

Opinion

Free Press Viewpoint



Colby Replacements need replaced

What happened last weekend will probably last longer than the Colby Community Building, basketballs and, heck, even the air in the basketballs.

The Colby Replacements, a team made up of area men who play basketball as a recreation, actually won two games in the annual Colby Community College Ambassador Classic. The Replacements defeated Western Nebraska and the host school — Colby. Fans won't forget those games.

Did the Replacements have to play? Yes.

Colby men's coach, John Woods, said it felt like he called every school from coast to coast to get someone to play in the schedule. Months ago, he had the Classic schedule filled with traditional teams, but two of those teams backed out for whatever reason.

Woods was back on the phone finding replacements. The Buckley Air Force Base sent a team and the Replacements was put together.

The fear was one of Colby's players injuring themselves against Buckley or the Replacements. That fear would turn into frustration knowing someone was hurt in a game against a nontraditional opponent.

But the schedule had to be filled out. Colby and Western Nebraska had to play somebody.

Don't blame Woods for what happened. He had the mens' teams scheduled months ago. It's a shame those kind of commitments can't be kept. He is already working on next year's Classic. McCook, Neb., is interested playing next year and that could be the start of a great regional rivalry.

Woods and Colby Community College needs the support of the fans no matter who they play. If someone out there knows of a traditional community college team that Woods didn't call, don't be afraid to tell them we have a time for them to play.

— John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press

About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

Where to write, call

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- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorrison@ink.org web: www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

COLBY FREE PRESS

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Colby, Kan. 67701

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701. THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association. **SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.

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A new playground

As I listen to the pundits wax eloquent on the election last Tuesday, it occurs to me the results were, as usual, neither as good nor as bad as whichever camp to which you happen to subscribe thinks.

It was, however, an old-fashioned political bloodletting for the Republicans. At last count, I believe the Democrats picked up 29 seats, including several supposedly safe, red state seats, when they only needed 15.

Add the loss of the Senate to that and it certainly seems the country has abandoned the Republican message. In fact, to say the electorate was dissatisfied is an understatement on the magnitude of saying Godzilla is a big lizard.

I don't think it is conservative principles the electorate has abandoned, although the recent failures of gay marriage and abortion bans give me pause.

It is not conservatism which has lost, it is the Republican Party and it is because many of its members became bogged down by internal power struggles which helped bring about such scandalous episodes such as the Mark Foley debacle.

The Democrats are the apparent beneficiaries of the Republican fall, but they will experience over the next two years the same big tent problems of the Republicans.

Nancy Pelosi, the speaker-apparent, is very liberal, but she is not stupid. She has to know that to simply impose a far-left agenda will have two results with neither one conducive to the health



Jay Kelley
● Speaking MyMind

of the Democratic Party.

First, many of the new representatives will probably not follow, especially on guns and abortion, but also on Iraq. That will leave open the possibility of some conservative consensus votes which she cannot control.

Second, if the newly elected congressmen do not balk, and perhaps even if they do, they could very likely find themselves voted out of office by the same conservative and moderate voters who elected them.

Pelosi also must balance the desires of such left-wing icons as Barney Frank and Charles Rangel with the center-right sentiments of many of the incoming freshmen, while staving off a coup attempt in the making by John Murtha, whose only agenda seems to be making sure we actually do lose in Iraq.

As for the Republican loss in the Senate, there are a few things to remember about that august body. First, the Republican Party, or at least the party leaders, weren't in charge there anyway.

Because of internal rules which make a 60-

member majority the only practical way to pass any truly controversial legislation, the Republicans were never able to capitalize on their majority in the way they would have liked.

That left John McCain and John Warner, both of whom were able to build consensus blocks for or against key legislation, arguably the two most powerful men in the Senate. Although both will lose their committee chairs, it is doubtful their influence will diminish in a Senate which rides on a slim one-vote majority.

Joe Lieberman will also wield some influence, especially among the Democratic Party that abandoned him during his campaign and now needs his independent vote badly.

