

Why North trial turned out fine

GLAD THE North trial turned out the way it did. What's the good of being president if you can't thumb your nose at Congress, subvert the Constitution and bamboozle the American People? That, of course, was the effect of the North sentence; Ronald Reagan got off scot-free. In case you haven't heard, Ollie North, for lying to Congress and assorted Iran-contra crimes, was sentenced to a two-week, all-expense-paid vacation in Hawaii and a lifetime supply of Kleenex. Oh, those weren't the technical terms but it was like that. He got off easy, especially considering the fact that people are lining up to give him money to pay off his fines and his lawyers. This means that Mr. Reagan (along with his faithful companion, Tonto of Kennebunkport) no longer has to suffer amnesia when North's name comes up. Had North been clamped in irons

between academics and athletics

By ROBERT JAMES WALLER

The University of Iowa recruits agile young men, many of them black and from distant cities, and lets them entertain us through the snap of November air and the hurtful cold of our winter nights. These young

Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad, who should have known better than to involve himself in this quarrel, argued against Rawlings' position: "We must also recognize athletics is part of the extracurricular activities in colleges and at larger universities it is very important and significant. It is also a source of entertainment for many people who never went to college them-

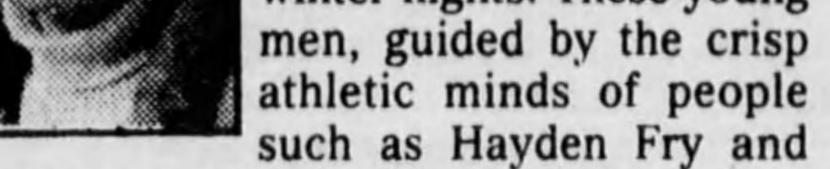
OVER THE COFFEE

and dragged off to jail, the Reagan-Bush team would have had to continue to deny its responsibility for Ollie's plight even as North proclaimed it. Now the matter can be allowed to drift away and be forgotten, like the deficit.

It's for the best, I'm sure. We liberals have spent the past year getting hit over the head with flags, skewered by the Pledge of Allegiance and subjected to anti-abortion harangues. I'm not sure we needed "Free Ollie!" demonstrations. His price for speeches is bound to go up to \$50,000 and Mel Gibson probably will play him in the movie.

The Iran-contra scheme started as a fantasy; let it end as a fiction. Ollie North is a hero. President Reagan couldn't know everything that was going on in the government. George Bush was at the Army-Navy game.

I imagine John Poindexter is pretty eager to go on trial now. If he cops a plea maybe they'll give him a new car. I did enjoy the performance of North's lawyer, Brendan Sullivan, however. Having spent the better part of two years protesting the innocence of his client, he quick shifted gears and threw himself on the mercy of the court at sentencing. "Ollie North is far from a perfect man," said Sullivan. "He made serious mistakes. But I ask again in closing what is a good life worth if not given full measure at this hour of need? You have before you a man who is worthy of the court's mercy, compassion, understanding and leniency." The presiding judge, Gerhard Gesell, apparently thought so, too. "I do not think that . . . you were a leader at all," he told North, "but really a low-ranking subordinate working to carry out initiatives of a few cynical superiors. You came to be the point man in a very complex power play developed by higher-ups." Which is true, but it dodges the opportunity to put moral pressure on those cynical superiors by being hard on North. On the other hand, the superiors probably could have stood the pain of seeing Ollie in jail. It's not as though they have consciences. Whatever Ollie is paying him, Sullivan was worth it.



Tom Davis, do what they're asked to do and do it well. The touchdowns come, the stuff shots make the backboards tremble, the bowls and the tournaments send out invitations, and Iowans are content. In a state that suffers from geographical anonymity, along with a curious and self-imposed sense of cultural inferiority, apparently many lowans believe that successful college athletic teams provide them with legitimate national bragging rights, of sorts.

Comes now into our midst one Hunter Rawlings III, princely of both name and spirit. After a somewhat jumbled effort at finding a decent president for the University of Iowa, the state's Board of Regents hired Rawlings and gave him the explicit charge of making the university a place of academic excellence. Rawlings, it seems, has taken that directive seriously. A little too seriously, for some.

