

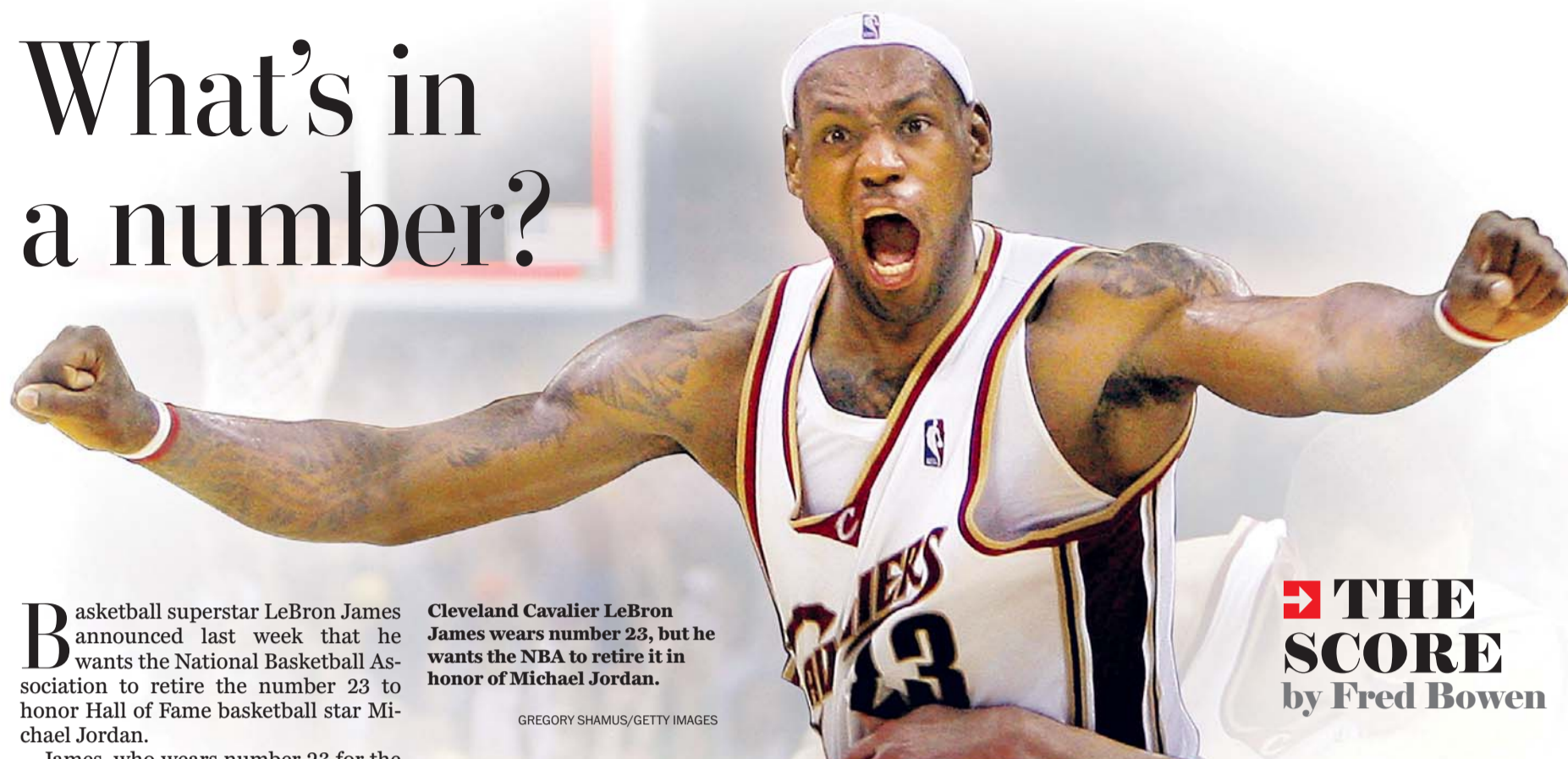
No Washington Wizards players currently wear the number 23. (Of course, Michael Jordan did when he played for the Wizards from 2001 to 2003.)

KidsPost



TODAY:
Cloudy with rain
HIGH 62 **LOW** 50
ILLUSTRATION BY GRACE MATSON, 9, FAIRFAX

What's in a number?



THE SCORE
by Fred Bowen

Basketball superstar LeBron James announced last week that he wants the National Basketball Association to retire the number 23 to honor Hall of Fame basketball star Michael Jordan.

Cleveland Cavalier LeBron James wears number 23, but he wants the NBA to retire it in honor of Michael Jordan.

