

Soup bet plays up women's basketball

■ *Monongalia, Cabell delegates use wager on WVU-MU game to make case for female athletics*

By **JAKE STUMP**
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Even when it comes to college basketball, these women remain on opposite sides of the aisle.

Delegates Barbara Evans Fleischauer and Charlene Marshall are both Democrats representing Monongalia County, home of West Virginia University.

Their counterparts, Kelli Sobonya and Carol Miller, are Republicans from Cabell County, in Marshall Thundering Herd territory.

With the Capital Classic in town Wednesday night, the women made a friendly little wager on the women's basketball game.

If WVU won, Sobonya and Miller would have to serve Fleischauer and Marshall a bowl of buffalo chili.

But if Marshall came out victorious, the Morgantown delegates would have to cook up a batch of "Fiesta Bowl soup."

After the No. 12-ranked WVU women's team beat Marshall 58-51, it looks like there's really such a thing as a free meal, if you're a woman representing Monongalia County.

The women made the same bet for last year's game, with the same result.

"Last year we got to eat buffalo chili made by the Marshall enthusiasts," Fleischauer said Wednesday, hours before the game. "This year, we expect to eat it again. If not, I'll have to do a good recipe search to make Fiesta Bowl soup."

A quick online search of Fiesta Bowl soup doesn't turn up much.

So Fleischauer was prepared to concoct some sort of chicken tortilla soup "with a little bite to it so they'll remember it."

Again, the chili will contain chunks of ground buffalo meat, provided by Miller who raises bison on a 300-acre farm in Milton.

One observation Sobonya made regarding her adversaries' proposed dish: "They don't have to kill their mascot to prepare it."

During Wednesday's session on the House floor, Sobonya noted that she bled green — although her daughter attends WVU.

In addition to this amusing wager, the four delegates wanted to draw serious attention to women's athletics.

"It's our way to encourage



FLEISCHAUER



MARSHALL



SOBONYA



MILLER

members to attend the women's game as well, which is not as well attended as the men's game," Sobonya said. "The girls work just as hard on the court and off the court."

Center Olayinka Sanni led the Mountaineers to victory with a team-high 17 points and 10 rebounds. For Marshall, Kizzy Hart scored 18 points.

WVU's record improved to 15-3 while the Thundering Herd team is now 11-8.

"The women's teams don't get the attention they deserve," Fleischauer said. "The Mountaineers have a great record and it's been an exciting season.

"Title Nine has been so important for women around the country."

Sobonya said this is only the second time she can recall engaging in the bet in her six years as a delegate.

But Fleischauer, who first started serving in 1994, said the tradition dates back quite a few years.

At one point, only ice cream was at stake before the delegates dazzled up the ante with fancy soups.

Former Delegate Margaret Leach, D-Cabell, who passed away in December, was an enthusiastic participant.

"She was a very, very adamant Herd fan," Fleischauer said.

Sobonya said the wager sheds some lightheartedness in the House.

"It's a friendly rivalry, all in good humor," she said.

The buffalo chili will likely be served at the next women's caucus meeting.

Sobonya and Miller will eat with their Morgantown cohorts, like last year, to indicate they didn't taint the food with any magical Thundering Herd sauce.

"Last year we ate from the same Crock Pot," Sobonya said, "so they'd feel safe."

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