What Rawlings recommended

Hunter Rawlings III, you see, is fed up with the shallow academic performance of many university athletes and the dishonesty that seems to accompany top-drawer collegiate athletic enterprises. He believes that athletes ought to learn something aside from how to execute a four-corner offense, late in the game, early in their lives. So as spring came to the flatlands, the April light thin and yellow and warming, Rawlings' announced his recommendations:

 Lobby the National Collegiate Athletic Association to ban freshmen from playing for or practicing with athletic teams.

• If the NCAA does not adopt such a ban within three years, the University of Iowa should do it unilaterally.

selves."

How Iowans responded

It gets worse. The letters-to-the-editor column in The Register has been an embarrassment to a state that continually toots about its scores on national achievement tests, such as the ACT and SAT. (lowans never seem to realize that, in addition to a rather-decent educational system, one reason we look so fine on such tests is that we have a low proportion of people in the disadvantaged groups from which many good athletes come.)

One writer ultimately opposed to Rawlings' position stated: "The suggestions of the University of Iowa is commendable." Another: '... If they're good enough to enroll at U of I, then let 'em play ball!" Another: "Why don't we get rid of Hunter and keep our sports program." Another: "Do we want to be recognized as another Northwestern?" That last one is especially perverse. Given Northwestern's fine academic reputation, I suspect that Rawlings would answer "Yes, absolutely!"

Then there was Jim Walden, football coach at Iowa State University and would-be social philosopher, who was quoted as saying: "I'm opposed to idle time. To say they should not be allowed to practice is against the American way. Idleness is the devil's workshop. When do you see most athletes get in trouble? It's not during the season."

That's one to paste on your sunglasses. If I were Gordon Eaton, president of Iowa State, I'd ask for Walden's resignation on the grounds of (1) misunderstanding both time and patriotism, (2) getting the proverb wrong, and (3) harmful blither and terminal cliches.

In Tama, Ia., with cigarette smoke swirling and Hawkeye banners flying at the Eagles lodge, the local I-Club gave Hayden Fry stand-



Which reminds me of a lawyer joke. A man seeks out a lawyer and asks him what he charges.

"Fifty dollars for three questions," says the lawyer.

"Isn't that a little steep?" asks the man.

"Yes," says the lawyer. "Now what was your final question?"

· College sports seasons should be shortened.

• The practice of housing athletes together in University of Iowa dormitories should be ended.

 Athletes who are convicted of crimes should be banned from their teams.

 Universities should be required to make public the graduation rates of their athletes, with the rates broken down by the athletes' race and sport.

The Valdez oil spill and the annual meeting of the lowa Legislature had to fight for newspaper space in competition with the debate over Rawlings' proposals. Considerably less uproar would have been generated if Rawlings had urged lowans to cut back on consumption of red meat in the interest of good health or had come out in favor of rural-school consolidation.

The opposition to his plan has been emotional, intense, self-serving and poorly argued. But he's taken heat. God, how he's taken heat. Most of the criticism surrounds his proposal to eliminate freshman eligibility and practice.

The Des Moines Register's April 12 headline screamed in six columns: "Fry 'Mad as Hell,' Hints He'd Quit." "Iowans United in Opposition to Benching Freshman Athletes" was the April 16 headline following The Register's Iowa Poll.

The poll, for which The Register claims accuracy to within 4.8 percentage points, indicated that 74 percent of lowans object to restrictions on freshman play and practice. It is worth noting that only 13 percent of those who claim to be University of Iowa athletic fans ever attended classes there. In a separate poll reported the following day, just 34 percent of Iowans approved of how Hunter Rawlings is handling his job at the university, judging him, one supposes, on the single criterion of athletic

ing ovations during his appearance there, shortly after Rawlings' announcement. No discussion, it seems, transpired concerning recent developments in the Ethiopian hunger Crisis.

Then 15 influential members of the mother I-Club met, denounced Rawlings, and even had the temerity to demand that he apologize to Iowans and University of Iowa coaches for insulting "their intellectual efforts and the emphasis placed on college athletics."

On the other hand, the U of I faculty senate supports Rawlings. So do The Register, the lowa Board of Regents, and at least 50 other owans, including me, except I believe his plan should be even more draconian.

Legal, academic smoke and carnage

Rawlings' proposals were a semi-gut-level response to some rather nasty revelations that emerged during the trial of sports agents Nory Walters and Lloyd Bloom, which included testimony from two former Iowa football players, Devon Mitchell and Ronnie Harmon.

