

# OPINIONS

## Should Butch be out and about?

### Yes: Butch is a symbol for all students, not just a select few



**FEKADU KIROS**  
News Editor

I was at the Pride Parade in Seattle while Butch led the 30 to 50 in the WSU "family" at the march.

I had never heard of the "Fight song," but I learned it there, and Butch got me to sing the "Fight song." I had a high spirit even in the supposedly hostile Husky territory.

Also, it was the first time that I felt proud of being "a Cougar." Like some people on this campus, I have no interest in college teams including the WSU teams. I love sports but college sports are too commercialized for my taste.

Thus, I do not like being known as "a Cougar" and I do not identify very much with Butch.

However, I took Butch as the best representative we have of WSU. The whole idea of a mascot is an indication of the insane obsession American higher education institutions have with sports.

Butch, for that reason, is too often associated with the athletic department. They use it more often as well. Butch, however, does not belong to the athletic department.

In fact, tracing the history of "Butch" would indicate that "Butch" is named after a football player. Thus, for the most part, Butch is used at athletic and fund-raising events.

The university trains and probably pays or gives students scholarships to be "Butch" just so they can get the crowd cheering at athletic events or get the money flowing at fund raising events.

Yes, for the most part, the point of having a mascot is to cheer the crowd. This is exactly what Butch did in Seattle.

Having Butch at the march brought the intended result. The WSU group marched adorned with two "WSU" banners.

Going along the route, our esteemed Butch was brilliant. It stopped and gave hand shakes to alumni, kisses to their kids and a hug here and there.

In contradiction to what I hear in Pullman, several people at the march were pleased.

Some, in fact, wanted to take pictures with Butch.

We also heard comments from those along the sidewalks. "Good for Pullman!" one woman said.

"Go Cougs," another man said. That silly game between WSU and UW was also funny, for once. Some Husky fans good naturedly made fun of Butch.

My question, is there any rule that says people at a gay march don't need to be cheered for? Or that we do not need the support of people at a gay march? Can we pick and choose who we want supporting us? No, we need all the support that we can get.

Personally, opposition to Butch being at a gay pride parade reeks of homophobia. We can not expect Butch to be at events only we, as individuals, support.

If one does not like gays and lesbians, then that individual has a problem. WSU can not be expected to fit the prejudices of everyone, although I am convinced at times WSU does try.

Also, the argument that Butch should not participate in "political" events is a ridiculous one. Let alone the fact that the pride march was not a political one.

Butch is just a costume.

**Butch is just a costume. It has no meaning without students' input.**

It has no meaning without students' input. Butch is what students want it to be. If the GLBA wants Butch to be gay at the Pride Parade then it is gay and if the GLBA wants it to be a gay rights supporter, then that is what it is. Often, Butch is forced to be an athlete.

Each student and each organization at WSU has ownership of Butch. If the Campus Crusade for Christ wants Butch at some church or the

African-American Association group wants it in some parade, I say go for it. We pay enough in tuition and fees to have that privilege.

This whole Butch thing is just out of hand.

Some people take Butch too seriously.

Butch does not say anything about who we are as individuals. It is simply a costume, a symbol and a way to build some camaraderie between graduates of WSU. It is meant to unite us not separate us.

Well, to probably collect money from alumni as well. But this would not be America if we did not find ways to make money. Yeah, Go "Cougs."

*Fekadu Kiros will return your call if you leave a message at 335-1140.*

### No: Butch should be used carefully for all, not politics



**DOUG HUGHES**  
Opinions Editor

Butch is a symbol for all students. It (referring to the genderless unknown person within the suit, not the actual Butch namesake) is a nationally known symbol for WSU, its students, faculty, and aura.

Everybody loves Butch.

Until recently, most people thought Butch only appeared at athletic, university, and fund raising events.

It turns out the Butch suit is available for rent from the marketing office for any group that goes through the proper channels to rent it.

After finding this out, many were appalled.

Butch is a symbol for the entire university.

There are specific things anyone with the Butch costume can and can't do while wearing it.

The tradition of a cougar mascot began in 1927, and the tradition of a human mascot in a cougar suit began in 1978.

Every few years, a few new students are chosen to be Butch for athletic events and university fund raisers.

Every year at homecoming, Butch dances about and everyone enjoys the party.

At every athletic event, from football to baseball to volleyball, Butch makes his presence felt.

Butch claps his hands, jumps, dances, and beats up opposing mascots in a fake fight.

When Sam Smith has big fund raiser dinners for Campaign WSU, Butch gets decked out in a tuxedo and makes a good impression of WSU and the spirit and dedication of its students.

Butch should not be available for rent to any political group of any kind.

This is not, I repeat is not, a Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Association issue; it is a Butch issue.

Butch's presence at the Gay Pride March in Seattle, and the picture printed in The Summer Evergreen as evidence of this, only opened the eyes of many prideful cougars to an unhealthy policy on the part of the "Butch" powers that be.

Butch should not appear at any political events of any kind.

Bob Dole rallies: No.

Bill Clinton town meetings: No.

Gay Pride marches: No.

The Butch suit should be reserved for the select few chosen to wear it at athletic fund raising events. The suit should not be loaned,

rented, borrowed or in any other way given to anyone not trained to be in the suit for events other than those for the entire university.

No political events of any kind are benign enough for Butch.

Why all the hoopla? Why does anyone care about a person in a cougar suit so damn much?

WSU does not have a flag. We have a logo, which is on T-shirts and other merchandise. We really don't have anything that is a true symbol of the university other than Butch.

During the Alive! program, or at a football game, students learn the fight song (and by the way, who invented that whole clapping game anyway?). Butch sprints across the field with a banner, he dances with the rally team and, most importantly, he leads the crowd in the "Go Cougs" cheer.

Thousands of voices, the large and the small, the loud and the soft, blend together in an incredibly loud chant of Cougar Pride.

Some fans, mostly young children, but some adults, even enjoyed Butch more than the event itself.

This kind of respect, pride and recognition make Butch an interesting figure in the public life of the university.

The once universal Butch is now a political figure endorsing, by his very presence, the agenda of those marching in and organizing the Gay Pride Parade.

However one may feel about the GLBA or homosexual issues in general, it was a mistake to allow Butch to attend the Gay Pride Parade.

By having Butch at this seemingly benign parade brought him into dialogue with the entire events of the past year, namely the protests and counter protests of GLBA and its committee status.

We can learn from this mistake. The tradition of Butch is one of an anonymous student participating in events for the benefit of WSU.

The name, gender, major, voice and personal life of Butch is shrouded in mystery until his or her retirement.

The tradition of Butch should be kept traditional and not political.

By loaning out the Butch suit to anyone who wants it, we are inviting trouble, even if it has been avoided thus far.

A club member wearing the Butch suit could take liberties to get close to people, and take advantage of this closeness.

Anyone wearing the suit could do, in all actuality, anything they want.

It isn't a matter of being anti-GLBA, it's a matter of supporting the traditional practices and symbolism of Butch. Go Cougs!

*Doug Hughes will return your call if you leave a message at 335-4576.*

**It isn't an anti-GLBA issue, it's supporting the traditional Butch.**

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