

College athletics is confronted with critical and variable decisions. There is a need for greater awareness of the educational significance of intercollegiate athletics, since participation can influence strongly the growth and development of student athletes throughout their lives.

Views From The Student Affairs' Bleachers: Academics, Financial Assistance, and Title IX Legislation in Intercollegiate Athletics

Dr. Mark S. Denke

INTRODUCTION

As the term indicates, intercollegiate athletics is a component of many educational institutions. Consequently, it should be educational in nature. Organized sports, sponsored by colleges and universities, and conducted with educational outcomes in mind, will contribute to the total development of the individual, provide opportunities for fun and growth, and furnish experiences from which much can be learned about American culture. The first priority of any program should be the welfare of the student athlete (Thelin, 1994). Athletic programs should be conducted in the spirit of the rules for the greatest benefit to the largest possible number of persons.

Commercialism in college athletics must be diminished and university sports must rise to a point where it is esteemed primarily and sincerely for the opportunities it affords to mature youth under its responsibility. The American college and university must renew within itself the force that will challenge the best intellectual capabilities of the undergraduate (Sperber, 1990).

HISTORY IN THE UNITED STATES

College athletics have evolved much since the rowing crew days at Harvard and Yale in 1852. There were no paid coaches in those days, no large crowds, no scholarships, and many of the rules were created on the spot (Brubacher and Rudy, 1976):

As college sport became a big business, a number of practices arose which were, to say the least, questionable. Many of these were introduced by overzealous alumni, eager for victory and bent upon booming their alma mater. The tramp athlete and his cousin, the ringer, made their appearance as able players, canvassed the colleges and enrolled at those institutions willing to award them the most lucrative scholarship. Graduate students, even coaches, played on some teams along with the undergraduates. Many coaches found that retention of their position depended upon winning games, whether by fair means or foul. In addition to all of the foregoing, large-scale betting on college games began to pose serious problems. (p. 132)

Intercollegiate athletic programs at first were opposed, later tolerated as a necessary evil, and then recognized as an integral part of an educational enterprise. Originally, most of the management and coaching was handled by faculty and students. Intercollegiate competition developed out of undirected play and intramural sports. In colleges and universities, undergraduate leadership soon was replaced by voluntary supervision by graduates and, finally, by salaried coaches. As expenditures for interinstitutional sports increased, the practice of charging admission at the gate was introduced. During the final two decades of the nineteenth century, most of the evils of intercollegiate athletics took root because faculties had ignored athletics in one of its most critical periods, its period of greatest growth. Then, colleges and universities took a position of vigorous opposition to athletics, but much of the damage already had been done. College administrators, realizing it was inadvisable to abolish college sports, made an effort to control them (Brubacher and Rudy, 1976).

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was formed in the early 1900s. The alarming number of injuries and the lack of national control of intercollegiate sports led to a conference of representatives of universities and colleges. Preliminary plans were made for a national body to assist in the formation of sound requirements for intercollegiate athletics and the name of Intercollegiate Athletic Association was suggested. On December 29, 1910, the name of the association was changed to National Collegiate Athletic Association (Fleisher, Goff, and Tollison, 1992). The purposes of the NCAA are to uphold the principle of institutional control of all collegiate sports; to maintain a uniform code of amateurism in conjunction with sound eligibility rules, scholarship requirements and good sportsmanship.

ACADEMICS

Intercollegiate athletics are an important part of the educational program of our American colleges and universities. Higher education administrators are becoming increasingly concerned about how best to

conduct their intercollegiate athletic programs on a sound educational basis in light of ever increasing student, alumni, and community interest. As Chu (1989) describes:

To academics in the United States, the relationship between institutions of higher education and intercollegiate sport may be simultaneously a source of pleasure and of embarrassment. For them, it may be a curious question requiring study, or they may see matters athletic as of little significance, only meriting attention occasionally because of some extraordinary event such as a bowl appearance or a "Big Game." I believe it is fair to say, however, that most in the academic world are affected in some way by the tradition of sport that has developed at American college and universities since the late nineteenth century. In the public mind, college populations may be less scholars and professors than Buckeyes, Trojans, Sooners, or Hoyas. To students, the concerns of the game, the pep rally, or practice may take easy precedence over classes, laboratories, or papers. (p. 1)

When athletics and academics conflict, University presidents cannot compete with the wishes of boards of trustees, state wide boosters, and alumni. John DiBiaggio, past president of Michigan State University, was forced to leave his position after the Board of Trustees overruled his decisions concerning the status of the University's football program. "At some institutions the alumni are fiercely loyal because of a school's athletic achievement rather than its academic prowess; and the trustees at some institutions are more interested in where seats are located than what is going on at the institution" (Naughton, 1996, p. A37).

