



Illustration by Dave Pfeiffer

*Mike woman aims to
get lions to roar;
finds much to cheer about,
her job's no chore*

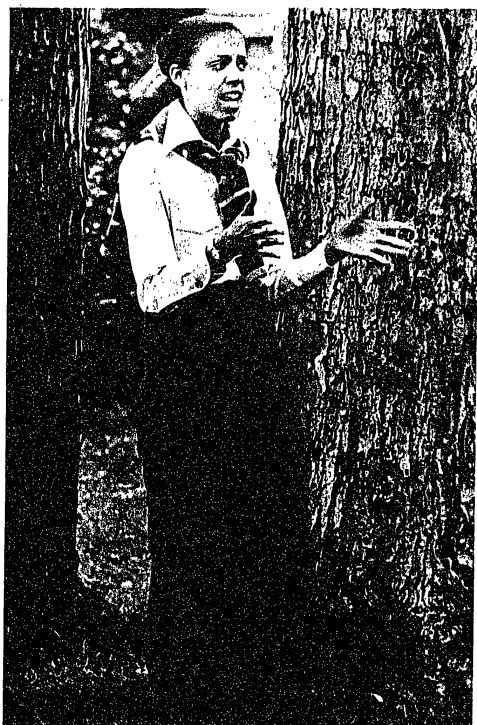


Photo by Lynn Dudinsky

Sandra Blackwell (4th-art), as mike woman for the football games, leads 60,000 Penn State fans in cheering the Lions to victory each week. Sandra came down from the stands during one of the games last year to lead the crowd in the "Rowdie" cheer and later tried out for the job as microphone woman.

By DENISE RYAN
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

Sometimes the going gets rough and the crowds get unruly, but that doesn't daunt Sandra Blackwell, the smiling dynamo who leads Penn State's cheers at the football games.

"I'm a person of extremes," grins the 5'10" art major from Philadelphia, her chestnut-brown eyes dancing with self amusement. "Going halfway isn't worth it."

Sandra goes all-out for cheerleading, and the fourth term sophomore has more to say about it than Muhammed Ali has to say about boxing.

"It's a lot of fun; I don't think I'd trade it for anything," she says.

The hardest part of Sandra's role as "mike lady" is remaining responsive to the throngs of high-charged fans.

"I should have some type of control," she says. "It's a responsible job and it keeps me alert."

The frenzied enthusiasm of Penn State crowds sometimes borders on violence. Sandra is quite frank about discussing the over-exuberant fans who occasionally hurl paper cups at the squad.

"I can see one coming," she laughs, "but it's all in fun."

When several freshmen jeered at the Maryland team's band at last week's home game, Sandra's task was to re-

channel their energies into more sportsman-like cheers.

The one thing that vexes Sandra the most are "fans who don't appreciate you." She says that some fans come down to the fence at half-time telling her to "get smart" and offering her unsolicited advice on cheering. But for Sandra, the hassle is simply part of the role. "You just keep on going," she says.

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Sandra, who confesses to going home and falling asleep after games, says nervousness has courted her throughout some of her earlier games. At the Houston game, she said she almost shouted "Beat Rutgers" but caught the faux pas just in time to say: "Beat Rutge-Cougars!"

Sandra gets the most reaction from the freshman stands. "Freshman have spunk," she says. "Sometimes I think they get into cheers more than the game."

Practicing monopolizes much of Sandra's free time, usually two hours every night. She praises the squad for its dedication and the friendliness of its members. "I feel like I'm in a family," she says.

The microphone that distinguishes Sandra from the other cheerleaders on the squad also gives her many headaches. She says that she sacrifices the health of her voice by turning the volume down, but often overwhelms people if she turns it up to be heard. "They're not used to my voice yet," she says of the fans.

Sandra is very critical of her performance down on the field. In fact, she has an odd way of unwinding from a game: "I look at the game and analyze it; it cools me down a lot," she says.

Sandra describes herself as a busybody, and dedication to all tasks and "pushing yourself" are important to her. "I believe in total involvement — just like cheerleading," she says. "Total commitment."

Sandra says she would like to direct an art firm some day or do designing and freelance work.

Competition in her field is something that Sandra is prepared to face. "I have to prove myself and go from the bottom up," she asserts.

Working in her native Philadelphia after graduation appeals to Sandra . . . for a while, anyway. "I've had good teachers and good supporters," she says of the people back home.

Sandra graduated from Dobbins Area Vocational-Technical High School in Philadelphia, where she majored in commercial art and cheered on the pep squad. Occasionally, she returns to her old school to get new ideas for cheers, but also creates new cheers simply by listening to radio songs and picking up a novel beat.

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It is futile to extract an objective reply from Sandra Blackwell when you ask her what she believes Penn State's chances are for making it to the Bowls this season. Her sparkling eyes widen with excitement.

"PSU all the waaaaaay! WE ARE SO PSYYYYYYYCHED!"