

BOARD EDITORIALS

THE END OF AN ERA

The ACC men's basketball tournament was exhilarating, but the addition of new teams means that it won't be the same in the future.

Despite the tragic absence of the Tar Heels, Sunday's championship game of the Atlantic Coast Conference men's basketball tournament was an exciting comeback bout that emphasized all that is great about ACC basketball.

The game, in which the Maryland Terrapins — thankfully — defeated the Duke Blue Devils in overtime, was reminiscent of many previous ACC title contests due to its sheer intensity and dramatic conclusion.

Unfortunately, the controversial ACC expansion risks turning the tournament and the conference itself into a bloated shadow of its former self. The move to 11 teams will take place next year with the addition of Miami and Virginia Tech.

With that malignant growth and the ACC's eventual shift from the very best of the old basketball conferences to a football conference, the league will be losing a great deal of the magic that has captured the hearts of the entire region for more than 50 years.

Next year's addition and the inevitable inclusion of Boston College, which, of course, falls cleanly in

the traditional footstep of the ACC, will result in the tournament slowly becoming a 12-team affair.

The added travel commitments in a conference that stretches from Boston to Miami could prove harmful to student-athletes from every conference school.

With the conclusion of this conference season, the round-robin format that consistently reveals the ACC's best team will no longer be in use.

And with 11 or 12 teams, coaches would have to sacrifice valuable out-of-conference games to continue the practice of playing each team in the conference twice.

Furthermore, the expanded ACC includes schools that are perennially powerful in the world of college football but water down the level of competition during the basketball season.

Miami, Virginia Tech and Boston College are not known for their basketball legacies, to say the least.

While the new and not-so-improved ACC potentially could bring in loads of money, it regrettably signals the end of an era.

The old ACC will be sorely missed.

POORLY TIMED CUT

By reducing the amount of tobacco it will buy from N.C. farmers, R.J. Reynolds will injure the state that has been so supportive of it.

Tobacco giant R.J. Reynolds Inc. has a long history in North Carolina. Even as the tobacco industry has had to face increasing hardship, the company has supported North Carolina's economy strongly in the form of both jobs and revenue for the state.

In turn, North Carolina provides the stalwart Winston-Salem-based operation with a productive farming community and a tax-friendly business environment. Just last year, the N.C. General Assembly provided R.J. Reynolds with \$126 million in tax cuts.

Lawmakers passed one of those cuts, a \$10 million credit on exported products, as recently as December. However, despite this hospitable treatment by the people of North Carolina, R.J. Reynolds announced that it is planning to reduce its leaf purchase from N.C. farmers to about half of last year's amount.

R.J. Reynolds cites business realities and declining cigarette sales as the primary reasons for its decision. But considering the company's recent tax breaks, this represents a disingenuous decision by R.J. Reynolds at the very least.

Lawmakers should repeal the recent tax cuts for R.J. Reynolds until the company keeps the purchasing promise that many farmers, not to mention the state's economy as a whole, still are depending on.

One cause of the reduction in R.J. Reynolds' planned purchase amount is the availability of cheaper overseas products and labor. If it bases its decisions purely on the cold amounts of a balance sheet, the company has no business incentive to stay committed to the domestic tobacco leaf.

Yet once a company benefits not only from good hospitality but also from a healthy dose of corporate welfare in the form of tax breaks and subsidies, both the state and its workers deserve more loyalty.

North Carolina still is reeling from the massive exportation of manufacturing jobs to cheaper, overseas markets. With its decision, R.J. Reynolds appears simultaneously to be relying on cheap overseas products and benefiting from an extremely amicable local tax policy.

The company simply can't have it both ways. Until it keeps its promise to North Carolina's tobacco farmers, R.J. Reynolds does not deserve its tax breaks.

ART FOR STUDENTS

Chapel Hill High School officials should not institute guidelines for the murals and other art that cover the walls of the school's hallways.

Chapel Hill High School is a lot more colorful than most other institutions of secondary education.

