

EDITORIAL

String of isolated incidents indicates something is wrong

Every few months another university is confronted with a situation that shakes its athletic program by its very foundations. Tulane dropped its basketball program after a point-shaving scandal. Memphis State's roundballers were ranked number one in the nation when its players began to be ticketed for careless and reckless driving in athletic boosters' cars. The University of Georgia had to pay millions to Jan Kemp after she proved in court that she was fired for refusing to give athletes special treatment. N.C. State has had its share of "problems." Most recently, the University of Maryland has revealed some warts left uncovered until the tragic death of Len Bias.

These seemingly isolated incidents do not even begin to take into account sports programs taken to task for various NCAA violations. Despite the alarming regularity of these disclosures, most of which come to light by accident, they are regarded as unfortunate and isolated instances. There are certainly some schools that do fulfill the letter, as well as the spirit of the rulebook, and every university hopes it may be included in this category. The number of these incidents may suggest that there is something fundamentally wrong with big-time college revenue sports that may not be remedied in the absence of a full reappraisal of the system as a whole.

The NCAA rule book is a thick volume that regulates the activities of athletic programs and covers everything from recruiting to day-to-day operations in minute detail that often verges on the ridiculous. College coaches charged with the task of winning, often under incredible pressure, invariably find ways to circumvent the rulebook.

Winning not only boosts university morale, but maintains athletic budgets often totaling tens of millions of dollars. Winning, especially on television, also boosts applications and provides

national exposure, and, strangely enough, prestige.

The student athlete too, is faced with the task of winning and all that winning brings with it. Filling stadiums, press conferences, television appearances, and as many as 30 roadtrips a year are only a few of the responsibilities shouldered by the athlete-student. They also are compelled to study, go to class and participate in university life. The emphasis on academic achievement rarely seems to be as high on the priority list as winning, perhaps because test scores rarely bring applause. Even more rarely does the student-athlete receive scorn for less than great academic performance. A missed foul shot is more likely to draw boos than failing to graduate.

The athlete-student is up against tremendous odds, especially if his team is successful. A trip to the final four can easily eat up half a semester, and it is probably viewed as a write-off, anyway. "Well, gee, I don't know why I missed that last shot at the buzzer. I was probably thinking about that chemistry quiz I have tomorrow."

Less than one percent of athlete-students ever earn any kind of paycheck in professional sports. Yet, less than half of scholarship athletes ever earn a degree. If the system isn't exploitative, it certainly is a cruel farm system. College shouldn't be the minor leagues, and if the present system is maintained, athletes should at least be paid for their services. If they have no chance of earning a degree, either because they can't due to other pressures or because they shouldn't be in college or because they don't think they'll need to, then there should be alternatives for them. If the villains are the coaches, boosters and fans they should be forced to support the athletes after they lose their eligibility to play or to earn a living.

The Tar Heel

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Constitutional rights sometimes collide

Everyone seems to be aware of his "rights" nowadays. The United States has a lengthy constitution which documents and guarantees the most basic of these rights. Human creatures should be allowed certain freedoms and a free choice in situations except when the choices made infringe on the rights of other individuals to live as they see fit. There are three areas where I see peoples' rights being forfeit as a consequence of another's choice.

First, persons choosing to smoke in enclosed, public places are infringing on the rights of the non-smoking individuals in the area. There is no doubt that it is the free choice of an individual whether to smoke or not. Information is readily available about the hazards of smoking, and smoking materials are available almost anywhere in almost any form. In enclosed areas, individuals surrounding the smoker are forced to inhale the secondary smoke, endure the odor, which may or may not be pleasant, and suffer the consequences of inhaling the smoke. Doctors now can attribute susceptibility to a number of diseases as well as a score of directly related conditions to smoke inhalation, whether primary or secondary. One of seven deaths in this country last year were attributable to smoking or smoke inhalation. Respect for the individual's right to open himself to these hazards is warranted, but the rights of others not to expose themselves to these hazards should also be considered.

A second issue is drinking and driving. When a person chooses to drink, he chooses to impair his judgment and reflexes. He feels that the sensations gained from being drunk are worth all of that. This is that individual's personal right, to choose to drink. However, this right infringes on the rights of other free individuals when that drunk person decides to get behind the wheel of a car. Today, accidents caused by individuals drinking and driving are one of the leading causes of death in America.

Another serious rights infringement is occurring in the area of abortion. The woman's right to not carry a

Bill Logan

The Right Stuff

baby is basic and should be protected. Methods, effective and inexpensive, are available to prevent conception of a child. Even in rape and incest, facilities are available to anyone to assure that conception will not occur, preserving the woman's right. However, many times these simple measures are not taken, and a fetus' life is forfeit to protect the mother's right. This is not seen as a rights infringement by most as the fetus has been devalued by studies saying that it is not a "human life," and therefore is not protected by constitutional precepts. But, just as a death caused by a drunk driver and premature death of innocent individuals from secondary smoke related diseases are atrocities and should not occur in our free society, neither should the death of an innocent fetus in the mother's womb occur in the name of protection of the mother's rights.

In our supposedly free, just society, individuals are slighted every day in the name of someone's "rights." If rights are to be pushed around at all, then all rights need to be pushed around. Smokers need to realize that by exercising their right to light up in a public place, they are taking other persons' right to clean air. People choosing to drink and drive should realize that they are imposing the consequences of their state on those with whom they share the road. And finally, women choosing to not carry a baby need to realize that in aborting that baby, they are denying it the very right to life itself. It is popular to be upset about something; everyone has a cause. Responsibility should be taken by all individuals for both themselves, their actions, and the effect that those actions will have on other free members of our society.

Bill Logan is a senior biology major from Chapel Hill who is a staff writer for the Summer Tar Heel.

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1986 Medal of Honor Citation

Sgt. Felton Crumbunn
U.S. Army

In action at Ft. Benning, Georgia, on June 15, 1986, Sgt. Crumbunn, at great risk to his own personal safety, dove on a lit cigarette, thus saving the lives of his fellow soldiers in the non-smoking section.