The standards for athletics need to be stated clearly. There should be no doubt in any educator's mind as to the types of intercollegiate programs that are educationally sound and in the best interests of students who participate in them. Intercollegiate athletics, like all educational endeavors, should be concerned with intellectual development and academics, as well as with physical outcomes. In the early 1980s, under intense pressure from college and university presidents, the NCAA voted to tighten academic standards for students participating in intercollegiate sports (Fleisher, Goff, and Tollison, 1992). Proposition 48 provided new regulations to determine athletic eligibility to play at an NCAA Division I institution. In a letter to the editor in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (1991), Richard Schultz, Executive Director of the National Collegiate Athletic Association wrote:

The reconciliation of academics and athletics is a decision that must be made at each individual institution. It requires the cooperation of many constituencies at each of those institutions. Alumni and boosters must relieve the pressure placed on an institution's administration to produce a "winning" program. Faculty members must not allow academic abuses to occur. College presidents must be given the authority to run the athletics departments as they see fit -- within the framework of those institutions. (p. B3)

Schultz (1991), in his letter, responds to complaints that it is the NCAA's fault that abuses occur at colleges and universities because of excessive rules the Association enforces. As he states: "hundreds of institutions quietly and without fanfare reconcile the aims of athletics and academics because each college and university -- not the association to which it belongs -- controls its own destiny" (p. B3). Colleges and universities do not need the NCAA to prevent abuses in intercollegiate athletics on individual campuses. Many evils associated with athletics stem from a tendency to regard athletes as a privileged class. Abuses can be controlled by our institutions without much outside assistance from the NCAA if serious violations are punished.

With the tremendous popularity of intercollegiate athletics, a great deal of responsibility rests on those who administer the programs. It is possible to eliminate the ills and evil influences of intercollegiate athletics when administrators are willing to recognize that these activities are only one part of an institution's educational program. As Bailey and Littleton (1991) stated:

There are many reasons for the lack of effective control of abuses in college sports. Perhaps the most important is the failure of the leadership of higher education to recognize the seriousness of the problem and the fact that over the past century control has often been directed more toward treatment of the symptoms than to the fundamental causes of the malady, a phenomenon almost universally characteristic of reactions to clinical experience with an illness. (p. ix)

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Should athletes receive scholarships or "special" financial assistance? This subject is argued continuously and is a towering problem at colleges and universities. Those in favor of scholarships and financial assistance claim that a student who excels in sports should receive aid just as one who excels in music or any other subject area. They claim that such inducements are justified in the educational picture. Those opposed point out that scholarships should be awarded on the basis of the need and general academic qualifications of a student, rather than skill in some sport. One solution could be to create a list of criteria for making grants and to have them handled by the Financial Aid Office without athletic department interference. This plan is based on the premise that scholarships and student aid should not be granted by any other department, including athletics. Financial aid should be handled on an institution-wide basis and it should be given to students who need them most and are best qualified (Salter, 1993). In this way, those students who are in need of assistance, regardless of the area in which they specialize, will be the ones who receive aid.

It was widely anticipated that the 1991 NCAA convention would enact landmark reforms in college athletics. It was thought that university presidents and academic administrators would take control of the destiny of college athletics away from coaches and athletic directors. From the analytical viewpoint of this

author, the 1991 convention produced superficial rather than substantive changes. (Fleisher, Goff, and Tollison, 1992, p. 156-157)

Some decisions affecting financial assistance and scholarships to student athletes either were rejected or never brought up for a vote. Some minor changes included a ten percent reduction of scholarships, the prohibition of summer scholarships for incoming freshmen, and permission for Division 1-A schools to set their own financial aid standards. These measures hardly would be considered a serious commitment to financial aid reform. "Financial aid should be based on need and merit only, and have that aid issued from the financial aid office, not the athletic department" (Salter, 1993, p. 103). When we look at financial aid operating philosophy, it seems the Ivy League Universities have the right perspective and lead the way. The Ivy League is planning a study to ensure that the leagues participating Universities are auditing the way financial aid is awarded to athletes. The intent is to prevent athletes from getting extra financial benefits as an incentive to enroll (Blum, 1996):

The Ivy League prohibits sports scholarships. Instead, athletes -- like all students -- are awarded packages of grants, loans, and work-study opportunities based on their financial need. Among other things, the audit will determine whether athletes are being offered financial-aid packages that exceed their need or that are more attractive than those offered to non-athletes with similar financial profiles. (p. A52)

TITLE IX

Today, there is considerable emphasis on women's athletic competition in colleges and universities. Traditionally, women have suffered in many intercollegiate athletic programs. In some cases they, at times, have been subjected to using poor equipment and facilities as well as experiencing the lack of financial support. The women's movement and other proponents of equality in women's sports, in addition to Title IX, have altered the concept of women's sports in recent years. Women are becoming more accepted as athletes, entitled to experience all types of sports activities. Many persons wrongly interpret this kind of statement to mean that women want to compete with men in all sports activities. Although women may compete with men in certain co-educational activities, they also want separate but equal athletic programs, including equal funding, equipment, and facility use (Thelin, 1994).

