

Beaverton fans real believers

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BEAVERTON — Wednesday was St. Patrick's Day; according to tradition, a day for the wearing of the green.

In the small town of Beaverton, it was a day for the wearing of the red. Red and white are the colors of the Beaverton High Beavers, and the entire town has become full of Beaver Believers as the basketball team goes into quarterfinals action against Unionville-Sebewaing Area in Owosso tonight.

As Beaver fan Dennis Agin states, "It's just impossible to find anything red around town — paint, felt-tip markers or anything."

The Beaver Believers are showing their colors, and the result is an inspiring array of slogans, banners and posters. The employees of Agin's Department Store even promised to wear Beaver Believer shirts to work today.

From the banner which hangs over the main street near city hall, to graffiti on a wall overlooking a vacant lot, to posters crowding store windows and signs in front of houses, one cannot help noticing that something is going on in Beaverton — something which hasn't gone on in the city for many years.

Clarence Metzger, athletic director of Beaverton High School, has been with the school for 38 years. He says this is the first time that Beaverton has advanced beyond regional competition.

The effect of the team's performance on the town is amazing. City Manager Wilbur Freer says, "It's nice. We're a small town, and when a team goes to the state finals, the whole town can't help getting involved."

"I wish it could be like this all the time. Everyone is happy, friendly and smiling. We're all caught up in it."

Everything is cancelled, and everyone is behind the team."

Freer's comments are supported by a proclamation by Mayor Bernard Allen, proclaiming today Beaver Believer Day and encouraging local businesses to close at 4 p.m. and join the community support of the team in Owosso.

Delena's Restaurant is one local business which will close at 4 p.m. today. Jan McKimy, an employee of Delena's explains, "We're always behind the team anyway, you know — that red B on the cash register has been right there since the beginning of the season."

Sam Bagnieski, principal of Beaverton Junior High, has known most of the Beavers for years, and joins in the enthusiasm.

"We feel that getting out and backing the team will have a real influence on their play. People are coming to the

games whom we haven't seen at a game in four or five years, and it's easier for the team to play before a full house, he said."

A full house should be no problem. The town of 1,000 has already bought all 1,500 tickets available to Beaver fans.

John Graves, Beaverton High principal, says tournament fever has produced "some disruption, but it's worth it." Graves said the school will close early today to give students plenty of time to get to the big game.

City Manager Freer is perhaps the only person who will face a problem if the Beavers defeat their foes tonight.

"If they win, the town will probably close down when they go to the finals. If they win the finals, the town might close for a couple of days. And we'll have to come up with another slogan to take place of Beaver Believers."



Midland Daily News