, then, just what the men's National Collegiate Ath-

letic Association (NCAA) has been lobbying for ever since Title IX was enacted in 1972—that major "revenue-producing" sports be measured by one standard while other sports stand up to an entirely different one. At schools where sports other than football and basketball are considered major sports and are played on a national level, the new guidelines merely muddy the issue.

At universities like Duke, where the athletic department already provides equal funding proportional to the number of men and women in nonrevenue sports, no changes are required. But what of programs like women's basketball that have the potential for growth? If a team schedules national opponents, does it move up to the same category as men's football and basketball? Will that then require equal funding for the women, or will it earn them another amorphous "exemption"? And if nationally-oriented women's teams must be given equal funding, will that encourage some schools purposely to stifle the development of some women's sports? The confusion is far from over. —B.J.



Duke coach Debbie Leonard recruits without money; player Tara McCarthy (insert) practices late at night, after the men are gone.

Neither is 26-year-old Debbie Leonard, who knows all about playing sports for the sheer enjoyment of it, having lettered in field hockey, basketball, and softball at High Point College. But she is determined to join the party. "Women's basketball is here," she insisted. "You either take advantage of the situation or not. Grant scholarships and take a stand, or play just to have fun."

Most of the emerging women's basketball powers are state institutions. Private universities like Duke are hard-pressed to come up with comparable funding even when they try, a fact Leonard reluctant-

ly accepts. "I don't think it would do me much good to file a Title IX suit," she admitted. Not that she's willing to meekly swallow poverty and defeat. "I think the athletic department has to take a stand and say, 'This is what we want for women athletes at Duke University.'"

## Idle talk.

Duke athletic director Tom Butters explains that the needs of the school's traditional prestige sports—men's basketball and especially football—take precedence over funding women's basketball or anything else. Still, he declared, "I believe in quality programs, both men's and women's." He said Duke is implementing a five-year plan to bring its women's program up to par with those at other schools.

If so, it's taking its time about it. Leonard's budget isn't appreciably different this year from last. "I have to pat myself on the back," smiled Leonard. "I did a pretty good job of recruiting without money." Better than pretty good when Duke's prohibitive \$6,000 annual cost and tough academics are taken into account.

But getting quality players to come to Duke is only part of the battle. They still have to practice, to work at becoming a team, a task made more difficult because Duke's athletic facilities are so limited. Until the women's volleyball season ended in mid-November, Leonard's squad started practice at 8:15 each night after first Foster's team, and then the other women, were through. Her players didn't get out of the locker room until 10:30; Leonard was at work past 11 p.m. "I've got a bunch of zombies walking around here as basketball players," she observed, adding, "but that's just the way it's going to have to be."

Debbie Leonard is confident that with enough money, promotion, and press coverage, she can make women's basketball work at Duke. "I'm going to try to build a program here if they'll support me," she pledged. "Give me the kids and I can build a winning team. If I can't produce, I'll leave."

# ART «» ENTERTAINMENT

## FILM BUSINESS

# Superman is a book, game, uh, shirt, uh...

By Pat Aufderheide

*Superman*, as those Warner Brothers advertisements have so delicately been pointing out to you, is a movie.

It's also a TV show, or actually a series of Warner Television documentaries on the making of *Superman*. And a soundtrack album and two singles on Warner Brothers records. And books—eight *Superman* related titles, by Warner Books. And a pinball game, by the Warner subsidiary Atari. And a T-shirt, exhibited by the Warner-owned New York Cosmos soccer team.

Oh, and a comic book. Remember the comic book? Warner bought its publishers, DC Comics, ten years ago.

*Superman* is the latest and most sophisticated example of broad-based movie marketing. (Kenneth Turan reports *Superman's* supersell in December *American Film*.) In the age of the entertainment conglomerate, the selling of the same notion in many forms is displaying ever stronger powers to seduce consumers away from their entertainment dollars. People are increasing their purchase of new items, and also paying top amounts and going in record numbers to movies. There are fewer movies around than there used to be, but they're a bigger business than ever before. And to sell themselves so many ways, the super-movies increasingly depend on familiar forms and images, leaving the risks to the independents.

Supermarketing techniques range from simple product tie-ins for a movie, to making a movie as the trailer for other products. At every stage it's more than advertisement; the saleable products multiply. You can play it a number of ways.

For instance, you, a United Artists executive, arrange with Cannon Mills to produce *Lord of the Rings* drapes, linens and bedspreads. Or you, *Star Wars* promoter, sell the right to use *Star Wars* images to fast food companies and the Kenner Corp. Or you, the executive in charge of Barbara Streisand's or Kiss' or Bette Midler's new projects arrange a movie, perhaps by another arm of your organization. The movie's soundtrack will become the new album.

