### Pitching records safe for posterity, reader predicts

To the sports editor:

In the April 21 Big Peach it was stated that Ted Williams believes there isn't a record in the books that will be tougher to break than Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak.

DiMaggio's streak is possible to break. But I don't think Cy Young's 511 career wins and Nolan Ryan's career strike-out record can possibly be broken. Ryan had 5,308 at the end of 1990 season, and he is still going strong -28 Ks in his first 3 games of 1991.

Today's managers use a 5-pitcher rotation, and they bring in relief pitchers in the 8th or 9th innings of almost every game, so no pitcher in the future will get enough starts to win

### LETTERS

512 games, and no pitcher will get to pitch enough innings to strike out as many batters as Ryan has already - let alone his total at career's end - Dan C. Pedersen, 1101 Crocker, Des Moines.

I wish to commend the young lady - Patti Battini - who sang the national anthem at the girls' basketball finals on March 16. She did a beautiful job.

I also appreciated the way the young Galva-Holstein high school wrestling cheerleader sang the anthem the week before, at the beginning of the wrestling competition. We also enjoyed the Voices of Valley (West Des Moines) when they sang March 23 at the boys' basketball finals.

These young people are to be praised for their renditions of a song that means so much to so many of us. We can overlook the comedians like Roseanne Barr who desecrate it, and the pop singers who improvise with their added trills of their own making.

climax of their respective seasons. We would also like to see, and hear, more of our fine musicians performing on TV, in a program all of their own. They also work very hard and deserve more recognition for their achievements. - Fran Stoneking, Schleswig.

The sportscasting job done by Jim Nantz and Billy Packer in the Final Four was the worst that I have ever seen. It was totally biased and made the game unenjoyable for everyone to watch. Or I should say everyone besides Duke fans.

Packer's comments were anything but objective and even degrading at some points. would rather have Dick Vitale than Packer. At least he doesn't favor one team over another. — Kevin Hayes, Des Moines.

Professional basketball and football are unique vocations. The prerequisites would read as follows: "You are required to attend college before you may pursue this career. However you need not acquire a four-year degree for this profession nor is the education directly useful. Athletic skill, potential and savvy are the main necessities. We can help you develop the remaining ingredients."

I can't think of another industry which looks to higher education for its employees but does not evaluate academic persistence or performance.

Perhaps this explains the results from a recent survey on graduation rates published by "The Chronicle of Higher Education." Among Division I-A colleges, 50.3 percent of freshmen students who enrolled in 1984 had graduated by August, 1989, as had 51.1 percent of all athletes. Conversely, 42.5 percent of the football recruits and a scant 31.9 percent of male basketball players had earned a degree within that period. By isolating these latter figures, the overall rate for other athletes would likely approach 60 percent.

Had the majority of participants in these two sports been serious about college, their graduation percentages should actually have been much higher than the norm. Since most were on full scholarships, they were less apt to drop out due to the financial hardship. In addition, their stipends allowed them to stretch a free education out over a five-year time frame. Beyond that, these athletes are afforded an array of academic support services, tutoring privileges and academic skills enhancement that exceed what is provided most other undergraduates.

Major colleges and universities are, and must be, selective academically. They are also the basic recourse any serious football or basketball player has for honing his athletic talents, regardless of his intellectual capacity. Therein lies the problem. - Mark Gries, 3100 Leona Dr., Storm Lake.

The NCAA, in its effort to clean its own house, has enacted some changes which may prove more detrimental to its overall mission. I refer to the reductions in scholarships and in assistant coaches.

By reducing the number of assistant coaches, athletic programs are losing an important ingredient to their overall mix. Combining less practice time with fewer coaches means players will get less individual attention to work on skills, and the overall quality of play will suffer, except at the places that

will invariably cheat.

Reduction of scholarships has implications which reach beyond the obvious arguments of denying opportunities to players. Fewer scholarships means more competition for top level players which will lead to, guess what, more cheating. Fewer scholarships will also mean more playing time for freshmen, something the NCAA should be trying to eliminate If they are serious about academics.

By enacting these rules and claiming reforms, the NCAA is treating the symptoms and not the problem. They need to get serious about reform. - Michael Colter, 200 Dickman Rd. Apt. 207, Des Moines.

