

Last year the Monsters finished 21-6, and rode a 14-game winning streak into the 1A South Region, yet failed to qualify for the state tournament. Then, an unexpected boost. The 2009-2010 Monsters welcomed a key addition to their team. Last year's Arizona Class 1A-3A Player of the Year found herself transferring from Yuma Catholic to Gila Bend; senior guard Ashley Wirtzberger didn't have much choice. Her father, Bill, had become the new principal and athletic director at Gila Bend. All Ashley Wirtzberger has done is set a national high school record for three-pointers in four years (475). Previously that distinction was held by Courtney Weibel of Hononegah,

Illinois (2004-2007). Ashley also holds the Class 1A single-game assist record (21), and for the season averaged 20.1 points, 9.1 assists, and 3.2 steals per game. A great player to have around if Luttrell's team was going to make a serious title run.

In this year's 1A state tournament, the Monsters, the #1 South Region seed with a 29-2 record, found the going easy in the first two rounds, beating Bagdad 68-25, and in the quarterfinals ripped #2 North region seed Rock Point, 74-44. In the semifinals the Monsters faced #2 East Region seed Ft. Thomas, winning 71-63. Luttrell and his Monsters were living a dream, a date in the state finals against #1 East Region

seed Salt River. Luttrell had to be feeling a quiet confidence. Though the Monsters had lost to the Eagles in the Desert Classic on December 4 (62-54), they won a December 19th matchup, 67-58. Though Wirtzberger scored a game-high 28 points in the state finals, Salt River got great offensive balance and played good enough defense to defeat the Monsters, 66-51. The Monsters finished 31-3, a program that has taken huge strides in five years; a program that should make noise at state most years if Luttrell sticks around. Leave it to the Arizona Highway Patrol.

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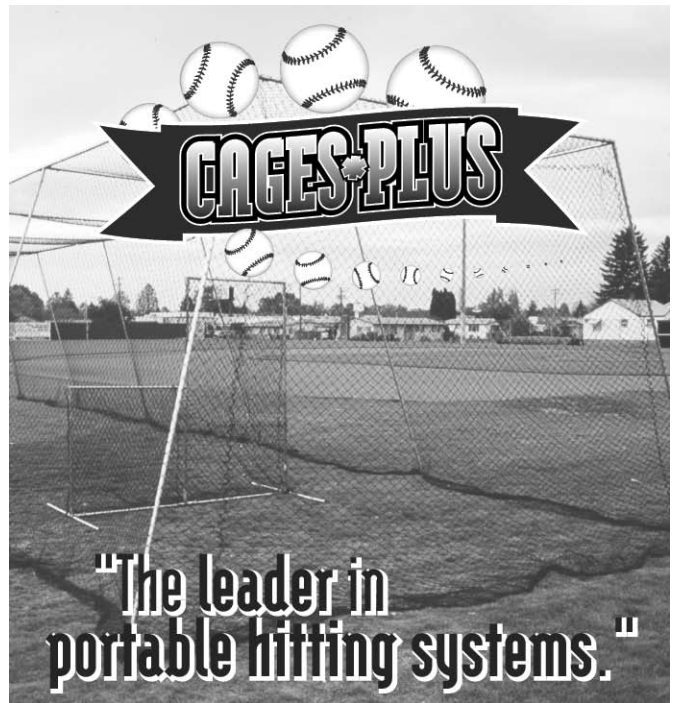
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