The legal strategies got a little vague, but generally the prosecution's idea was to prove that Walters and Bloom aided various athletes in defrauding universities by providing the players with monies while they were still on scholarship (\$54,000 to Harmon). The defense attempted to counter these allegations by trying to show that the universities were of such low mind and spirit that they, themselves, were acting in a fraudulent manner by allowing players on the field who, at best, were students only in the most nominal sense.

Mitchell and Harmon, testifying under immunity-from-prosecution agreements, said they attended the University of Iowa to play football and not much else. As part of the testimony, the two players' transcripts were made public, and these transcripts bore out what Mitchell and Harmon had said about their academic aspirations. For example, Mitchell's

ests in the visual arts, I particularly take issue with that complaint, since watercolor painting

is a fairly demanding medium. Though Walters and Bloom were found guilty of defrauding the University of Michigan and Purdue University, they were judged not guilty of fraud in the Michigan State and Iowa instances.

Lawyers for Walters and Bloom had argued that questionable conduct by the latter two universities made it impossible for them to be defrauded.

One juror, after reviewing the transcripts of Harmon and Mitchell, said: "I thought it was a travesty of higher education. It is appalling."

Apparently she was not moved by the claims

management.

course selections in the first semester of his 1981 freshman year included billiards, bowling, karate, ancient athletics, football, coaching basketball, a vocational education course, and two remedial courses in writing and read-

He rose to the challenge and received a 2.22 grade-point-average, on a 4-point scale, for his efforts. During his last semester at lowa, in 1986, Mitchell enrolled for five courses, withdrew from four, and received an incomplete in "First Aid and CPR." In between, his academic record is what generous institutional officials like to call "spotty."

Harmon's academic record was only slightly better than his performance in the 1986 Rose Bowl, where he fumbled four times. Much derisive snorting has occurred, in particular, over his grade of "D" in a watercolor painting course. As someone with rather serious inter-

Which reminds me of a lawyer story, a true one. I heard it from a friend who sat on a jury.

It seems that a man, who happened to be a lawyer for the Justice Department, was accosted on a Washington subway by a fellow who demanded a dollar. When the lawyer declined to give up the loot, the fellow grabbed the lawyer by the shoulders and said: "You'd better give me the dollar." Another passenger summoned the police and the fellow was arrested for assault. Not exactly Bernhard Goetz, is it?

Anyway, my friend the juror said that the jury was persuaded to bring in a guilty verdict - in what was, after all, a two-bit case -- by the defense attorney who throughout the trial kept referring to her client as "the assail-

If I ever get in serious trouble, I want Brendan Sullivan to defend me. My luck being what it is, not to mention my bank account, I'll probably get the lady who defended the assailant.

For the hundreds, even dozens, of vou who care, I am not going on RAGBRAI this year. I know that I bragged that I would, but as it turned out I have a sore foot and it rained every day when I was trying to get in shape and the dog ate my bicycle. Maybe next year.

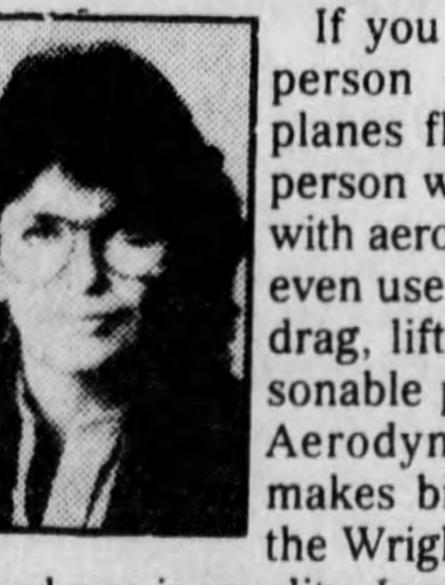
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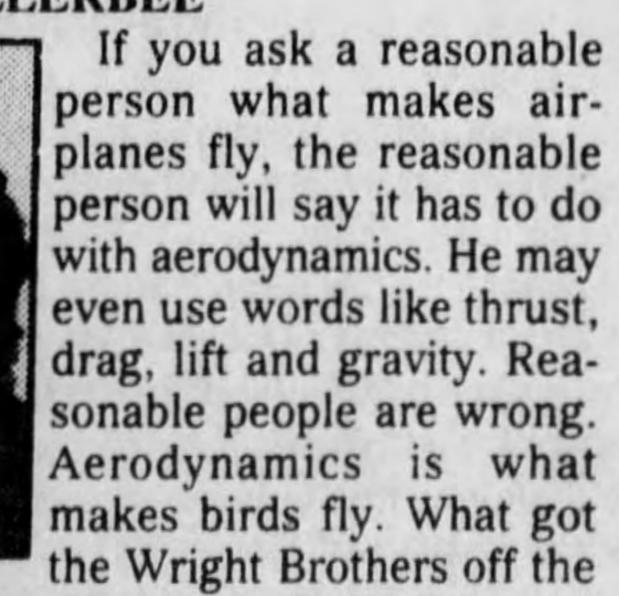
WALLER Please turn to Page 3C

