

IN THE STANDS

How comfortable did you feel at the game?

Asked by *Hélène Ducharme* at the Air Canada Centre

On Feb 23 Rainbow Hoops organized an outing to see the Raptors host the Indiana Pacers. The unofficial "gay day with the Raptors" drew a crowd of 106 to section 312. Tickets for the section were sold at a group rate; a portion of the proceeds benefited the lesbian-friendly league.



Sonja

"Pretty good. I'm one of the four collective members for Rainbow Hoops. I helped organize this event. I am the spokesperson for the group. We started talking to the Raptors in November and decided on this date before the John Amaechi story broke." (A former NBA centre, Amaechi came out on Feb 7, making him the first professional basketball player to do so.)



Katherine

"I feel great. It's like going to anything else, except I don't usually get interviewed for a newspaper at the other events." [On Amaechi's coming out] "It's fabulous. The NBA is very macho. A hard place to come out. Tim Hardaway [the former Miami Heat guard who made homophobic comments in the press in response to Amaechi's revelation] made it more of a negative thing. The Raptors downplayed the negative effect by having this event. It moves the Raptors up in my estimation."



Francine

"I felt a little nervous holding my girlfriend's hand. I was aware of the double takes."



Carla

"It's great! Lots of lesbians here and at [other] sporting events. Great on the Raptors for having this event. They gave us a good price on the seats. We are a small league with lots of needs. The Raptors are supporting us by donating \$5 per ticket sale toward the purchase of a time clock. I feel special that they supported us." [On Amaechi] "It's too bad you have to leave the league before you can come out. It doesn't help when the NFL [National Football League] shows the Snickers commercial to Superbowl fans then broadcasts their reactions on television. [The ad, shown at the Feb 4 Superbowl, was widely denounced as homophobic and has since been pulled.] This would keep anyone from coming out. Until companies like Snickers stop doing things like that, I mean, I wouldn't come out either."



Michelle

"It's not weird. I'm pretty comfortable knowing I'm surrounded by teammates." [On Hardaway's comments] "I used to like Tim Hardaway. He was a fun player to watch, my favourite player. He didn't have to say anything." [On Amaechi] "There are probably more gay players in the NBA. It may open the doors for them to come out. I doubt anyone comes out during their playing careers."

For more on Rainbow Hoops check out Rainbowhoops.com.

For more information on John Amaechi and Tim Hardaway turn to page 37.