

## MAINTAINING THE STUDENT IN THE STUDENT-ATHLETE

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I am so pleased to be speaking to you today. To say I am honored to have been asked to be your keynote speaker only makes this privilege more important.

Sport and the Law — sport and society. When I was growing up, those terms were rarely intermingled. Now I get at least one interview request each day on the topic. There are athletes in trouble with the law, owners and players in the courts, and presidential mediators. There are reporters asking not if the law and sport can be mingled, but if student and athlete can be. We have come a long way. And that was before O.J. Simpson faced the law.

It is seemingly the ultimate battleground for everyone. Depending on the expert legal consultant of your choice, it pitches the law versus sport; women versus men; blacks versus whites; everyone versus Asians; writers who glorify sports versus the ones who tear its value down. There is a lot to comprehend here - the vision of the future is obscured. For this morning, let me be your barometer. I will not speak as a dispassionate observer but as a person who was taught that, armed with information, one can help to affect change.

### THE SENSATIONALISM OF SPORTS

Within the past three weeks, I addressed the NASPS and the NAESP annual conferences. There were people from Manhattan, St. Peter's, Weber State, Mt. St. Mary's, Texas Southern and Gonzaga, any of a dozen schools which were immersed last month in the NCAA College Basketball Tournament. I challenged them that their respective campuses had rarely

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been so excited, so alive, and so together. They were part of the glory. They all did it right to get there.

In the women's tournament, consider that the University of Connecticut women flew back to Hartford on a Monday night where an estimated 5,000 fans were waiting at Bradley International Airport. Connecticut Governor John Roland gave all the players roses as they stepped off the plane. Entire towns turned out along the thirty mile ride back to their Storrs campus. It was the antidote for the incongruous O.J. Simpson Bronco ride through Los Angeles. Blacks and whites, men and boys, women and girls, and octogenarians and teenagers lined I-95 and the last 7.5 miles of the journey on Storrs Road. Townsfolk from Vernon, Manchester and South Windsor formed big crowds along the road. Just as moving as the throngs was the lone man on top of a steep hill on his mountain bike, holding a sign telling the team he loved them.

I also challenged them, however, that if they were not already seduced, they were a step away from seduction. Each school had reached the goal of the tournament and now they would want to go back. That moment is when the problems start.

### THE PROBLEM IN SOCIETY

Fourteen of the schools in the tournament were on the list of the fifty worst graduation rates for blacks on men's teams. To avoid the list, you merely had to graduate fourteen percent. I focus on men's teams because most problems are there:

\* Of the fourteen, seven graduated no blacks at all.

\* Thirty of the fifty graduated no black athletes, as noted in the 1994 NCAA Division I Graduation Rates Report for freshmen entering in 1984-1987.

What greater ethical issue could there be in college sport? Ethics and integrity are words we toss about in college sports with great ease. Those of us who have academic or legal backgrounds frequently use them with disdain when we think about programs that have run wild.

At the same time, we talk about issues like racism, sexism, drug abuse, abuse of women, and violence in our country as if we are doing all we can. I can tell you that, as we sit here in my home town, that we are not doing enough and that, by working together with our athletic departments, we can do

more. Our society is unraveling at a breakneck pace and we must do more to help our youth survive. We must include our athletic departments rather than exclude them.

In 1990, Louis Harris completed a landmark study entitled "Youth Attitudes on Racism." The study clearly showed how far racism had spread among our youth — that our children have learned how to hate. Yet it also showed their desire to participate in changing that society. Athletes were the overwhelming first choice of young people in terms of whom they wanted to hear socially relevant messages from at that time.

An update by Harris was completed in June of 1993. According to the study, the incidents of racial, religious and gender confrontations have risen significantly since 1990 as stress from violence and prejudice pervades the lives of many young people today:

- \* Three-quarters (seventy-five percent) of all students surveyed reported seeing or hearing about racially or religiously motivated confrontations very or somewhat often, up from fifty-seven percent in the 1990 survey.

- \* A staggering fifty-four percent of black students reported being the target of a racial incident, up from forty-six percent in the 1990 survey.

Ask most blacks what the affirmative action debate is about and they will tell you that it is about race. Some things to think about include:

- \* In 1993, white Americans gained 71,140 jobs; African Americans lost 59,479 jobs to down-sizing.

- \* African Americans were three times as likely to lose their jobs in spite of holding less than ten percent of the total job population.

Our schools are not safe havens for our children. Nearly one quarter of all high school students worry about being physically attacked in or on their way to school. Our children have not only learned how to hate, but they are at war with each other. As an example:

- \* Twenty-one percent of Massachusetts high school students carry weapons to school; Maui, nineteen percent.

- \* 2,000 students are physically assaulted on school grounds each hour.

- \* High school students across America collectively belong to 1,500 gangs.

- \* In the Children's Defense Fund 1994 annual report, a child is killed by a gun every two hours in America, and more children

have died from guns in the last decade than American soldiers in Vietnam.