Why inequality is what makes planes fly

AND SO IT GOES

By LINDA ELLERBEE





ground was inequality. Inequality is the cause of all movement. Leonardo Da Vinci said it first. But Judy Garland said it best.

If happy little blue birds fly beyond the rainbow, why, oh, why can't I?

Inequality. It invented the airplane, and even today aviation operates on the basic principle of inequality.

In May, Richard Cotrell refused to fasten his seat belt before his Lufthansa flight landed at London's Heathrow airport. Cotrell even fought with the captain about it, shouting at

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him, "I am a member of Parliament!" Richard Cotrell has been fined \$1,240 because he didn't understand that on an airplane, what counts is not who you are, but where you sit. Richard Cotrell sat in the first-class section. The captain, however, sat in the cockpit.

Another example is that pilots are much, much crazier than most people. This is true. I run a small film-production company. My assistant is a former crop duster, my partner is still a stunt pilot, and yet to look at either one of them, you'd think they had good sense. But I know they don't because I DO.

The first time I soloed

was 25 years ago. It was if I may use that recently corrupted but perfectly fine word - awesome. But it came to me after only a couple of months that there were in this world some pilots I wouldn't ever want to fly

with, and I was one of them.

Being a sane person, I didn't want to die, which is why I stopped flying airplanes and took up wing-walking and hang-gliding, instead. What has this to do with inequality?

It's like this: having once been a female pilot

and still being a female feminist, I pay close attention to the progress or lack of progress of women in aviation (Oh, Lord, here she goes again, her with her feminist angst to grind. Will this woman never quit?).

In 1984, when Sally Ride shuttled off to space, I shouted out with glee. In 1986, when Jeana Yeager and her partner flew non-stop around the world without refueling (26,000 miles in 9 days), I smiled 26 times in one day.

Now Capt. Jacquelyn S. Parker has become the first woman test pilot in the Air Force. Parker was trained to fly experimental, re-

> search and prototype aircraft at that barren piece of nowhere 60 miles north of Los Angeles known as

Edwards Air Force Base, where in 1947 a man named Chuck Yeager (no relation to Jeana) climbed into a Bell X-1 and flew it fast enough to get by the demon who lived in the sky, the one they called the sound barrier.

"Women are now getting the experience and education they need," said Capt. Jacquelyn Parker. "You can erase my name, along with many others in the class, and there's very little difference in our backgrounds."

She's right. If only the same could be said about our attitudes toward women fliers.

Some months ago I wrote a column about the strike at Eastern Airlines. It wasn't what you'd call a love note to Frank Lorenzo. Two weeks later, I got a note from a pilot:

"I have been a Delta Airlines pilot for 13 years and for 6 years I was managing editor of Plane & Pilot & Air Progress magazine. The purpose of this information is to lend background to express our appreciation...."

Naturally, I was flattered that this experienced airline pilot appreciated my thoughts on aviation. Even before I'd finished reading, I'd begun to compose an answer in my head. "Dear Sir: You reminded me why I've always loved pilots, even though they're crazy....'

I never wrote that letter.

You see, the note from the pilot ended with this sentence: "Oh, by the way, my husband is also a Delta pilot. . . . " Inequality?

Dear Valerie: You reminded me why I've always remained a much, much bigger fool than most people.

THE FORUM

A jousting match between college academics, athletics

WALLER

Continued from Page 1C

of **Iowa** assistant athletic director Fred Mims that the two players were eligible at all times and were progressing toward degrees.

While all of this was emerging, two Iowa State University athletes attempted a hold-up at an Ames Burger King. Both men received bullet wounds from the guns of policemen as a result of whatever occurred. One of them, Levin White, has pled guilty to first-degree robbery.

And there was the matter of three U. of I basketball players being treated for substance abuse in the summer of 1988.