Within the school's main building, many walls are covered with artwork supplied by the students themselves. A number of the murals have content that is related directly to the subject matter, from history to physics, being taught in nearby classrooms. Other murals don't.

According to The Chapel Hill News, critics of the "anything goes" nature of mural painting at the high school maintain that some of the works are eyesores and that use of famous cartoon characters on the walls could be considered copyright infringement.

But students aren't making money from these drawings and writings, and what connects all of the wall decorations is the fact that they represent a healthy opportunity for students to express themselves. It would be impossible to quantify, but CHHS students' ability to decorate the walls they walk past every day likely contributes to a level of comfort that could lead to improved learning.

Stifling any of that artistic expression — and it is artistic, regardless of how much talent is involved or how pleasing each piece is to the eye — would damage what has become an open atmosphere at CHHS.

The placement on school walls of those drawings or writings that are constructed poorly or are incomplete is as justified as that of the better-looking examples. It can be argued that any visual manifestation of an individual's thoughts, ideas or emotions is art.

However, certain rules, regulations that are in line with existing school policies, still should be enforced. In particular, the artwork shouldn't include any profane or offensive elements. Free speech doesn't apply in this case because the physical walls are the property of the state. Therefore, officials have the right to paint over murals if they see fit.

Nevertheless, these drawings and writings are all examples of students expressing themselves. To create guidelines for what can and can't remain on the walls now would be a step backward.

CHHS administrators should let the students paint their pictures — and leave those kids alone.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions of solely The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board, and were reached after open debate. The board consists of seven board members, the editorial page associate editor, the editorial page editor and the DTH editor. The 2003-04 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

READERS' FORUM

Applications available for student government posts

TO THE EDITOR:

Apply to be an officer in student government. We are currently looking for dedicated, qualified people to fill the following officer positions: student body vice president, student body treasurer and student body secretary.

You can find officer applications and more information on the student government Web site at <http://www.unc.edu/studentgovt>. Due to the extended election period this year, applications are due very soon: Friday, March 19. If you have any questions, please contact me at calabria@email.unc.edu.

Matt Calabria
Student Body President-elect

Claim about faculty hiring practices is without merit

TO THE EDITOR:

In his Viewpoint column, "Every opinion deserves respect," Michael McKnight charges that across American the forces of political correctness "deny jobs and tenure to faculty members who don't hold the correct political views."

I must assume that Mr. McKnight did not have Carolina on his mind when he wrote that.

As a member of the Chancellor's Advisory Committee, I have participated in review of hundreds of

faculty appointments and promotions.

I have never seen reference to political affiliation or political ideology on any candidate's résumé, nor in any letters evaluating his or her suitability for tenure or promotion.

In my experience, those factors have never played a part in any tenure or promotion decision at Carolina.

If anyone is aware of such instances, I invite them to bring the facts to the attention of the appropriate academic officials and the faculty's elected Committee on Appointments, Promotions, and Tenure.

I trust we all understand that blanket charges of suspected bias without documentation do a grave and undeserved disservice to the University and those of us to whose care its future has been entrusted.

Joseph S. Ferrell
Professor

Public Law and Government
Secretary of the Faculty

Dell program isn't offering a true deal for its computer

TO THE EDITOR:

In response to Tuesday's cover article "Deal to bring Dells to masses," I do not see how this is newsworthy. I have worked in a computer store for many years, and a functioning computer with similar or better specifications can be

had almost anywhere for a similar price.

Dell is not doing University employees or students any favors by offering a computer and printer for a "mere" \$500, as this is the market price for the general public. Dell's own Web site offers home systems starting at \$449.

The Dell University Program has far more to do with Dell's bottom line than it does with helping the University or increasing access to technology, which is what the article seemed to state.

Justin Wade
Sophomore
Business

UNC should stop the sale of cigarettes at Circus Room

TO THE EDITOR:

I am glad that (as reported on March 16) the UNC Health Care System has launched a new program to help UNC Hospitals patients to quit smoking. My father and grandfather suffered serious illnesses partly as a result of a lifetime of heavy smoking.