My family was recently in Atlanta. Our waitress there said she was leaving work early to comfort her ten year-old son. Two classmates, fifth graders, had been arrested in school for a quadruple murder and a carjacking! Can you imagine how her son would have felt back in school on Monday?

Fear may be the leading inhibitor to education in the 1990's. Students across the nation say they are not able to discuss racism, sexism and religious intolerance in their schools. Burying them makes them fester and boil over violence. They want athletes to talk to them about these issues and, rightly or wrongly, they want to talk about them to athletes. There has been a tendency since the start of the O.J. Simpson case to paint all athletes with the same brush. But children know athletes. They see them every day.

How do children feel about themselves? It is not a black and white issue. On the issue of drugs and alcohol:

- \* Americans consume sixty percent of the world's illegal drugs and teenagers are the biggest users.

- \* Most of the steroids consumed in America are used by boys under the age of sixteen who are not athletes due to their frailty of self-image.

- \* One million teenage girls become pregnant each year because they wanted someone to love them.

- \* Nine percent of New Hampshire high school students contemplated suicide. Twenty percent of Massachusetts high school students contemplated suicide, while ten percent of Massachusetts high school students actually attempted suicide.

For too many of our youth, hope has been eclipsed by despair. Our children are adrift, and many of them cannot see the shore.

### EDUCATION AS THE GOAL: IN THE CLASSROOM AND ON THE COURT

Education is the key to this problem, and education is in a crisis. Athletics can help educate and can be a vital lifeline for our children. We have power over those children playing our games. If they want to "be like Mike," we can make children be students and be involved in the community as part of their playing the game. But it has to be a better game than we have had, a new sports system that develops instead of debilitates our children. We have to deliver the promise of education in-

stead of breaking the promises as we have for so many young people in the past. Thirty schools did not graduate a single black basketball player in four years; we cannot forget that. You can help get us to the point where we can really use sport to improve the world in which we live.

So why do I say it must be a different sport system to deliver the promises? We have seen the headlines: Sports is part of a culture that teaches that unless you win the Superbowl or the National Championship, you are not a winner. Schools took risks; people took and take risks.

The lure of the big dollar has been the root cause of so many of our problems in sport today. Today's young athlete sees that Chris Webber will earn more in one quarter of a game than his high school teacher does in one year. It does not take much to get an answer when you ask who that young person may want to emulate.

I must tell you this afternoon that I have both a deep concern and a sense of profound optimism. That concern stems from the fact that while we have the Constitutional right to freedom of expression in America, it has become meaningless for a large part of a generation of our children who are functionally illiterate. While sport in America can do so many good things, too many of our athletes are falling into that pool of illiterates. This is especially true for urban and minority youngsters.

The optimism comes from the fact that athletes have produced whenever we have asked more of them academically. The problem is that we rarely ask. What are the human consequences of this? We only have to hear the stories of Fred Butler, Kevin Ross or Dexter Manley. If you feel that Fred, Kevin or Dexter are isolated cases, please understand that an estimated twenty-five to thirty percent of high school senior football and basketball players are young Fred Butlers, functionally illiterate with nowhere to go. Educators finally realize that we cannot afford to allow "student athletes" to be used to try to build athletic powers when they do not receive a real opportunity to complete an education that prepares them for life.

Have we created the image of the "dumb jock"? Do we expect less academically of athletes than of other students? Underlying the problem is the virtually ignored issue of the

academic problems of high school athletes. College sport is now well into reform mode, yet high school sport needs great scrutiny. That is not to say we should abandon it as some now propose. For example, fifty-one percent of African-American high school athletes believe they will make the pros buying the dream that they will beat the 10,000 to 1 odds and become professionals and even the 100 to 1 odds that they will play Division I in college. Too many waste their educational opportunities by pursuing eligibility and not educational skills.

### THE TYPICAL STUDENT-ATHLETE

The typical student-athlete, contrary to the public's image, performs as well or better academically than other students at both the college and high school levels. However, the figures can be misleading. The vast majority of educational problems of athletes exist in men's football and basketball, the so-called revenue sports.

According to NCAA graduation rates for basketball players, the graduation rate of African-American male players has risen to thirty-five percent, up from thirty-three percent prior to Proposition 48. It is still lower than that for whites, at fifty-six percent, but it is five percent higher than for black students. (thirty percent for all black male students; thirty-seven percent for all black female students).

The worst victim is clearly the African-American athlete. Society's promise that sports will lift African-American youth from poverty to riches and fame is a cruel illusion. Parents, coaches, and administrators buy the media package and encourage the illusion.

They did not have to read the *N.Y. Times* analysis that college sport now has the opportunity to become the leader in racial equality. It should naturally have been our opportunity right from the start. Our institutions have long been held up as the beacons for democracy in America and throughout the world, but on the issue of race, the light in the beacon is flickering. In college, fifty percent of football scholarships and sixty-five percent of basketball scholarships are held by African-Americans. Children see that hundreds of African-American professional athletes are millionaires, representing an illusion of fairness in a nation in despair. Racism denies most African-Americans and other minorities access to the "good life."