Then Time magazine, in its April 3, 1989, edition, reported that basketball player Lafester Rhodes left **Iowa** State with minimal reading and writing skills after playing there from 1984 to 1988. According to former Topeka Sizzlers coach, Art Ross, Rhodes had considerable difficulty in reading and filling out his application form for the team.

Gazing around himself at the smoke and carnage, Hunter Rawlings said, "Enough!" Like Clint Eastwood in one of the old spaghetti westerns, Rawlings rode in, surveyed the situation, and decided the town was worth saving. The hitch is that the town may not want to be saved.



subject, but I'll bow to the need for students to learn something about recreation and how their bodies function along with the thin, left-brained intellectualism that dominates college instruction.

Personally, I learned to play softball by batting against big farmers who could windmill a softball pitch at over 100 miles an hour on dusty Sunday afternoons across the plains of Iowa. But that was another time, I suppose.

Thus, the faculty is to blame for allowing a course in the higher intricacies of slow-pitch softball and similar bits of marshmallow in the catalog. The curriculum committee could have said "no," and it should have. But Fry is being more than a little disingenuous by arguing that athletic advisers simply chose from what is available.

Devon Mitchell's courses during his first and subsequent semesters can only be characterized as a bastardization of everything that going to college means. Those advising Mitchell could have selected a more typical schedule for his first semester, including a basic college mathematics course, something in the humanities and natural sciences, the study of history, and maybe a good, solid piece of work in philosophy.

That's naive, right? Of course it is. Obviously, the athletic department's academic advisers believed that Mitchell could not handle such a standard course load and would have been ineligible. After all, he needed remedial work in reading and writing. The point is, of course, that while living within the rules of the university, selecting courses listed in the schedule, Mitchell's academic advisers carried out a cynical mockery of all that higher education is supposed to mean. Why the mockery? So Mitchell could be eligible. Why should Mitchell be eligible? So the Hawks could use his talents to win games and satisfy the screaming and immature fans who, quite frankly, couldn't care less about Mitchell's course of study and whether he was being prepared for a life beyond football. Hunter Rawlings knows this. What he may not completely grasp is that he is tangled in the clash of two distinct cultures. On the one hand, there are those so bereft of individual skills and personal resources that they must find solace in the performance of young men for whom shaving is a new experience. On the other side are those who believe in the life of the mind and the spirit, who believe in rich self-fulfillment through knowledge and the arts, including the physical arts of recreation. Rawlings belongs to the latter group. So do I. If that makes us elitists, so be it, though I don't think it does. I think it labels us as sane. College athletics is a frenzied animal that slowly and inexorably is devouring itself. I see no lasting answers to be found in tinkering with the present system. Perhaps, as some suggest, a ban on freshman eligibility will help. But I rode a pretty fair long-range jump shot out of high school to a scholarship at the University of Iowa 30 years ago and saw most of the same problems that we have today, even when freshmen were not allowed to join the varsity and athletes were not housed in their own dormitories. In those days, Forest Evashevski, a man to be feared far more than Hayden Fry, stalked the Iowa fieldhouse like a lion, and the academic gazelles ran before him.

The tragic failure of academic system

What's going on here? First of all, the admissions by Mitchell and Harmon that their reasons for attending college had little to do with intellectual growth should not astonish anyone who has the least familiarity with big-time college athletics. There are, of course, athletes who do distinguish themselves academically.

For the most part, however, that is not the case. Thirty hours of practice time per week along with the psychological milieu in which such athletes exist make high achievement extremely difficult. And anyone who believes in the student-athlete concept as it relates to the searing pressure of big-time sports is either dumb or not paying attention or has suffered the kind of lobotomy that results from undue attention to the trivial.

Oh, athletic departments are fond of trotting out figures to show that athletes have higher graduation rates than nonathletes. That's not very convincing, to me at least. I want to know in what fields of study the athletes have graduated, what courses they took, who taught the courses, what grades they received, and something about the overall rigor of the classes. In general, athletics does not mix well with curriculums that demand long hours of laboratory work, contemplation, the pursuit of difficult mathematical proofs, extensive reading lists, and at least six hours of study per day.

But there's something more fundamental at work here. It has to do with immaturity and major flaws in the entire American educational system and, hence, our society. I still remember the words of a humanities professor from Florida who published an essay years ago. In that piece is a sentence that fairly rings with an essential and basic truth. It went something like this: "Anyone who graduates from college and five years later cares whether or not the athletic teams from that college win should consider their education a failure."