The Register invites letters from its readers on topics of interest to other sports tans. Send to Sports Forum, Des Moines Reg-1ster, P.O. Box 957, Des Moines, Iowa, 50304. All letters must be signed and carry an address and phone number for the writer. Chances of publication are best for shorter etters that clearly state a point of view. Letters may be edited:

## Rawlings' once-controversial call for reforms now looks good on field as well as in classroom

By TOM WITOSKY

IOWA CITY, IA. - Two years ago, University of Iowa President Hunter Rawlings shook the state's sports foundations by vowing to make all Hawkeye freshman athletes ineligible for varsity competition regardless of whether any other school did.

Within days, rumors surfaced that big-time alumni were demanding Rawlings be fired or, at minimum, be reined in before he did something to hurt the competitiveness of Iowa's athletic program.

As controversy swirled about him, the 6foot 7-inch former college athlete stood in its eye with the studied calm of the classicist he is. Despite holding the job for less than a year, Rawlings — with a sense of political timing few people gave him credit for - wouldn't be swayed.

'I guess I didn't expect the magnitude or the degree to which the controversy developed, but overall it wasn't all that bad," Rawlings said. "It was an interesting period to go through."

Helped Trigger Reforms

Recently, Rawlings remembered those weeks of controversy with some fondness. Though the clock is still running on the threeyear time limit he gave others to act on the eligibility issue, Rawlings sees intercollegiate athletics as in transition and says the changes are long overdue.

Rawlings exhibits a low-key but unmistakable pride in the role he has played both locally and nationally in the reform of collegiate athletics. To a great degree, Rawlings' salvo brought more attention to college athletic reform than anything else.

"A few of us stood up in the preceding months before reform became fashionable," We do enjoy seeing on TV our fine young | Rawlings said. "I believe that was a key facathletes perform in competitions at the | tor in what we now see as great momentum toward even further reforms."

Since the Iowa furor began, the reform of intercollegiate athletics has become as hot a topic as any in U.S. sports. In recent months, NCAA members have voted to impose limits on the amount of time that can be demanded of student-athletes and on athletic spending that has careered out of control since the mid-

Now, the report of the 22-member Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics has taken center stage since its release last month. Among other things, the report, entitled "Keeping Faith with the Student-Athlete," recommends strong presidential control of athletic departments, higher and more certain academic requirements for student athletes, and greater financial integrity not only from the nation's major college athletic departments, but from the employees of those departments.

More Changes Ahead

For Rawlings, a veteran of athletic controversies, there is hardly an objectionable word in the report. Its value, however, isn't so much in what it recommends, but rather in its push for further change.

"Within the context of reform, the Knight Commission report fits very well," he said. "It is within the reforms we already have passed in January in Nashville and is in the very same direction. It also gives the presidents even more momentum and gives us much more reason to believe the reform process is going to continue."

Moreover, Rawlings said, the report puts the pressure where it belongs - on the college presidents and chancellors and their governing boards. The commission recommends governing boards turn over total control of their athletic departments to the college pres-

Rawlings says he got favorable first-hand experience in the governing board-president relationship following disclosure of Ronnie



Hunter Rawlings, seated, and Hayden Fry exchanged cordial greetings at a banquet soon after Rawlings' then-controversial call for reforms.

Harmon's and Devon Mitchell's embarrassing academic transcripts during the Nor Walters-Lloyd Bloom trial. He said that incident provides a good example of what happens when a chief executive has the support of the governing board.

"There wasn't one hint of dissatisfaction or attempt to influence me from the members of the Board of Regents after I made my comments," Rawlings said. "I knew they were receiving some complaints and expressions of concern, but there wasn't a moment when I thought I didn't have their support."

In the aftermath of the trial, Rawlings also ordered a review by faculty and administration officials of the transcripts of athletes who had attended Iowa during the previous 10 years. From that review, school officials found isolated cases similar to those of Harmon and Mitchell, but nothing to indicate any overall problems.

Rawlings said he was irritated to find even a few of those kind of transcripts.

"The problem was that it raised serious questions about the values of this university," Rawlings said. "As a result, we decided we had to send a strong message that this type of thing would not be tolerated."

Steps Strengthen Program

MAURY WHITE

The combination of Rawlings' stand on freshman eligiblity and the review of transcripts helped soften the negative impact of the transcripts' disclosure. "I don't think this school ever really suffered greatly from a tarnished image," Rawlings said. "Instead, we made it clear immediately what was important to this school and that we would maintain our academic values regardless of how it affected our sports program."