GREGORY SHAMUS/GETTY IMAGES

James, who wears number 23 for the Cleveland Cavaliers, said: "I just think what Michael Jordan has done for the game has to be recognized in some way — soon. There would be no LeBron James, no Kobe Bryant, no Dwyane Wade without Michael Jordan."

I don't agree with James. Jordan was a great basketball player. He led the league in scoring 10 times and won six NBA championships for the Chicago Bulls. It's fine that the Bulls retired Jordan's number. But I don't think the entire NBA should retire the number 23.

Major League Baseball retired the number 42 in 1997 to honor Jackie Robinson. But that's different. Robinson was more than just a terrific baseball player. As the first African American to play in the major leagues, Robinson was a brave pioneer who helped make this country become a better place. Jordan has never done anything like that.

And if you retire the number 23, where would you stop? LeBron says he would be willing to wear the number 6, the number he wore for the United

States Olympic team.

Wait a minute: That's Bill Russell's number. Russell was a center who led the Boston Celtics to 11 NBA championships during his 13-year playing career. He's a bigger winner than even Jordan. Russell revolutionized the game with his ability to rebound and block shots.

If he's not superstitious, maybe James should subtract 10 from 23 and wear the number 13. Sorry, that's Wilt Chamberlain's number. Chamberlain, who once scored 100 points in an NBA game and averaged more than 50 points a game for an entire season, was one of the most unstoppable players in the history of the game.

Maybe James could add 10 to his 23 and wear number 33 or switch the numbers on his jersey and wear number 32.

Those numbers belong to Larry

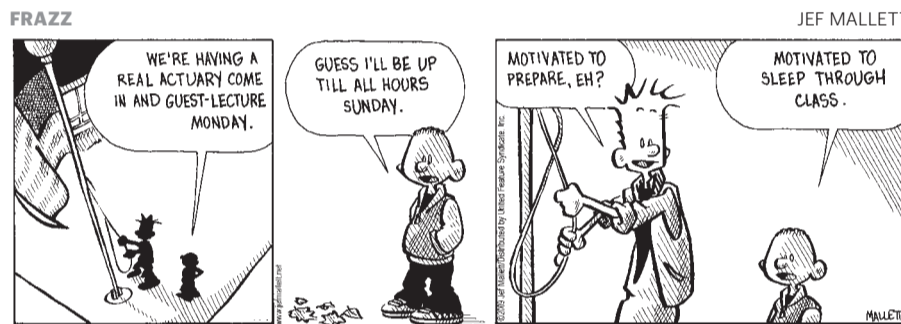
Bird of the Boston Celtics and Magic Johnson of the Los Angeles Lakers. Their passing and all-around hoop skills made basketball and the NBA popular in the 1980s.

You see, there are lots of great players who have contributed to the game of basketball, not just Jordan. I haven't mentioned such all-time greats as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (also number 33), Oscar Robertson (num-

bers 14 and 1) or Jerry West (number 44).

So my advice to LeBron James is to wear number 23. Play the best you can, and someday when fans think of the number 23 they will remember you instead of Michael Jordan.

Fred Bowen writes KidsPost's sports opinion column and is the author of such kids' books as "Touchdown Trouble" and "Soccer Team Upset."



TODAY'S NEWS

Should Santa get the flu vaccine?

● You may know what you want for Christmas, but what does Santa want? A swine flu vaccine.

Now, there are no cases of swine flu, or H1N1, at the North Pole that we know of. But for all the jolly, bearded, real-life substitutes who fill in for Santa at the nation's shopping malls every year, swine flu is a real concern. A sneezing, coughing child can easily spread flu germs to anyone close by.

So mall Santas want to be able to get the new H1N1 flu vaccine. The problem is the vaccine is being given only to certain high-priority groups, including children, pregnant women and adults with serious health problems. The Santas say their closeness to children isn't the only reason to give them the vaccine; it's also their round bellies. Being overweight is one of the factors that appear to make swine flu much worse in those who have had it.



KATHY WILLENS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

To keep germs away, mall Santas want swine flu vaccines.

A Williamsburg coffeehouse, rebuilt for a modern take on history

WILLIAMSBURG FROM C1

audiences and reinvent the telling of history in a more distracted, disengaged and uneducated era.

The thought of rebuilding Charlton's Coffeehouse goes back at least a decade. The historical record was clear: Where a large Victorian home known as the Cary Peyton Armistead House was then standing, there was once a bustling coffeehouse that played an important role during the years leading up to the American Revolution. That structure began life as a storeroom, but at some point in the 1760s a young immigrant named Richard Charlton used the building — adjacent to the Colonial Capitol — as a coffeehouse, serving a brew that likely would have tasted burned and bitter to the contemporary palate.

