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Time Out



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Icy Reception

I understand that some girls varsity tennis players would like for me to jump into a polar bear enclosure at the zoo after reading my comments last week about them missing a region tennis match. Oh well, it isn't the first time AJHS athletes or coaches were throwing darts at my *Time Out* photo.

For example, years ago, our BLT (Baker, Leach and Taylor) Sports Network was banned from televising Prospector football after an on-air round table discussion of the program's troubles, AJHS cheerleaders used to despise me before I was convinced that cheerleading was indeed a sport (at a rough one at that), Lady Prospector volleyball players drew likenesses of me on their balls and then spiked my face across the court after I complained that they giggled too much after messing up, I was scolded during a visit paid forward by the AJUSD Superintendent after quoting a head coach from a heated team practice, and most recently, football coaches wanted to kick my behind through the uprights after falsely accusing them, without any proof or evidence I might add, for the cancelling of the post season sports banquets.

There are several other "issues" I could have cited and not all have to do with AJHS. Eleven years of writing a weekly column can do that to you.

AJ Week At Chase

The Prospector baseball team won't be the only AJHS athletes to visit Chase Field this week (see lead sports story). The Lady Prospector softball team will be the first-ever softball team honored as the Diamondback's "baseball team of the month" this Monday, April 20. They will have their team photo appearing on the Jumbotron as well as being introduced on the field prior to the D-Backs vs. Rockies 6:40 p.m. game. In addition, the AJHS girls receive tickets to Monday's game, and later, at a school assembly, the Arizona Diamondbacks along with the U.S. Army, will be presenting the AJHS girls with a special D-Backs jersey.

AJHS Baseball Heads To Chase Field

Will take on Glendale Independence this Wednesday where 'the big boys play,'

AJHS also upsets Saguaro, 4-1

By Chuck Baker
The News

Imagine you are left-handed hitting Nathan Higginbottom, the leadoff batter for the Apache Junction Prospectors, standing in the same batter's box where Luis Gonzalez stood when he hit that now-famous bloop single off of New York Yankees closer Mariano Rivera to score Jay Bell from third base with the winning run of game seven of the 2001 World Series, giving the expansion Arizona Diamondbacks a 3-2 victory and their first World Series title.

That once in a lifetime opportunity is coming for

"Higgy" and about a dozen of his Prospector teammates when they venture inside Chase Field this Wednesday, April 22, to take on the Glendale Independence Patriots at the home of the Arizona Diamondbacks. The game is tentatively scheduled for 4:30 p.m. or 45 minutes after the conclusion of the D-Backs vs. Colorado Rockies game which is slated to start at 12:40 p.m.

Prior to last Tuesday's home game against Scottsdale Saguaro, Higgy reflected on the opportunity to play at Chase Field. He says he remembers watching the 2001 World Series and has even thought about stepping



Chase Field, home of the Arizona Diamondbacks, will be the host site of this Wednesday's Apache Junction vs. Glendale Independence varsity baseball game.

into the same batter's box as Gonzalez. But when asked if we would like to duplicate Gonzo's bloop single, he says no.

"I'd rather hit one like Richie Sexson—a homerun off the scoreboard," referring to the now-famous Jumbotron-shattering blast Sexson hit on April 26, 2004, while playing for Arizona.

Of course, Sexson is a right-handed batter but there are plenty of notorious "lefties" who have batted at Chase Field, including Gonzalez, Barry Bonds, Ken Griffey Jr., Chipper Jones, Jim Thome, Jim Edmonds, Todd Helton and Ryan Howard, just to name a few.

This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity came about

because the AJHS baseball players have been selling tickets to various D-Backs games. And AJHS coaches, Preston English and Jeff Cox, hope to be able to make this (playing at Chase Field) an annual affair.

Even the coaches were excited about the idea of playing at Chase Field.

"I plan to tip the bill of my cap down (so as not to be recognized as one of the coaches) and take a couple of grounders in the infield," says Coach Cox.

As for games played this past week, the Prospectors came up with a great effort in Tuesday's home game with Scottsdale Saguaro,

getting solid pitching from both Ryan Howard and Ryan Sparks, and trailed the Sabercats (15-8-1, 4-2-1, No. 6 in 4A-I power points) just 4-2 through six innings before falling 8-2.

Saguaro scored once in the first inning and added three runs in the second inning but the Prospectors (2-15) battled back with runs in the third and fourth innings to make it a close game. The Sabercats scored four runs in the seventh to put the game away and Howard and Sparks combined for nine strikeouts.

At the plate, Higginbottom came up with an infield

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Prospector pitcher Ryan Howard delivers one to home plate in last Tuesday's game against Saguaro.