### Oil, hotels, and movies.

Movies haven't been just movies for some decades now. These days Gulf and Western owns Paramount, the Transamerica Corporation owns United Artists, MGM is part of a Las Vegas-based real estate corporation, MCA corporation owns Universal, and Warner Communications is a synoptic picture of entertainment and communications empire-building in America.

It can become a chicken-and-egg question to decide whether

products are selling the movies or movies are selling the products. The products can finance a picture. *The Buddy Holly Story*, Mitch Tuchman reports in *Film Comment*, was partly financed by sale of the soundtrack album, script novelization, and marketing rights to T-shirts, posters and guitar picks. *T.G.I.F.*, *Grease*, *Saturday Night Fever*, and *American Hot Wax* all serve as record commercials, whatever their quality as movies. (*American Hot Wax* was a grainy but energetic and good humored film, while watching *T.G.I.F.* was like having honey poured into the wrinkles in your grey matter.)

RSO (the Robert Stigwood Organization), proud supersalesman father of *Saturday Night Fever* (largest selling record album of all time, with over 30 million world-wide sales), *Grease* (close behind), and *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (runt of the litter, but overseas sales are just starting), is pastmaster of film and record deal. Polygram B.V. Records bankrolls RSO, which has creative autonomy.

RSO has so dazzled the marketing world that it became headline news in *Advertising Age* when RSO decided not to release the single *Moment by Moment* simultaneously with the Universal-distributed movie starring Lily Tomlin and John Travolta.

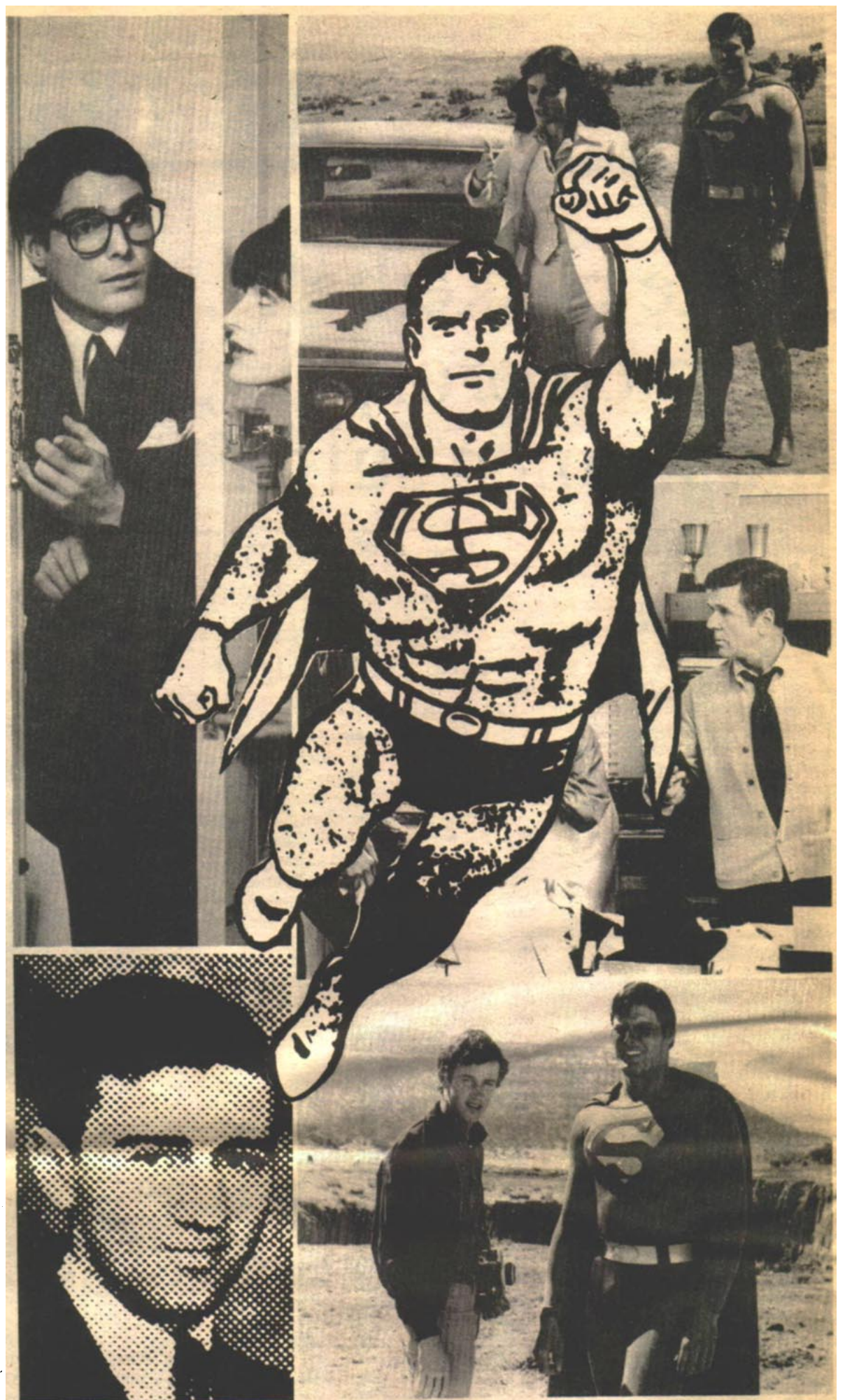
"We expect the film to generate the demand for the record this time," said one of their executives demurely. "This is a whole new thing for us." The ploy may, however, simply be RSO's way of saying they've already cleared their profit on the slae of distribution rights to Universal, and that they expect little interest in this very little, maudlin film.

