The Daily Tar Heel

95th year of editorial freedom

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Scales tip for system athletes

board opinion

UNC-system officials have come under fire recently to ensure that both parts of the term "student-athlete" are fulfilled for participants in its athletic programs.

The pressure has yielded results. Reports released last week by 13 system schools showed some progress in enforcing admissions standards and to a lesser degree, improving graduation rates for athletes.

At UNC-Chapel Hill, an average of 17 student-athletes were admitted as exceptions each year from 1980 to 1984. In 1986, eight exceptions were admitted; this year, there were seven.

Although higher admissions standards are a definite improvement, graduation rates belie the soundness of the system's commitment to an academically balanced program.

For UNC-Chapel Hill, rates were mixed. Of the 1981 freshmen football class, almost 70 percent graduated by 1986, compared to 32 percent for the previous class. This rate nearly matches that for all freshmen, including athletes.

Yet football stands as the exception. For men's basketball, only one of the players recruited in 1981 graduated in five years. For all sports, only 59 percent of all student-athletes recruited in 1981 graduated by 1986.

It is disturbing that the highest graduation rates of all the schools are nothing short of mediocre, yet were produced by the most exemplary campus in the UNC system. Before administrators sing praises for the slight improvements, they should realize that much work lies ahead.

As East Carolina University shows, a school may regress if efforts to improve the student-athlete's experience fall by the wayside. Only 5 percent of football players recruited at ECU in 1981 graduated in five years. Also, the school gave more admissions exceptions to football and men's basketball players this fall than it did last year.

Higher graduation rates alone do not absolve the UNC system of tipping the scales on the balance between academics and athletics. The improvements mean that either student-athletes have been encouraged to do as well in the classroom as on the field, or that athletic departments have made it easier for their charges to slip through the system.

The school that values a student-athlete only for his or her ability to add points to the scoreboard has not earned the title "university."

AIDS issue overwhelms rally

There were over 200,000 marchers, some singing "We shall overcome." From a distance the images and sounds harkened to the civil rights convergence on Washington in the 1960s. On Sunday, it was a gay rights march.

The gay community was able to mobilize 200,000 people in its support because of AIDS. Since the disease, gays have found themselves allied with numbers of health care specialists, politicians and entertainers — groups that had avoided making strong public stands about them before. Consequently, doors have opened for gays.

President Reagan's summer appointment of a gay man to an advisory council resulted only because the council dealt with AIDS. But the fact that an individual achieved a position not because he concealed his sexual preference, but because he revealed it, was a boost to the movement.

Revealing one's homosexuality remains a matter of fierce pride in the gay movement. And as the spectre of AIDS looms perilously closer, more homosexuals are vocalizing their membership and seeking support.

Gays have earned support for their work with AIDS. They were the first to act in response to a disease that threatens the entire nation. Although they acted because the disease affected them most immediately, by assuming the leadership they showed that they were not the slack-wristed interior designers or leather-garbed hairdressers as mainstream America had seen them.

Moreover, gays have shattered stereotypes by taking the AIDS issue and pointing out that there is no single type at high risk for the disease. Anyone can get it.

But AIDS has had a double effect on the gay movement. While mobilizing support, it has also been severely limiting, causing a backlash of fear. Gays cannot deny that they, along with intravenous drug users, are the highest risk group.

No matter how they try, gays cannot assuage the homophobia already prevalent in society. Americans may realize that they must act to stanch the AIDS epidemic, but many will not forgive the group that, by association, has become a central AIDS focus.

Not only does the disease then cast almost evil connotations on the gay movement, it overwhelms the movement's other causes. The 200,000 who showed up in Washington on Sunday were not there to demand gay rights. They were there to demand AIDS research. When and if AIDS ever goes, so will the masses. Until then, gays are inevitably tied to the greatest bane of this era. **— Jon Rust**

non sequitur

Perfecting alarm clock torture tactics

Alarm clocks are terrible instruments of torture for college students, and have to be the No. 1 cause of roommate strife in colleges across America.

Each alarm clock makes a certain noise, which is burned into its owner's memory. Even when the clock goes off when one is wide awake, it is a disgusting sound, reminiscient of all those 8 o'clock classes after three hours of sleep.

Years of conditioning create a sick feeling in the bowels at the sound of that cheesy buzzer or those hiss-filled speakers belting out Huey Lewis, no matter what the time of day.