Rawlings ordered several steps be taken, including a requirement that greater attention be given to assuring academic progress among student-athletes. Some critics feared that such action would hurt Iowa's athletic competitiveness.

In fact, the opposite appears to have taken place - something that Rawlings is quick to point out.

"A Rose Bowl appearance, an unexpected NCAA bid for the men's basketball team, an NCAA championship for the wrestling team, a rated softball team and a field hockey team that makes it to the Final Four," Rawlings said. "And that was just this year. I'm not counting the regular season championship last year for the baseball team."

At the same time, Rawlings pointed out, the graduation rates of the men's and women's program have remained high in comparison to their Big Ten counterparts as well as other schools within the NCAA. For example, Rawlings pointed out, the Hawkeye football program is one of only two that can boast a graduation rate equal to or better than the overall student body's.

"It clearly has been a great year for us both in the field and in the classroom," Rawlings said. "It is not every year we have the success we have had and I think it is tribute to this school, its faculty, its coaches and its stu-

What Lies Ahead?

Looking ahead, Rawlings predicts even greater reform efforts on the national level. He also foresees the hiring of a top athletic administrator for the men's program to succeed Bump Elliott, who has announced his retirement.

Rawlings said a decision should be made before long, but declined to provide many details of what type of person will take Elliott's place. He did indicate that the replacement will be someone with experience in intercollegiate athletic administration.

"We are looking for someone who can work effectively and with great integrity," Rawlings said, adding that the new men's athletic director must not only command respect from alumni and coaches, but also be able to work effectively with the Iowa women's program headed by athletic director Christine

Of the national reform effort, Rawlings said it is clear to him that high admission and academic standards will be considered and likely approved at the 1992 NCAA convention to be held in Anaheim. Rawlings said a recent visit with fellow chief executives in Washington, D.C. has cemented that feeling. "Everything I hear indicates that the mo-

mentum is even greater and that the presidents will stick with it at least one more year in a very focused fashion," he said. "You can't expect that level of attention every single year for many years in a row. But I do think we will get another year or two." Of his vow on freshman eligibility, Rawl-

ings repeated that he will be willing to back down if the NCAA makes sufficient progress on academic reforms. That would include raising the Proposition 48 standards to include a higher grade point average in a greater number of college preparatory courses.

"That way we would have freshman ineligibility for those who need it and eligibility for those who are capable of handling it," Rawlings said.

# Athletes get sentimental over favorite old gear

A story entitled "Whips are jockeys favorite piece of racing tack" written for the Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel caught my attention, for no better reason than I would have guessed saddles.

"As a baseball player coddles his bat, a jockey favors a particular whip," wrote Chris Lazzarino. "And as a baseball player can splinter his favorite bat, a whip's life is limit-

"'For some guys, a whip is like a security blanket,' says jockey Jerry Bailey. 'But you learn not to depend on one whip too much, because they can break or get run over by a tractor if you drop it and the outriders can't find it in time."

Consequently, the favorite of the moment is used sparingly, hoarded for the biggest races. Many jockeys even insist on carrying their No. 1 fiberglass whip aboard commercial flights, thereby spawning brisk arguments with security-conscious airline personnel.

While some of the pint-sized humans riding horses professionally may seem direct descendants of the Marquis de Sade, the Frenchman who made whipping infamous, racing wands become favorites because of the noise generated when the leather thong dangling at one end is popped.

A good "popper" produces a sound equivalent to a gun shot, quickly catching the attention of a day-dreaming mount. They tell me trainers don't like horses to be whipped vigorously because some will resent the pain, cease running hard and may never try to run hard again.

#### Favorite Baseball Gear

Lazzarino's story set me musing about favorite articles of equipment in other sports. Starting with baseball, it is true the best hitters coddle a favorite bat. It is just as true

bats break and must be replaced often. Gloves, I believe, qualify as the most enduring item of equipment. Whereas a good hitter might lend a bat to a friend, a good fielder would no more consider sharing his glove

than his wife. The classic gathering of battered leather

came in the 1971 World Series. Brooks Robinson, one of the all-time great third basemen, was with Baltimore. Bill Mazeroski, owner of many fielding records for second baseman, was a Pittsburgh reserve.