I happen to agree, completely, with that statement. Whether or not the University of Northern Iowa or Indiana University, both of which have been kind enough to grant me degrees, wins or loses in athletics means nothing to me. Period. It means nothing to me because it means nothing in general. But it's important to many people. And therein lies a tragedy of our lives and the failure of education in this country. Consider it. Why did Hunter Rawlings receive the kind of abuse that he did and where did it come from? Well, it didn't emanate from the students at the University of lowa. And it didn't come from the faculty. It came from adults who should know better. The scolding that Rawlings has endured gushes mostly from so-called grownups outside the university who know very little about how the academic world really functions or, at least, is supposed to function. Moreover, despite protestations to the contrary about the importance of academics, these critics really don't care how the university carries out its business as long as it provides winning athletic teams and issues degrees and bowl tickets to their children.

The only solution for student athletics

BOUT THE ONLY solution I can see to these stu-A dent-athletics concerns is for the university presidents to agree, in a headlong denial of what they now perceive to be self-interest, that the entire situation is out of hand, athletic revenues and false prestige notwithstanding, and agree to substantial reductions in the level of competition. If we must have competitive sports for entertainment, as our governor believes, the reduction in the level of collegiate competition should be accompanied by the development of a farm system in all major sports similar to that used by baseball (although baseball, unfortunately, also has come to view universities as a cost-free minor league). If fans are willing to support professional athletics in various classes, then a system of major and minor leagues in all popular sports will survive. If such support is not forthcoming, then it will prove that the various implicit subsidies provided by universities and those who support them through taxes or other means are all that really keeps high-powered collegiate athletics alive. That and the rosy illusion that what we are seeing on the field is a group of young folks who have been reading Kant all morning just before arriving at the stadium. That illusion somehow is part of the current nonsense. After all, taxpayers subsidize college athletics in many subtle ways, such as university parking lots, dormitory construction, the use of police and state troopers for crowd control, highway maintenance, insurance, and so forth. I never, for a moment, have believed that athletic departments are entitled to all the revenues they profess to generate. I suspect a first-class audit would disclose indirect costs being incurred all over the place that are not charged to athletic functions. Society pays a substantial portion of the freight, and the so-called profits derived from major sports likely are non-existent or at least less than usually proclaimed. So we can set up professional leagues with no organizational relationships to the schools, rent the existing

university facilities to these teams at a price covering all costs, pay the coaches and players what the market says they're worth, and even toss in the old black-and-gold or purple-and-gold uniforms until the teams can buy their own. They even can keep the team logos and nicknames, for all I care.

What can be done?

Maybe paying coaches salaries comparable to regular faculty and giving them tenure is part of the answer. If, however, you're making \$500,000 from a combination of salary, revenue from summer camps, television shows, and the like, it's going to be pretty difficult to support that proposal. Check with Rick Pitino about that. He recently signed a seven-year contract to coach basketball at the University of Kentucky that will provide him with an estimated income of \$800,000-\$900,000 per year. So ask him, "Rick, don't you think we ought to cut back on the importance of athletics just a little?" Other suggestions offered include the reduction of practice time, having games only on weekends, requiring coaches to snitch on other coaches when violations of standards are observed, and stiffening entrance requirements for athletes. If all of these are adopted, college athletics likely will be reduced to just a cut above club sports, which is about where I think it ought to be. For example, the Iowa Conference still adheres to most of the original intents of collegiate sports, and I applaud them for it. To the extent that athletic coaches have a say in the matter, however, none of this will be done; the disincentives are too great. Though some enlightened coaches sick of fans and boosters and arbitrary dismissals based on win-loss records might be ready to support a subset of the current proposals. The very worst of the recommendations floating around involves treating the players as professionals and simply paying them for their services. I doubt if this is economically feasible, particularly if the level of competition is reduced by other rules. Much more important, such a system is unthinkable in light of what universities proclaim to be their central mission - the pursuit of truth, the education of students, the betterment of our world. Those who favor treating college athletes as professionals do not understand the unholiness of a marriage between athletics as a business and the academic enterprise.

Entertainment is most important

What they're really whining about is the possible loss of personal entertainment and misplaced pride flowing from the skills of young men who actually think these fans care about them as human beings. Former athletes at our universities who did not enter the professional ranks are the first to admit this. They are shocked at the sudden loss of adulation that accompanies the termination of their playing careers. If you're not on the court, you're not on television, and, therefore, you are no longer in our hearts. They are singers with one hit song who fade into that curious oblivion reserved for those who achieve modest athletic prominence.

