

COLUMNIST

Court-storming melee aftermath



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Utah
Valley's
66-61
overtime

win against New Mexico State is indicative of Charles Dickens' famous opening line, "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

The first-place battle Feb. 27 at the UCCU Center had everything one would want from a game between the Western Athletic Conference's best teams.

However, despite nine lead changes and hard physical play, an electrifying overtime win was all but overshadowed by an all-out brawl between opposing players from New Mexico State and Utah Valley fans.

So what's one to make from it all? Can one reduce the melee to a single player or UVU fan? Even more, does this mark the tipping point where college students will no longer be permitted to rush the court to celebrate a big win?

Ultimately every person is responsible for his or her actions, which includes dejected athletes and the winning team's fans.

There was plenty of blame to go around, beginning with New Mexico State's K.C. Ross-Miller who cowardly threw the ball at Utah Valley point guard Holton Hunsaker at the end of the game.

Like it or not, fans who enter the court or field after an emotionally charged game are entering at their own risk, or even peril. Fans need to understand the ramifications when choosing to do so.

ESPN writer Myron Metcalf stated it succinctly. "If you decide to run on that gridiron, that court, that field of play in the hectic, emotional post-game frenzy that tends to accompany high-octane matchups, you might get punched. Yes, punched."

Tough language, but he's got it right. Still, my dilemma is—despite what took place—I'm still a fan and a proponent for court storming.

With some minor tweaking, I believe that event security and management should-and-can embrace a way to allow fans to still rush the court without jeopardizing athletes or fans.

I love collegiate sports traditions; from college students camping out to court storming. That's what makes collegiate sports different from professional sports, in my opinion.

There's something romantic about collegiate sports that is almost ineffable. I can recall so many great memories either watching or taking part in running onto the court or field after a big game.

I can only remember once where an altercation took place after fans rushed the court and that was between Utah Valley and New Mexico State. Sad, but true.

I don't think there should be a ban on court storming just because of this unfortunate incident, but perhaps court storming is becoming all too

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common, making it less poignant and meaningful.

I think as fans we have reduced our justification for storming the court. This season I was struck, even perplexed, when I saw Penn State fans rushing the court after beating No. 22 ranked Ohio State.

I know there is no rule that indicates when fans should storm the court, but I've always thought it should be saved for when a lower ranked

team defeats, say, a top-five team in the country, or after winning a national championship.

I don't necessarily believe that the court should be rushed after beating the No. 22 ranked team or even edging out a New Mexico State for first place in the WAC.

The sad news is that storming the court will likely become a thing of the past. Even more disappointing could be that a rule change would forever be linked to Utah Valley University.