It remains to be seen how this will play out. Perhaps the Democrats will self-destruct in a haze of anarchy, which is always possible in such a diverse group, and the Republicans will regain power without regaining their moral and fiscal compass, in which case, we are probably finished as a nation.

But, I prefer to think positively. Perhaps the shift in the Democratic Party will grow stronger and we will see an alignment change in both parties as we did in the 1960s and 1970s, or perhaps this is only an anomaly and the social and fiscal conservatives in the Republican Party will again assert themselves.

Whatever happens, it's a new playground.

Jay Kelley is a local writer who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail is jkelly@st-tel.net.

Help our leaders lead

By John Schlageck
Kansas Farm Bureau

On Nov. 7, the people of Kansas and this country went to the polls and they cast their vote for a new direction in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate.

This is the first time since 1994 that the Democrats are in control of both the House and Senate.

The message last Tuesday was clear: Kansans and the American people want their leaders in Washington to set aside partisan differences, conduct themselves in an ethical manner and work together to address the challenges facing our nation.

No doubt about it, we're living in historic times. The challenges and opportunities are plain for all to see.

Farmers and ranchers across the Sunflower State expressed optimism about furthering key policy priorities on behalf of agricultural producers following the mid-term elections. They will continue to lead the charge for maintaining the basic structure and foundation of the current farm program.

Ag producers also believe there are renewed opportunities to pursue issues including: comprehensive immigration reform, including U.S. agriculture's need for an adequate legal workforce; a greater role for home-grown renewable fuels for America; disaster assistance legislation for farmers and ranchers; and improved market access opportunities for U.S. agricultural products.

The 2006 election also will be remembered as an example of American democracy at its finest. Voters turned out in near-record numbers to elect candidates and play their part in the political process. Rural Americans, in particular, made the effort to get out and vote.

Other Viewpoints

● From Pens of Kansans

As is usually the case, America's farmers and ranchers lost a few loyal friends during this election cycle, but we will focus on building strong relationships with their successors. Agriculture and the organizations that represent this industry will continue to reach out on a bipartisan basis to assemble a strong pro-agricultural agenda for the 110th Congress.

Farmers and ranchers will continue to work with the Bush administration on a national agricultural agenda that supports farm and ranch families. We will continue to support the president in his pursuit of policies that: lessen the tax load on farmers; create new opportunities to sell our products abroad; and recognize the positive roles of farmers and ranchers in conserving our natural resources.

Now that the Nov. 7, 2006 election is history, it's time to quit arguing the merits of the political candidates. It's time to throw away the political yard signs and throw away the direct mail postcards.

It's time to put away individual feelings — the voters have spoken. The majority has elected the people who will provide leadership on the local, state and national levels for the next two years.

Remember, those who were elected cannot lead without help. That support must come from each of us. Our political leaders need to know

when we are pleased with their actions as well as when we are displeased.

Our elected officials will be called upon to make some difficult decisions. For instance, ways must be found to fun and increases services from dwindling incomes and funding at the local level.

At the state level, legislators must find a method to increase jobs so our young people can continue to find futures in Kansas. They must find ways to enhance both our agricultural and industrial economic bases. Our legislators must decide how to provide quality education in areas with low or declining population density.

Moving to the national level, our Congressmen must pass realistic legislation that would tax Solomon's wisdom. Some people want increased taxation to balance the federal deficit that must be reined under control for the future of our children and grandchildren. Others want government spending cut.

Some want government to dictate farm policy, while others would prefer farmers and ranchers are able to take maximum advantage of market opportunities without governmental interference.

This country has a war on terror that will continue to rear its ugly head. We still have sons and daughters fighting in a war in Iraq.

Our elected officials have a difficult task ahead of them. Remember, if we want a better community, state and nation in which to live, we must join together and help our leaders lead.

Editor's note: John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

Mallard Fillmore

● Bruce Tinsley

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