And the entertainment aspect spills beyond the boundaries of the games themselves. The tailgate parties, the athletic fund-raising dinners, the golfing outings, the restaurant talk — they're all part of it. They form an interlocked social and economic sub-system that has little to do with the intellects and lives of the people who play the games. As one lowa fan put it: "I could walk up to a stranger that had a Hawk cap or jacket on and start an enthusiastic conversation about 'our Hawks.'" So there is that and the fact that football Saturdays in lowa City bring approximately \$1 mil-

and pass and punt while pretending to be serious students.

This probably sounds a little superior. I hope not, for I don't feel superior. I'm pretty much in favor of anything that is not socially destructive or environmentally damaging and that prevents people from injuring themselves or others in the muddle of some existential funk.

What we're talking about is something less than candor, something this side of complete honesty, a kind of lie-witha-wink attitude that is doing disservice to our universities, to our players, and, most of all, to ourselves. We know the state of college athletics is neither good nor true to the academic ideal, and yet we persist in lying to ourselves and each other for the sake of some shallow participation as spectators and worshipers of transitory heroes. We are watchers at the pond, not swimmers.

We'll let the market decide the worth of the enterprise. All right-thinking conservatives, and true Americans in general, certainly will be in favor of this approach. Moreover, there are reasonable, intelligent people who simply treat competitive athletics the way others of us entertain ourselves by watching films or reading or playing the guitar. A market-based plan works for these folks as well, since they can decide whether or not to spend their recreational time and dollars on spectator sports formerly sponsored by universities.

For boosters, the de-academizing of athletics results in a perfect world. They can kick in all the money and cars they want to without the sneaky, annoying intrusions of the NCAA. And no more Proposition 42 worries here. Those who want to become professional athletes can forget about astronomy, concentrate on blocking, and possibly earn at least the minimum wage in the process.

None of what I propose will be any more damaging to the academic spirit than, choking as I say it, renting out the UNI-Dome for car-crunching by a giant, internal-combustion vehicle called "Bigfoot." If there is duplication in athletic events and facilities, a subject seemingly not addressed in the recent study, we'll let the market sort that out, too.

As for disadvantaged young people (read that "athletes") losing the opportunity to attend college, I, for one, am willing to pay more taxes to make this happen, as long as their recruitment and admission is based on intellectual and artistic skills rather than well-developed abilities in what are essentially recreational pastimes that have been taken to ludicrous heights.

- Robert James Waller

believably tiresome. Fry is not the only person who fashioned the world in which he operates. Like the rest of the big-time coaches, he's on a runaway train, and all he can think about is how to hang on, not stop it, even if he wanted to. He's a captive of a sick and failing system. So he was surprised, saw Rawlings' proposals as a threat to his world, and reacted.

Still, even if he made some tactical managerial errors, I admire Hunter Rawlings for his courage, his plain and unabashed guts. It appears he acted almost instinctively from a strong and fundamentally correct set of values concerning the real purpose of a university and the humane treatment of young men who have been sorely misled about what is right, about what really matters in the long run. You don't get that kind of wonderful, lofty and righteous passion out of management textbooks, you don't get it from watching the antics of Donald Trump, and you don't get it from watching college sports as a spectator. As one supporter of Rawlings wrote in a letter to The Register: "If Hunter Rawlings III isn't careful, he'll be ranked with James B. Conant of Harvard and Robert Hutchings of the University of Chicago as one of the great educators of this century." Winding its way through the mess at lowa, and big-time college athletics in general, is the matter of decision making. Bad academic decisions. Rising to his own defense, and rolling out a little of his Texas-boy language at the same time, Hayden Fry said: "But what is Iowa guilty of? Not a cotton-picking thing. Our people are entitled to enroll in a program that the university offers." And: "The supposedly rinky-dink courses are set up by academicians, not the athletic department. At no time in my coaching history has the coaching staff had anything to do with the curriculum."