Title IX, a law passed in 1972, makes sex discrimination illegal in all educational institutions that receive federal funds. The law prohibits discrimination in the following areas: general admissions, counseling, selection of courses, financial aid, housing, dining and other campus facilities, scholarships, student health and insurance benefits, athletic programs and recruitment, vocational education, and employment. However, the section of Title IX calling for equal opportunity in athletics by far has stirred the greatest controversy (Vargyas, 1994). Title IX states: "No person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, be treated differently from another person or otherwise be

discriminated against in any interscholastic, intercollegiate club, or intramural athletics offered (by colleges and universities that received Federal funds), and no recipient shall provide any such athletics separately on such basis (Vaulthorn and Seils, May, 1980, p. 22).

An institution must provide a selection of sports and a level of competition that effectively accommodates the interests and abilities for members of both genders. Institutions must provide comparable equipment and supplies, travel and per diem allowances, opportunity to receive coaching and academic tutoring, publicity, scheduling of game and practice times, scholarship aid, medical, housing, and dining facilities for both genders (Vargyas, 1994). Indeed, the most important reason why Title IX became law was to prevent sex discrimination in sports and athletic programs. The emphasis of Title IX is the creation of equal opportunity for both sexes. In order to determine if equal opportunity is administered, it is important to know whether the interests and abilities of students and others of both genders have been met and whether things such as adequate facilities and equipment are available to both in each sport.

Each institution of higher education should have members of the academic and athletic staff coordinate a self-evaluation to ensure compliance. Athletic programs need to develop a statement of philosophy that serves as a guide for equality of opportunity for both genders. Forward-looking organizations recognize that equality is necessary, even more importantly, fair and appropriate, and when in doubt, they decide in favor of equalized opportunity and they make every effort to follow the full intent of the law. In December 1995, the Department of Education finalized regulations under a new law that requires colleges and universities to publish annual reports comparing their treatment of men's and women's athletics (Blum, 1995).

Today, women want to participate in intercollegiate athletics and institutions gradually are accepting this reality. However, myths pertaining to the inability of women to compete die slowly. Athletic administrators must be prepared to face charges of discrimination. The best way to do this is to furnish equitable opportunities for all interested students.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between academics and intercollegiate athletics is greatly challenged and questioned by educators, students, alumni, and legislators. Efforts must be made to improve and to increase the understanding of intercollegiate problems and potentialities and to stimulate fuller achievement of higher educational objectives in intercollegiate athletics. Dealy (1990) states it best:

Because games and athletics mirror human behavior, they serve as glimpses into the best and the worst in us. But college sports offer a far more important opportunity. College athletics reflect the personality and character of institutions of higher education, institutions that are supposed to symbolize truth and

enlightenment. Although regrettable, it is one thing for hooliganism to tarnish the World Cup. But it is quite another thing for scandal to taint the University of Oklahoma. The former reflects badly on any Country's lowest class of people. The latter reflects badly on what should be America's best class. (p. 207)

American higher education is committed to a program of competitive sports and responsibility must be vested in this commitment. The premise of academic achievement must be preserved and the influence of athletics must be controlled. All educational programs must be established to accomplish desirable outcomes in and for the student athlete. If programs of intercollegiate athletics are to play their part in the education and development of young men and women, educational leaders must establish definite and defensible administrative principles, policies, and procedures regarding organization, personnel, and academics.

If we do not attempt to plan and prepare for the future, when our students will have different expectations and goals, our ability to cope with change may be inadequate. Planning for the future will be a necessary ingredient of success in college and university athletic programs. Those administering these programs must seek to understand their impact on educational events and trends. Every educational institution should develop a philosophy for its athletic program. This philosophy should indicate direction, express purposes, and enumerate goals. All programs and curricula should be in reasonable harmony with the institutional philosophy. Intercollegiate athletics and education must be compatible.

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Dr. Mark S. Denke is the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and an Associate Professor in the School of Education at Colorado State University. He teaches the Organizational Behavior in Student Affairs course (HE676) in the Student Affairs in Higher Education Master's Program.