If the sound of an alarm causes pain during the day, it is nothing compared to the dull hatred felt when it goes off in the morning. There is a special kind of lethargic panic associated with realizing, "That's it. No more sleep today."

All of your life, you have tortured yourself with an alarm clock of one description or another. But in college, for the first time you have to deal with someone else's clock.

If your roommate's clock is a bell or buzzer you can count yourself lucky. These kinds of clocks don't have those wretched snooze alarms. Every morning, some roommates repeatedly hit the snooze buttons on their radios, catching those crucial four minutes of sleep that can make or break a day.

Even worse than the snooze button roomies are the ones who listen to the radio for 20 minutes every morning, before finally turning it off.

After the 20 seconds of listening to "The Morning Zoo," when you don't have to be up for hours, you will grit your teeth so hard your face will hurt. Needless to say, this kind of tension eventually erupts into an early morning shouting match.

Never share an alarm clock with your roommate. Invariably, you or he will set it wrong the day of your midterm, and the resulting fight will make past battles pale in comparison. You might even invent some new curses.

Alarm clocks with snooze buttons often also have sleep buttons. This feature, designed by sadists, allows roommates to fall asleep to the radio, which will turn itself off after a set period of time.

Since it is University policy never to put two roommates together who both like to fall asleep to the sound of music, somebody eventually must make a sacrifice in this situation.

Sleeping with a Walkman is no solution. Eventually the cord wraps around your neck, and you wake up choking. That is, if your roommate didn't get to you first.

Readers' Forum

Performance Art comes down South

Sean Rowe
Staff Columnist

The lights go down. The space music comes up: sounds of trickling water and wind chimes, the clacking of bones. Marilyn Arsem comes out onstage wearing a big black cloak. She is six feet tall and her hair is three feet long. *This woman looks strange. She looks like a witch.*

A large bulge develops beneath her cloak at crotch level. *What is that?* The bulge reveals itself, peeks out from the folds of the cloak. It is a fish, a real fish, a real eight-pound, $12 puppydrum, and it smells like a real fish.

With the help of the artist the fish swims around the periphery of the stage, peering out at the audience as through the glass wall of an aquarium. Arsem lays the fish down in a small crib on the floor.

She goes to a table and begins to knead a lump of dough. There is a wine glass on the table with a big clump of human hair in it. *It's her hair.* She begins to beat the dough furiously, almost knocking over the table, grunting and gasping. The audience doesn't know what to do or expect. They have paid $5 apiece to see this. *Is she going to knead that cupfull of hair into the dough? My God. She is.*

She puts the hair-bread loaf on a pan, shapes it into the unmistakable form of a penis, and pops it in a toaster oven, stage left. She picks up the puppydrum from the crib and sits down in a rocking chair. For the next 15 minutes she proceeds to sew chicken legs onto the fish, delivering an extemporaneous monologue about her first trip to the South.

The audience learns that Arsem generally buys her fish at a Chinese market in Boston. Finding a fresh, ungutted fish in Chapel Hill was kind of tough, but Squid's restaurant finally sold her one. Good chicken feet were even harder to come by, and just when she was about to have them Federal Expressed from Boston, someone took her to Piggly Wiggly. Piggly Wiggly was a new experience for Arsem, as was barbecue and hushpuppies. But it appears Arsem is open to new experiences.

She finishes sewing on the chicken legs, and takes the fish for a walk around stage. Then she sews on some wings and hangs the puppydrum to roost from the ceiling on a wire. The bread is done. She takes it out of the toaster oven. She breaks the loaf into four hairy, steaming portions and puts them on plates on the table. There is a white pitcher on the table filled with *leaping lizards, it's blood.* She slowly fills the wine glass with blood and continues pouring until the glass overflows and blood covers the white tablecloth and leaks down onto the floor. The lights are going down as she pours. *What does it mean?*

At the reception afterward, in a loft down the street from Carrboro's new million-dollar ArtsCenter, something seems very wrong. Arsem is neither in custody nor wearing a straitjacket. She is smiling and chatting amiably with her audience, looking around at the paintings. One art enthusiast asks her, "Have you ever worked with a rotting fish?"

"Yes, but not on purpose," says Arsem. "Someone once had to leave a performance because they were going to throw up. I felt really bad about that."

"What happens to the fish after the performance?"