A line drawn in the sand

In the end, then, Rawlings is correct, though his approach may have been a little crude. He knows, I know, and anybody who has given 10 minutes of serious thought to the situation knows that we have a savage burlesque on our hands. We have a warping of all that universities are supposed to stand for, and should stand for, and this warpage is being supported by those who have no sense of the academic ideal and couldn't care less about it if they did. Yet The Register recently published a series of letters on the University of Iowa situation with a covering headline. that read: "The Last Word on U of I College Athletics vs. Academics." I sincerely hope the editors don't really mean the debate over the proper role of collegiate athletics is, in their minds, closed. The problem has not gone away. The knee ligaments are still tearing, the deceit continues. The chicanery goes on, and, to be fair, it's probably more severe at some other universities than it is at the University of Iowa, though we should not decrease the intensity of our debate because our universities may sin less. Recently, an editor from Sports Illustrated asked me what I thought would happen if it really came down to a firefight between Rawlings and the coaches/fans/politicians faction. Could Rawlings survive? I hesitated for a moment, and I didn't like it that I was hesitating. But I recovered and told him that the Iowa Board of Regents historically has shown courage in supporting academic principles, and that I believe they would stand firm in this matter as well, supporting and encouraging Rawlings in his laudable efforts. Hunter Rawlings has drawn a line in the sand. Those of us who still care about education and truth and the removal of a dangerous and debilitating hypocrisy from our lives should step over it with him. And if the image and pride of Iowa, as a state, is dependent upon the athletic performance of young men who are not old enough to understand what's really going on, then we are less of a people than I once thought we were.

lion per game into town.

lowa stores are full of athletic memorabilia. Caps, jackets, sweatshirts, jogging suits, coffee cups and dozens of other items. University of Iowa trinkets are most favored, followed by those linked with Iowa State and the University of Northern Iowa. And, believe it, there is big money involved here.

In the city where I live, a man painted the mascot emblems of the three state universities on his garage doors. He admitted a bias toward the University of Iowa, and, therefore, made "Herky the Hawk" a little larger than the University of Northern Iowa panther and the Iowa State cyclone or bird or whatever it is. The newspaper that reported this story treated the man's endeavors as cute. I consider that sort of personal attention devoted to college athletic teams prima facie evidence of a foolish and wasted life.

Then, of course, there's television. And the sports magazines and the daily sports sections of major newspapers. And radio. And the sports books of Vegas. It all interlocks and becomes mutually self-supporting. The players play, but the big guys, the money folks, know what's really going on, and it has nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with learning or concern for the personal welfare of young athletes in the long run.

How fans fill empty lives

The foundation upon which this entire superstructure rests is the fan. Without the fan, the person who supposedly watches television advertisements during time-outs, makes donations to athletic funds and buys tickets to the games, the whole business collapses. What's sad and a little frightening is that people's lives apparently are so empty of belief in themselves and the ability to provide their own emotional satisfaction that they must rely on the prowess of young men, boys really, who run and jump and block and tackle

Where Rawlings

went wrong

That's where part of the tragedy rests, for in the interest of our private, selfish enjoyment we also mislead the swimmers about their importance to us and the value of their product. As one old Western-movie gunfighter said when asked what he was doing: "Me? I jus' hang around and keep tellin' lies to children."

A lot of former athletes, and fans, are doing exactly that. So, for our own selfishness, to quiet the voice of our own inadequacies, we lie — to the players, to each other, to ourselves, and, perhaps most damaging, to the very young who hear the applause given by their parents to athletes and strive to receive this applause at all costs, including the cost of their own development as complete human beings.

And that's where Hunter Rawlings got in trouble. You see, he was thinking about the welfare of young athletes and the progress of his university. What he really didn't consider, perhaps, was the larger social and economic structure that supports the nonsense, the lies, the duping of our young.

He also made another mistake, a managerial one. In his haste to take action, to appear decisive, he neglected to meet with his coaches and athletic directors, and maybe the heads of the booster (lord, how I hate that word!) clubs ahead of time. There was too much shock in the way he made the announcement. People do not like nasty surprises, and athletic coaches are no exception to this.

I can understand Hayden Fry's histrionics, though his periodic threats to quit if his wants are not assuaged get un-

A point for Fry

All right, let's grant Fry a minor point on that issue. University curriculum committees, faculty, approve curriculums and individual courses. Ultimately, the lowa Board of Regents grants its approval.

Fry likes to characterize the University of Iowa as a "great university." It is not a great university yet, though it might become one. In addition to more esoteric measures of greatness, no front-rank institution would allow a course in "Advanced Slow Pitch Softball" to be on the books.

I question the value of even a beginning course in that