

Pollsters demand perfection

COLLEGE PRESS EXCHANGE

DALLAS — The college football pollsters are irritable and unforgiving people. Struggle to win a game you should win by 20 or 30 or 40, and—blammo!—out of the No. 1 spot you go.

It was Nebraska's turn to take a dive Sunday. A day after the Cornhuskers needed a miracle play and overtime to beat Missouri, Nebraska was demoted from No. 1 to No. 3 in the Associated Press writers' poll and USA Today/ESPN coaches' poll.

There are two new No. 1 teams in the country. The writers picked Michigan, the former No. 4 team, by a narrow margin, 21 first-place votes of 70 cast.

The coaches picked Florida State, the former No. 3 team, by an even narrower margin, six first-place votes of 62. Florida State is No. 2 in the AP poll,

and Michigan is No. 2 in the USA Today-ESPN poll.

Florida State coach Bobby Bowden said Sunday he had been so concerned about beating North Carolina that he had not thought much about taking the top spot after Nebraska's nervous victory and Michigan's romp over Penn State, formerly No. 2.

"A four spot is a little bit bigger than I would have thought would occur," Bowden said. "But Michigan is very deserving."

As for his own team's No. 1 ranking, Bowden said, "I didn't know if I wanted to carry the No. 1 banner just yet. I guess now that we've been dealt that hand, we've got to play it."

It was the third time this year that the AP pollsters dumped a team out of the top spot because it did not win

handily enough. Penn State was the victim the first two times.

So we are back to where we began there are two No. 1 teams, and the bowl alliance is in a major quandary.

Much like Florida and Penn State at the beginning of the season, Michigan (9-0) and Florida State (9-0) won't play each other in a national championship game, because Michigan, as a member of the Big Ten, is obligated to play in the Rose Bowl if it wins the conference. The Big Ten won't be affiliated with the Alliance until next year.

The last time the Wolverines were ranked No. 1 in the AP poll was Oct. 9, 1990, and then Michigan was promptly upended by Michigan State to end the stay after one week. The Wolverines have not won a national championship since 1948.

"Watch us the next two weeks," Michigan safety Marcus Ray said. "We've got a lot to prove. Everyone thought we were going to go 6-5 again. Now, here we are, controlling our own destiny."

The Wolverines play Saturday at Wisconsin. Their Oct. 22 game against rival Ohio State is looking like a spectacular grudge match. In two of the past four seasons, the Buckeyes had national championship hopes squashed by the Wolverines.

If Michigan and Florida State win out, there could be a split national championship for the first time since 1991, when Miami, Fla., won the writers' poll and Washington won the coaches' poll.

"The thing we have to do is fight self-satisfaction," Michigan coach Lloyd Carr said after the Penn State game. "That won't be easy. They (opponents) don't care what you did last week."

Injury suit says cheerleaders are 'just too heavy'

COLLEGE PRESS EXCHANGE

CHICAGO — A former Marquette University cheerleader is suing his alma mater after sustaining a back injury from lifting female partners who were, in his words, "just too heavy."

Douglas O'Reilly had already been a cheerleader for two years when he hurt his back during routine tryouts in April 1996.