"Well, usually a member of the company takes it home and cooks it."

The company Arsem refers to is Mobilus Inc., an experimental performance group she founded 11 years ago. One way she has described the purpose of the group is that it does "research and development in the arts." Besides being director of the company, Arsem teaches Performance Art at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

I went up to Arsem, kind of in awe, and said, "It's a good thing you didn't try to sew chicken feet on a catfish."

"Catfish?"

"Yeah, they're really tough. Some people skin 'em with pliers."

"Catfish. Hmm."

"Can I ask you the obligatory rhetorical-journalist question?"

"Sure."

"What do you think Performance Art is?"

"Well, the only definition I've been able to come up with that I'm prepared to use is this: an action conceived and executed by an artist in front of an audience."

Good enough. Art critics have for more than a decade been demanding of Performance Art a definition, a defense, a methodology or manifesto, and have wound up missing the point. In the words of essayist Dick Higgins, Performance Art, with its radical emphasis on art process rather than the production of art objects, makes new and interesting experiences possible, which is ultimately the best justification for an innovation in art.

Sean Rowe is a senior journalism major from Douglas, Ga.

Leave out personal attacks

To the editor:

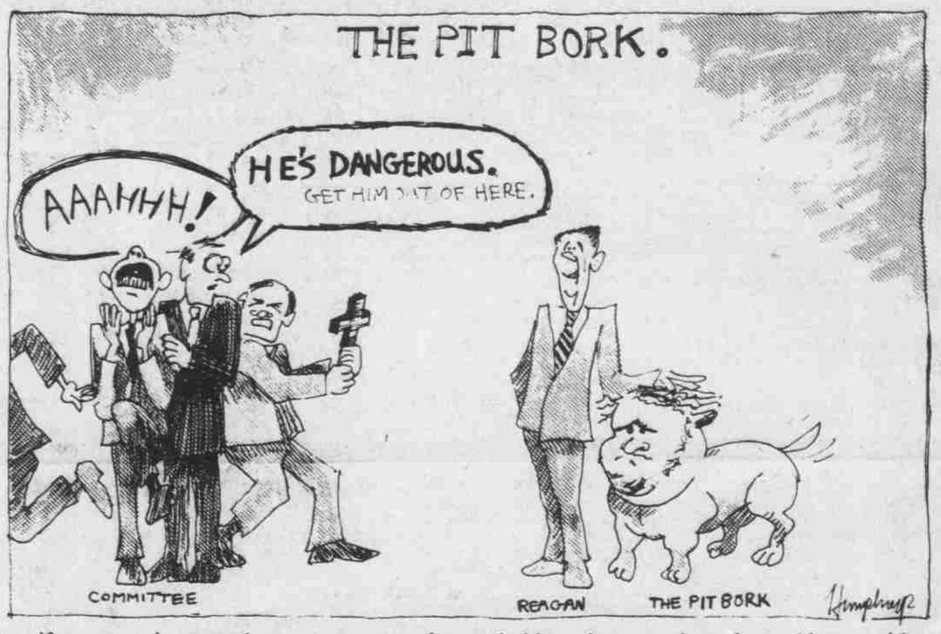
I found myself particularly offended by Kelli Smith-English's letter of Oct. 8, "Just say no to U2 concert." To begin, I do not feel that this forum is the place to ridicule previous contributors by speculating on their clothing or pastimes, or by mocking their role at this university. I'm not attempting to win a journalism award with this letter, as I doubt those other authors were — I'm merely expressing my opinion.

Prepared by the childish and insulting opening paragraph, I was not surprised by the contents that followed. Smith-English recommends that U2 fans who are disappointed by the University's decision to not host the internationally popular band go see a symphony orchestra. She also suggests that these notions of "auditory diversion" may offer "insight, enhancement, enlightenment, enjoyment." Well, isn't the place where one finds such elements dependent on individual tastes? I'm sure many students would have found these qualities at the U2 concert, just as others may find them at a function of the UNC Concert Series. It is all a matter of preference — a very important personal liberty.

Judging by her description of the concert that won't be, it is evident that Smith-English has never attended a concert at the Dean Dome. I found a great deal of control at the two shows I saw there. So much in fact, I felt like I might have been sitting in class or taking a test with all the monitors lurking about — all set to put me in my assigned seat if dare I dance into the aisle. Further, what 20,000 rowdy fans? I would describe the crowd as awake, maybe.