Lady Prospectors Come Up Short In Two Hit-A-Thons

By Chuck Baker
The News

Heading into last week's Desert Sky Region home-and-away softball series, Apache Junction and Scottsdale Saguaro were next to one another in the 4A-I power point rankings at numbers 17 and 18, both teams "on the bubble" hoping to qualify for the State Tournament.

The two teams are also two of the better hitting teams in the state based on www.maxpreps.com statistics, which has Saguaro with the fourth best team batting average in the state while Apache Junction was listed at number twenty.

So it shouldn't come as a surprise to see these two teams combine for 39 runs and 54 hits in their home-and-away series last week,



Lady Prospector Chelsey Streibich comes up with a terrific slide at home plate to avoid the tag by the Saguaro catcher in last Thursday's game.

both wins for Saguaro, 11-10 and 13-5, greatly helping its playoff chances while Apache Junction may now be in panic mode with only six games left in the regular season.

In Tuesday's one-run loss, the Lady Prospectors com-

mitted five errors on defense which offset the fact they had out-hit the Lady Sabercats, 13-11.

Lindsey Skinner had a monster day at the plate for Apache Junction, collecting

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AJHS Girls Beat McClintock 7-2 In Tennis Season Finale

By Chuck Baker
The News

The Lady Prospector varsity tennis team closed out its regular season with a bang, defeating Tempe McClintock 7-2 this past Thursday. The AJHS girls won four of the six singles matches and swept all three doubles

matches, also giving Apache Junction a series sweep over McClintock.

Jessica Iniguez fell 6-2, 6-2 playing number one singles and Katie Karbo lost a hard fought 2-6, 6-2 (7-2 tiebreaker) decision playing number two singles but Iniguez and Karbo got revenge when they paired for

doubles and pulled off an 8-2 victory.

Nicoletta Carbone won her number three singles match 6-1, 6-1, Anna Ramos prevailed 6-0, 6-1 at number four singles, Nicole Vandelaere rallied for a 4-6, 6-2 (7-4 tie-breaker) win

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AJHS Track And Field Returns Home

By Chuck Baker
The News

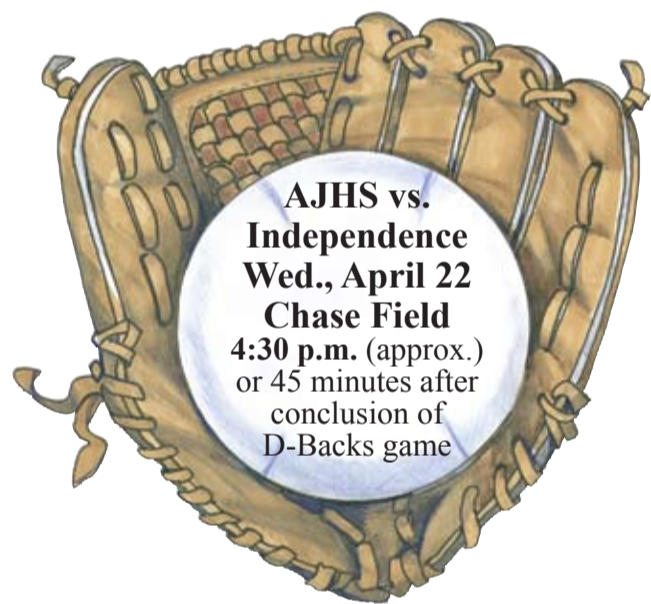
After six weeks on the road, the Apache Junction boys and girls track and field teams will return to Davis Field this week for not one, but two home appearances. This coming Wednesday, April 22, Apache Junction will host a three-team meet involving Desert Sky Region foes, Tempe McClintock and Paradise Valley, and beginning at 3:30 p.m. This coming Friday, Apache Junction will host the annual Lost Dutchman Invitational beginning at 5 p.m. and featuring several competing schools.

Also this week, AJHS sophomores and freshmen will be participating in a special meet for underclassmen to be held at Payson High School.

Results from recent away meets have been slow to come in, including last Wednesday's meet hosted by Cave Creek Cactus Shadows, another Desert Sky Region foe. As a result, individual event results have not yet been made available.

Apache Junction also participated last Friday in the Blue Ridge Invitational, again with no results available.

The Desert Sky Region Meet is tentatively scheduled for May 6 and 8 at Phoenix Shadow Mountain High School and the 4A-I State Championships are scheduled for May 13 and 16 at Mesa Community College. The AJHS boys are the defending 4A-I State champs, winning the school's first-ever track and field title last year at MCC.



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