The property eventually fell into the hands of the Armistead family, who used much of the original foundation to build themselves a stylish new Victorian home — which looked utterly out of place by the time John D. Rockefeller Jr. was funding the re-creation of Colonial-era Duke of Gloucester Street during the Great Depression. So in 1994, the Williamsburg curators moved the home, and in 1995 they began a fine-tooth archaeological comb of the site. From the evidence gathered, including materials reused from the original coffee shop in the Armistead structure, and a sole photograph showing the structure from sometime in the 1880s, they felt confident that they could reconstruct the building.

"There's a lot of potential there for programming," says Jim Horn, vice president for research and historical interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg. On Friday there will be a sneak peek at the latest addition to the "Revolutionary City" script, a scene depicting a famous 1765 protest against the Stamp Act that happened on the steps of the coffeehouse.

"We can re-create an important event right where it took place," Horn says.

Dwindling civic life

It is fitting, perhaps, that a building that once served as a site of Colonial-era discussion and debate is the first major reconstruction of the narrative-driven era of Williamsburg. The roots of Charlton's Coffeehouse go back to the 18th century, but the roots of the reconstruction reflect deep concerns about growing social anomie over the past few decades. In museum circles, the shorthand for this is "Bowling Alone," a reference to Robert Putnam's 1995 book, which claimed that Americans were becoming increasingly disengaged from civic participation and social engagement.

Horn rattles off a litany of worries that



PHOTOS BY COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FOUNDATION

A ROLE IN HISTORY: The modest parlor room of R. Charlton's Coffeehouse, which opens to the public Friday.

everyone in the history business is facing: "The decline of civic awareness and school education; the decline of quality newspapers; voting every four years, or not at all . . ." Schoolchildren, he says, are arriving at Williamsburg with very little knowledge of the basics of American history. And in the age of endless electronic blandishments, from online gaming to iPhones that can immerse you in enhanced realities, reengaging kids without a narrative and emotional component is seen as impossible.

Narrative also allows for what curators feel is a more open and subtle approach to complicated issues.

"It began to come up in the early 1980s as we began dealing with slavery," says Ron Hurst, vice president for collections, conservation and museums. Storytelling and engagement with visitors made for a more supple and inclusive form of teaching, a way to finesse the awkward fact that while Colonial Williamsburg was diverse, it was by no means inclusive by 21st-century standards.

But "Revolutionary City" isn't for everyone. The piece strives for interaction and emotional appeal, which can leave some visitors standing awkwardly on the sidelines.



BACK TO THE ORIGINAL: Charlton's coffeehouse was rebuilt on the site of a Victorian house that replaced it on Duke of Gloucester Street.

"The involvement is up to you," says Horn, who adds that Williamsburg tries to appeal to multiple audiences who have various expectations of a historical park.

History, amplified

Theater-driven history also has its dangers, and ironies. The actors available to Williamsburg aren't necessarily performing at the level that many visitors are used to from film, television and genuine theater. This isn't Mel Gibson and Heath Ledger doing "The Patriot." A kind of enforced intensity prevails through much of the show as actors strive to make 18th-century language comprehensible in an outdoor setting. Electric speakers hidden in the trees help.

But just as you wonder whether hanging speakers in trees is yet another concession to theater on behalf of 18th-century ambiance, you're reminded that the trees themselves are part of the Colonial Revival-era fantasy.

"No trees, no sidewalks and more buildings," says Hurst, summing up the main differences between the way the town actually looked and the way the designers of the Rockefeller era envisioned it.

Theater is also self-exhausting, meaning it must be refreshed with new scenes to keep people coming back. And there is always the danger of balancing audience enthusiasm and entertainment with teaching and complexity.

"It's important that we don't portray this as some sort of patriotic drum-beating pageant," says Horn, who adds that they have recently included a scene involving Native Americans.

But theater may not be enough to deal with the larger issues facing institutions such as Williamsburg, where attendance peaked at around 1 million in the 1980s, and despite a spike in the first years after the introduction of "Revolutionary City," has remained level at around 700,000 a year. Live human beings interacting with each other may ultimately seem as archaic as tour guides running through the practiced patter of a history lecture. And so, new media and games are also being considered. Carefully.

"Many people actually want to escape technology," Hurst says. But Williamsburg is also looking into providing customized information via iPhone and other handheld devices, and it is working with game designers on a project called Rev Quest, a game directed at children that will involve finding clues as they move about the historic district.

"It's about linking experiences," Horn says. "Some of the clues might be online. We think that is going to be quite appealing."

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