Robinson owned a sporting goods store and had access to the best gloves at the lowest prices. Yet, four years previous to the '71 Series he took two new gloves out of stock and traded both for a glove being used by outfielder Dave May.

Being already broken in, May's former glove quickly became Robinson's gamer and he wielded it so well in the 1970 World Series that the Hall of Fame wanted it for display. Brooks agreed to send it when one of his reserve gloves started feeling right. None did, so the glove made another Series appearance in '71. I think it was sent to Cooperstown after

Mazeroski's love affair ran even deeper. Bill arrived in the major leagues in 1956 with two gloves, a gamer and a reserve. No. 1 became a casualty of his greatest moment: the home run in the bottom of the ninth of the seventh game that beat the Yankees, 10-9, and brought the Bucs the title.

Fans poured onto the field and one souvenir-crazed nut stole Mazeroski's glove from the dugout. Bill had to go to No. 2 in '61. He lasted 10 more years. So did the glove: patched and sewn on dozens of times and also held together by prayer.

Recent advances in technology have changed patterns, but golf is a game in which

old friends are not discarded lightly. Not long ago, most stars clung to a favorite driver, a favorite wedge and a favorite putter with the tenacity of small children hanging onto tattered blankets.

These days, tournament players often carry two drivers and three wedges and don't get as locked in on any one club. They also fiddle more with shafts and club heads. By elimination, then, the putter emerges as the No. 1 treasure.

For good putters, that is. Folks who butcher the greens never cease switching, whereas a guy like Ben Crenshaw makes a putter feel wanted. He found a good one as a schoolboy in Austin, Tex., almost 30 years ago. Little Ben (the instrument) is still going strong.

During the 20 years he has been recognized as arguably the PGA Tour's best on the greens, Crenshaw faithfully stroked with that putter. Once in a great while he'd try another, but Little Ben was never far away.

Jack Nicklaus has been known to take White Fang, a onetime favorite, out of a trophy case for a few more days in the sun.

#### Football and Basketball

Football and basketball offer fewer opportunities for lifetime allegiances, although I have read that Hall of Fame passing star Sammy Baugh wore the same dinky shoulder pads throughout a professional career starting in 1937 and lasting through 1952.

Most asked think a good-fitting helmet would be treasured most by those who play the game for a dozen or so years. There is no doubt on the most unfavorite piece of football equipment.

perennially powerful Brigham Young University. "We have to check constantly to see they're being worn. Players hate them, even knowing its dangerous going without."

Particularly in basketball but also in football, obtaining and retaining a certain jersey number is likely the No. 1 treasure. Basketball players simply don't have much gear other than shirts, pants, socks and shoes, all of which must be replaced often.

#### The treasured items range from mitts to putters to teddy bears.

People who heave a shot, throw a discus or javelin, or ride a fiberglass vaulting pole develop fondnesses for favorite instruments. Relay runners coddle favorite batons. Reason must prevail for the world class, though, as personal equipment can't be used in Olympic competition.

Runners, swimmers, divers and gymnasts operate with scant amounts of clothing and equipment. Glenn Patton, Iowa's swimming coach, says comfortable, tight-fitting goggles qualify as that sport's keeper. Divers carefully preserve their favorite chamois skins used to wipe the body after dives.

#### Lucky Charms and Teddy Bears

Often, though, in the minimal-equipment sports, lucky charms become the enduring treasures. If memory serves correctly, Greg Louganis, the best diver the world has yet produced, lugged a teddy bear to competitions as unabashedly as young girls tote dolls.

Tennis players have favorite racquets restrung many times, but racquets do get battered, tired and then retired. Carrying cases don't get slammed around as much and sometimes become The Thing the Player Would Feel Naked Without.

In amateur wrestling, according to Hawkeye Coach Dan Gable, the headgear is the thing and some wear a favorite until it falls "Hip pads," says LaVell Edwards, coach of apart. However, in his brilliant career that peaked with an Olympic title in 1972, THE item never accompanied Gable onto the mat.

> "I had a small isometric rope I carried in a back pocket for quick 10 or 15-minute workouts," he said. "It was given to me by my seventh grade wrestling teacher and I carried it all the way through the Olympic Games. A lot of times, an athlete's treasured item is not known to others."

Ain't it the truth?