But if UNC was serious about discouraging people under its care from smoking, then UNC might begin by ceasing to sell tobacco products in the "Circus Room" student store (located near Jackson Hall). Does the University really want to turn a profit from this addiction and the suffering and

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"All change is not growth, as all movement is not forward."

ELLEN GLASGOW, NOVELIST

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Fitz Holladay, wfollad@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

Madrid bombings spotlight sobering reality of terrorism

When I hopped the pond to Spain last January for a semester abroad, I thought I'd be in a safer place than the United States.

Here at home, terror alerts were becoming more routine, and the war drums beat louder as we marched toward an Iraq invasion.

Spain was the last place terrorists would strike, or so I thought. Even while I was there, I generally felt at peace. As I walked the streets of Seville, the city where I lived and studied, I shook off the occasional dirty glare from locals disgusted with my obviously American self.

And after being trapped in a spirited Madrid war protest, I came away little more than slightly unsettled.

But almost a year to the day of that protest, Madrid's people and their brothers and sisters in other Spanish cities took to the streets for more condemnation.

This context was different but not entirely.

Anger and fear weave these events together, just as they rallied the proud people of Spain.

Last week's coordinated commuter train bombings in the Spanish capital of Madrid killed more than 200 people and injured another 1,500, thrusting a low profile European nation into worldwide spotlight and causing us to wonder, as we always do, why these things happen.

Now, I'm scratching my head, questioning just how safe I was over there and realizing my naive view of an undeserved peace of mind.

I am lucky and fortunate that I was far from that tragedy. And I'm now fully aware that there's no magical place where we're untouchable from the evils of ter-



MICHAEL DAVIS
COUNTRY FEEDBACK

rorists, who truly believe killing innocent people is the way to affect change.

For Spaniards, terrorism has long been a part of life — not a constant preoccupation, but an unsettling reality that has hit the nation from time to time. The organization ETA, which wants the northern Basque province near France to gain autonomy, has used bombings and kidnappings to push its radical platform but has never done anything quite like this.

Given the group's low profile and lack of sophistication, it didn't make much sense for Spanish officials to blame the group for Thursday's bombings immediately. But who else could be responsible?

Most evidence now points toward some offshoot of al-Qaida. And Spaniards now are waking up to the reality that they, too, are victims of global terrorism.

They're waking up with anger and fear, just as we did. They wanted no part in the Iraq war: polls conducted last year showed that more than three of every four Spaniards opposed the invasion.

All ages took to the streets leading up to and during the conflict. The mood toward U.S. foreign policy was of disgust as they gathered and chanted. Yet the government decided to side with the United States, sending some forces to the region.

About the only two Spaniards I

met who supported the war and Spain's participation in it were the older couple with whom I boarded. Staunch conservatives, they viewed the campaign to depose Saddam Hussein as a necessity toward a greater good.

Now, after experiencing the ripples of their nation's most devastating terrorist attack, I bet even those two are doubting their hawkish sentiments.

Spain's alliance with the United States clearly positioned the country as another target for al-Qaida. The people didn't ask for this.

And no one saw it coming. Just as Americans gave terrorism on our soil little thought prior to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Spaniards considered themselves safe.

Things are changing. On Sunday, the nation, alarmed and volatile after the bombings, voted out the sitting Popular Party that backed the Iraq war in favor of the anti-war Socialist Party.

Some claim a connection between the bombings and the scheduled elections that quickly followed. Regardless, the prime minister-elect has pledged to remove Spanish troops from Iraq.

From new foreign policy to a likely dip in tourism, the country's biggest industry, Spain will change slowly as it continues to grieve.

We're all waking up, but we're all in this together: An attack on one is an attack on all. After Spain's recent misfortunes, international unity could not be more important than now.

It's much needed as we scratch our heads in disbelief. As we question our prior assumptions.

And as we once again evaluate our safety.

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