A movie can become a mini-industry, as happened with *Star Wars*. The week after *Star Wars* became a surprise hit, sudden jumps in popcorn and theater candy stocks were traced to its success. The confident selling of *Superman*, irrespective of the film's quality, is firmly based on *Star Wars'* precedent, with the advantage that *Superman* has had time to prepare the field before release. It wasn't until a week after the film was released, after all, that George Lucas realized he had created a lifetime's worth of business interests.

### Lines at the box office.

It would be easy to see movies as a simple tool to promote other products—especially records, the key to the "entertainment complex," and the most lucrative single legal entertainment product around. But it would be too easy.

People are going like never before, and paying like never before to go to the movies. Box office receipts have more than doubled between 1973 and 1978, in a period when the cost of living rose



Clockwise from top left: Clark loves Lois; Lois loves Superman; editor Perry White questions his reporters; cub photographer Jimmy Olson stands with his hero; high school editor Jerry Siegel made them all up.

sharply as well. This year Americans left (according to *Variety*) almost \$3 billion at the box office. And the executives don't seriously start to count the profits till they send the movies overseas, where almost all the take can be profits, often untaxed or taxed at a superlow rate.

Overseas rentals have boomed, in fact doubled, in the last few years. The rewards are terrific. The distribution fee 20th-Century Fox charged for *Star Wars* last year could pay for the entire world-wide sales operations of the corporation for three years, and still leave over \$70 million for the company. And *Star Wars*, don't forget, cost \$9 million to make.

The results are clear in the latest figures for the central eight entertainment conglomerates: the summer's net income was up 32 percent, on revenues that are higher than last quarter by 20 percent. Although these profits come from diverse activities, film revenues were up for most of the eight as well.

Why this sudden rush to the box office?

The new broad-range marketing is part of the reason. For a few weeks it becomes more than

a movie. It's an event! It's a phenomenon! You can't miss it!

### Paying the price.

This multi-product sell does make movie-going more popular. But it reduces the number of movies there are. American movie production has been declining for over a decade, down from 400 pictures a year to 150. And movies are increasingly polarized, between big splashy productions that soak up huge amounts of advertising and entertainment dollars and small independently-made films squeezing by on black-and-white budgets.

When movies are part of an "entertainment package," there's no reason why they have to be the central part of it. They can be the trailer for the main event, most often that big-selling album. No one needs to care about the quality of the film as a film. When Frank Pierson took the hot-potato job of director and scriptwriter for the latest version of *A Star Is Born*, a project foundering on Barbara Streisand's temperamental reputation, a Warner executive took him aside. Warner had bought rights to *A Star Is Born* for Streisand, looking for a soundtrack album to fulfill an

outstanding commitment to the singer.

"It would be nice if the picture was good," he explained, "but the bottom line is to get her to the floor. Shoot her singing six numbers and we'll make \$60 million."

Finally, this broad range marketing increases the likelihood of conservative themes in the movies that succeed. After all, not every subject will sell broadly. It's hard to pull a catchy, hummable message out of, say, *Taxi Driver* or *Bread and Chocolate* or *Girlfriends*. You can do it, though, if you have an image that's already familiar to people. This is known as being pre-sold, and is the reason why Warners' big bucks go behind *Superman*, a word everyone knows already. You can also do it with sensations that thrill but don't threaten to touch too closely or to force people to reflect.

Comic book heroes are perfect. And, *Variety* tells us in front page headlines, comic book heroes are the coming wave for movies. The Mattel corporation will be mighty pleased, I imagine. It'll be great for the poster industry. Even popcorn vendors will be pleased. And if you didn't like the movie, well, maybe you'll like the book.