Editorial: New state law sets its sights on smokers

I

t was a battle of David-and-Goliath proportions. New Jersey — the tiny state that has more than enough attitude to make up for what it lacks in size — waged war against the mighty tobacco industry. And, echoing the Biblical battle’s miraculous outcome, the little-state-that-could proved victorious. On Monday, Jan. 9, New Jersey became the 11th state to embrace a ban on smoking in most indoor public places.

Like all good bills, this one has a bit of a Jersey-themed loophole. The measure recognized that it’s beneficial health-wise to forbid the patrons of the state’s bars and restaurants to smoke within the confines of enclosed buildings, but no such ban would be inflicted upon the gambling areas of the dozen casinos in Atlantic City. Additionally, the state also decided to raise the minimum age of lawful tobacco purchasing from 18 to 19.

While these changes in state law won’t go into effect until Saturday, April 15, Rider has taken the initiative to implement the ban months before it was actually passed. The Fall 2005 semester began with a new no-smoking policy in the residence halls and, after a grace period of one week, the Spring 2006 semester has ushered in a smoking prohibition policy in the Bart Luedeke Center’s (BLC) Pub.

The University’s decision to put the smoking ban into play well before its mandatory deadline comes as an attempt to lessen the shock of a measure that will force an abrupt change in lifestyle upon many New Jersey residents. As inconvenient as this new ban is for the smoking population, it is a laudable and tremendously healthy step in the right direction.

It’s not fair to the students and faculty among us who have respiratory problems or seasonal allergies, nor is it fair to those who simply cannot stand the smell of smoke, to be exposed to second-hand smoke. And, while places like pubs and the one-third of restaurants that haven’t already implemented a no-smoking law may fear losing both business and income as a side effect of the ban, a university doesn’t really have to pander to the same concerns. It’s a safe assumption that students don’t flock to Rider’s decision to get a head start on adhering to a lifestyle of a nicotine enthusiast. While it is one’s own decision to respect the rights of people who choose not to partake in the burning of tobacco, it is the responsibility of these individuals to choose to smoke in places that do not extend the comfort provided by the University and provide a safe haven for non-smokers.

Arguably, this new ban isn’t entirely fair to smokers, seeing as they’re not able to smoke in the comfort provided by the indoors. Anyone who wishes to enjoy a cigarette is now forced outside, which isn’t a terribly palatable fare during these brutally cold winter months. This is an inconvenience that is made less appealing by the fact that once someone leaves the Pub to smoke, he or she must go through the whole routine of signing in again. Those who slip away to light up are locked out, and must traverse the bottom floor of the BLC to get back inside. But existing smokers is a small price to pay in the attempt to respect the rights of people who choose not to partake in the lifestyle of a nicotine enthusiast. While it is one’s own decision to smoke, not everyone chooses to wallow in a cloud of second-hand smoke. Rider’s decision to get a head start on adhering to the standards set forth by New Jersey’s ban on smoking in public indoor settings shows that the University is putting the health of the students at the forefront of its concerns, which is something that all students should appreciate.

I’m sure all we could have guessed there were no artists in the group.

Toward the end of the game, the opposing team was fighting for half-points. My team was clearly going to win by a landslide, so not even 20 half-points would have made any difference.

Seriously, just ask Brad Pitt.

All right, he wasn’t the actual once-loved all-American celebrity-prince-turned-adulterer Brad Pitt. Instead, I’m talking about my partner Brad Pitt from another orientation game. Everyone was given an index card with something written on it and were then told to find our partner in order to make a pair.

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See TRANSFER, page 9