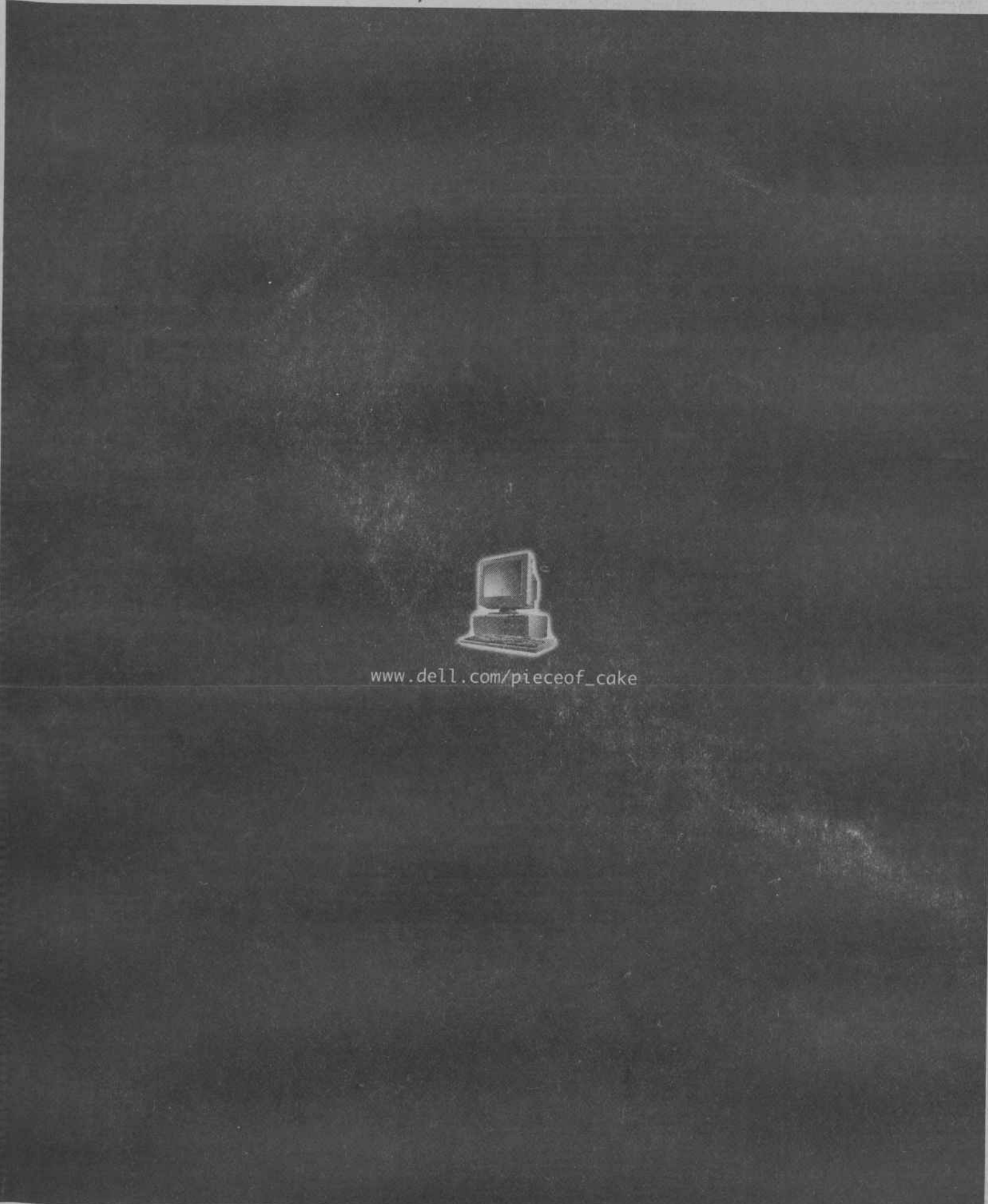
He told the Chicago Sun-Times that his two female partners during the session were larger than average—more than 120 pounds, he estimates. The 6-foot-tall, 200-pound O'Reilly claims he asked to switch partners, but a coach said no.

And after tossing each woman into the air five to seven times, O'Reilly dropped out because of pain. A month later, doctors found he had a broken vertebra.

O'Reilly spent the summer of 1996 in physical therapy and was graduated from the Milwaukee school last spring.

He's currently living in the Chicago suburb of Long Grove, but he says his insurance won't cover physical therapy.

O'Reilly says he hopes his lawsuit will help other male cheerleaders avoid his experience. He also thinks there should be weight restrictions on female cheerleaders who perform stunts.



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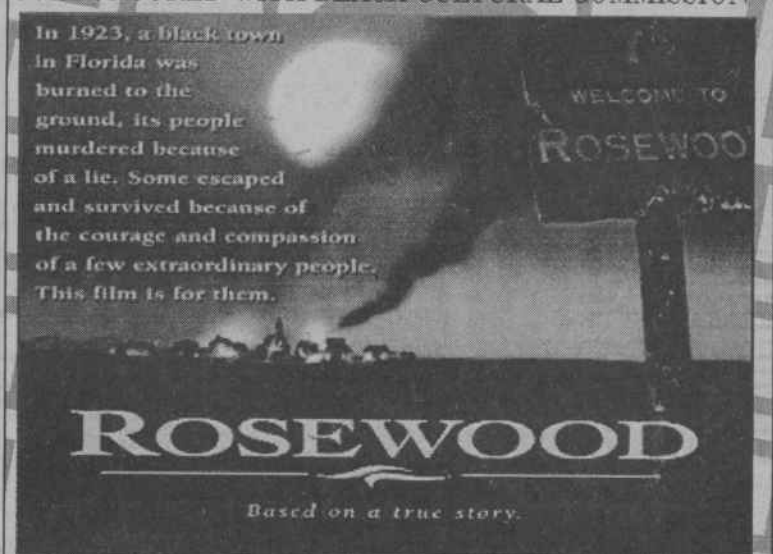
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