Finally, I would like to ask that if anyone is moved to counter my opinions, feel free, but please limit criticisms to content and leave me and what you don't know about me out of it.

SUSAN DICKSON
Senior
RTVMP



Don't cast editorial stones

To the editor:

Perhaps we who address letters to the DTH benefit from an unfair advantage: We can react freely to articles we find offensive, while editorialists are responsible for composition of an original opinion. I was so dismayed by Oct. 9's editorial "A university in need of a soul," however, that I feel compelled to respond. It attempts to critique the "facelessness of the undergraduate program" at the University and urges students to make their feelings known in the search of a new chancellor. It's unfortunate effect is rather a muddling of the undergraduate issue, and its poor argumentation probably makes trustees wonder if even one student merits a position on the committee to choose Chancellor Christopher Fordham's successor.

First, I find it difficult to understand the causal relationship between horrific conditions ("a blockhouse of a dorm," "uncomfortable seats in drab rooms") and an unfulfilling academic experience. Conspicuously absent was any complaint about Lenoir Hall, which weighs equally heavily in the quality of our collective academic experience, but the writer did manage to craft the biting accusation that "the Student Union resembles a badly designed shopping mall."

Predictably, students are absolved from blame for this horrible mess, though we are reminded of professors who complain that few students come to visit during their office hours.

Perhaps the editorialist spends too much time discussing Joyce in the Pit and has failed to notice the wealth of opportunities, academic and otherwise, available to all students here. Almost without exception, my professors have encouraged student/faculty interaction and have responded favorably to suggestions for contact outside the classroom.

Ultimately, the writer must realize that cries for a chancellor who will rescue us from an imaginary undergraduate malaise rings of defeatism. I agree that we must continue to press for improvement in the undergraduate program, but such an inane critique of what we already have simply damages the credibility of future student comment.

I think the DTH owes an apology to the students and faculty who make campus such an engaging atmosphere for undergraduate studies. Opportunities abound for an enriching academic experience, but they must be pursued with vigor. If in fact such a pursuit is fruitless, then let the editorialist cast the first rhetorical stone, at the Student Union or anywhere else.

JERRY HORNER
Senior
History/French

PlayMakers plays douse passion for theater

To the editor:

Although in the past I haven't felt passionately enough about any issues to write a letter, I do feel passionately about theater.

When I first came to UNC in 1983, I attended every play produced by PlayMakers Repertory Company. At the time, the company's director was Greg Boyd, and I was never disappointed with what I experienced in the darkened auditorium of Paul Green Theater.

Indeed, of all the productions I saw during his tenure were entirely worthy of the title "professional." Which brings me to my disappointment with the current director of PRC, David Hammond.

Hammond came to the company with blazing credentials from the Yale School of Drama, American Conservatory Theatre and the Juilliard Theatre Centre. When he arrived I, like all the other avid PRC supporters, anxiously awaited his first production. Disappointingly, not a single production of his has risen above the level of mediocrity, at least if his work is to be ranked with that of other professional directors.

The recent "Romeo and Juliet" is a case in point. First, the ranting and raving with which the actors' lines were delivered was absolutely offensive. Sure, the play does call for some ranting and raving, especially by the adolescents and their often adolescent-behaving parents. But in this production almost everyone, aside from the Nurse, Mercutio and Peter, was continually yelling, to the effect that after a while the audience no longer heard what was being said. The result was so strained and unnatural that almost none of the actors seemed to be speaking with each other, but instead seemed to be simply delivering lines.

Another weakness was the staging. On the night that I saw the show, the actors made substantial use of only two areas of the stage — the middle of the thrust and the balcony. If Hammond's idea in having them do so was to make the action visible to as many members of the audience as possible, then why did he have two actors speaking together nearly always stand with their backs to one entire side of the audience, and so close together that the audience could scarcely see the face or body of the other?

For all these reasons, and more, the production failed miserably as a professional endeavor. This failure is not, I feel certain, the fault of the actors who obviously possess a great deal of individual talent. What they lack is a director — someone with insight and creative vision who can put their talents to good use. Without that vision — that artistic insight and understanding that helps the audience make discoveries about themselves as well as the characters — one cannot be a good director. Hammond must have had it at one point, or he never would have come as far as he has. My only hope is that he finds it again. Soon.

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