

## Sports of The Times; How About an Academic Media Guide?

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Side by side, the brochures were stacked in press rooms at all eight sub regional sites in the National Collegiate Athletic Association basketball tournament this weekend. Quickly and efficiently, the sports information director for each tournament team had produced a post-season media guide to update the regular-season guide. Pages and pages of stats. Pages and pages of puffy profiles.

"He is one of the most versatile players we have because of his quickness and great touch from the perimeter," one coach was quoted as saying in a typical player profile. "He has worked extremely hard." Nowhere was there a quote from any of that player's professors as to how hard this so-called student-athlete has worked as a student. Nothing about that player's touch in balancing studies and athletics in progressing toward a meaningful degree. Nothing about his quickness in completing assignments. Nothing about his versatility in coordinating his classroom attendance with his basketball travels.

But isn't it time that colleges, if they are really trying to clean out the cesspool in which so many of them exist, provided some evidence that a student-athlete is really a student-athlete?

Isn't it time that colleges with a basketball team in the N.C.A.A. tournament or a football team in a bowl game issued a media guide that included some academic information beyond that of a player's major?

Isn't it time that colleges let the public know what courses their so-called student-athletes are taking? Or would that information be more of an embarrassment to the college more than to the athletes?

Wouldn't it be reassuring to know that some so-called student-athletes didn't cut any classes in the previous semester? Or that their only cuts were excused because they were caused by the basketball team's travels?

According to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, a college student's marks are considered confidential information, not to be announced publicly. Fair enough. Such disclosure is potentially embarrassing. But colleges have no qualms about disclosing a student's basketball marks, so to speak, embarrassing or not. Those marks are in all the tournament media guides for all to see. All 27 columns of statistics, including turnovers.

Those marks enhance an all-American's credentials for the National Basketball Association, but those marks also embarrass the bench-warmer who averaged 1.2 points a game and missed all 8 of his 3-point attempts.

During the current Chicago trial of the sports agents **Norby Walters** and **Lloyd Bloom** on charges of mail **fraud**, racketeering and **extortion**, **Ronnie Harmon**, now a running back with the Buffalo Bills, testified to having taken a summer course in watercolor painting at the University of **Iowa** while on academic probation before his final season. Despite a D in watercolor painting, he scored 10 touchdowns as a co-captain of the Hawkeye team that went to the Rose Bowl.

Watercolor painting? Isn't that what little kids do in kindergarten? Or in preschool?

Once upon a time basket-weaving was considered the ultimate snap course for a college jock. But anybody who took basket-weaving in the good old days had to be offended not only by **Harmon's** testimony, but also by how it's just not as tough for a jock to get through college as it was in the good old days when basket-weavers were basket-weavers. It took time to weave a basket, if any of them took the time. But in watercolor painting, all you need to do is splash the colors around, then try to convince the teacher that you're a serious student of Picasso.

Not that **Harmon's** academic schedule was confined to watercolor painting. As an **Iowa** freshman, he produced a 1.62 average (on a 4.0 scale), an overall D, in such physical-education courses as billiards, bowling, soccer, and coaching football. On the stand **Harmon** insisted that his curriculum was "not a joke." The tragedy is, he was serious. But an even greater tragedy is that too many colleges create too many schemes that enable too many so-called student-athletes to perpetrate the same **fraud**. Too many so-called student-athletes who never graduate from college.

With that in mind, Bill Bradley, the Senator from New Jersey who was a Rhodes scholar and an all-America basketball player at Princeton before joining the Knicks, has introduced Federal legislation that would force colleges and universities to disclose their graduation rate of student-athletes so that incoming student-athletes would have what Bradley described as an "informed choice." For now, colleges may or may not disclose that graduation rate. But those that waffle tell a real student all that student needs to know.

The fun of rooting for a college team is knowing that its athletes are serious students who take serious courses, who go to serious classes and complete serious assignments in earning a serious degree.

Not long ago Duke suspended its 6-foot-10-inch center, Alaa Abdelnaby, for academic reasons. Not because he hadn't met the Atlantic Coast Conference's standards, but because he hadn't met Duke's standards. After missing two games, Abdelnaby was



reinstated in time for the A.C.C. tournament. But at least Duke had not been willing to wink at, much less close its eyes to, an academic problem.

Those who root for a college team that depends on tramp athletes taking tramp courses aren't really rooting for that college; they're just rooting for some semiprofs that the college has hired, the same way it hires security officers or kitchen cooks.

Bill Bradley is calling his legislation the Student-Athletes Right to Know Act. But shouldn't a college rooter have a right to know what courses a student-athlete is taking in order to know if that athlete is worth rooting for? Is that athlete taking medieval history or watercolor painting? Shakespeare or basket-weaving? Sociology or negotiating with an agent? Chemistry or shopping for a Trans-Am that a booster has arranged?

Let the colleges put that academic information in their media guides instead of all those puffy profiles.

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