Sports becomes the cruel illusion for too many African-Americans who see the stars and the money. Pursuing the dream, twenty-five percent leave high school as potential Fred Butlers, functionally illiterate. If they are good enough as athletes, they may end up on one of our campus.

Our Division I athletic departments have frequently been criticized for exploiting African-American athletes. At first glance, this perception seemed to be reinforced with the publication of graduation rates. To me, that is the most important problem we still face in intercollegiate sport where we have made so much progress on so many other issues.

But college sport does not own the problem of failing to graduate African-American students who happen to be athletes. By far the most disturbing revelation when graduation rates were published was that African-American student-athletes graduate at a higher rate than African-American students in general!

In 1994, our institutions of higher education are failing to fulfill their promises to our African-American students as a whole. That is a bottom line of ethics and integrity. America cannot afford the perpetuation of this unbroken cycle. Our institutions of higher education are in the best position to break it.

College sport can lead the way. We have the opportunity and the leadership to shape a new vision on our campuses. However, it will not be easy, as the hiring practices of our athletic departments have not been worthy of emulation. Historically, they have not been much better than our faculties and have actually been worse than professional sport.

There is an expectation that athletic departments would be better. A look at the men's Final Four teams is an indication that they do not do better. No one would deny that we saw great basketball in Seattle and Minneapolis. But a deeper look at the men's teams and the staff who support or follow them shows another side of the story.

On the court, there were sixty players, with thirty-eight, or sixty-three percent African-Americans. Twenty-two, or thirty-seven percent, were white. Alongside the court, there were thirty-seven basketball and strength and conditioning coaches; six, or sixteen percent were African-Americans, and eighty-four percent of them were white, with one woman. Of the med-

ical teams, ninety-one percent were white, and there was one Asian-American woman. Next to the court, nine out of the ten local radio and television broadcasters were white; there was one African-American and one female. Running the programs, eleven of the twelve athletic directors and associate athletic directors were white; there was one African-American. Helping run the programs, finally, were ninety-two percent whites, with thirty-four percent being women, six percent being African-American, and three percent being Asian-American.

It was much the same in the Miami-Nebraska "National Championship" game. While nearly sixty-three percent of the players were black, one hundred percent of the Presidents, Athletic Directors, head coaches, associate athletic directors, sports information, and medical staff directors were white. Seventy-eight percent of the assistant coaches were white, while nineteen percent were African-American and four percent were Latino.

But I sense that this is changing. College presidents, who as a whole must be considered more egalitarian than professional sports owners, are supporting the changes.

Do we need Reverend Jesse Jackson and Charles Farrell to publish a "Fairness Index?" Do we need to go to the University of Colorado after a black assistant coach with more experience is passed over for a younger white assistant? Do we need the Black Coaches Association to threaten us with boycotts before we act?

With a department staff that better reflects the racial composition of our teams, African-American student-athletes will begin to feel that there is a more welcoming environment on campus to encourage them off the court.

### A MOVE TOWARD HIGHER ACADEMIC STANDARDS

After the years of working with more than one-hundred universities and colleges across the land, and more than 1,000 high, middle and elementary schools, it is clear that while rule violations may be limited to a small number of schools, stereotypes of athletes and athletic programs exist at all levels: IA, IAA, II, III, and NAIA.

At each level, athletes in football and basketball are frequently viewed as "dumb jocks" not interested in education, as self-centered, and as so macho that they think they are above



the law. At the college level, athletic programs are looked at as self-interested and profit-oriented, and not interested in the academic and social lives of their athletes.

Public recognition of the problem has led to a movement for higher academic standards by the colleges, and increasingly, by high schools. My focus here is on students before they get to college and the role that you can play.

Prior to the passage of Proposition 48 in 1993, less than 100 of 16,000 high school districts had a "C" average requirement for participation in extra-curricular events. What does not having a "C" mean? In my state of Massachusetts, and in forty-three other states, it means that a high school basketball player can be eligible for all four years and not only never get a "C" average, but never get a single "C" in any course. My question is what have we prepared that young person to do in life?

Without higher academic standards, the lack of a mental challenge feeds on and fuels lenient admission standards in self-fulfilling prophecies of academic failure. Without moral standards, we will see our youth seek the streets more than the classroom, join gangs instead of teams, and emulate drug dealers instead of teachers and coaches.

With athletes who love the game, we have a captive audience. We can make it a condition for playing that they have a "C" average and demand social responsibility on the part of our student-athletes.

I mentioned earlier the name of Fred Butler. Now, I must share with you a more positive side. In Dade County, Florida, Clint Albury took over as coach of Killian High School six years ago. He discovered that his team's grade point average was a 1.3. Horrified, he instituted a mandatory study hall. There were no state eligibility standards, but Albury brought in honor students to tutor his athletes. In specialized study hall, they taught Math and English three days per week, and science and history on the other two. The team's seniors graduated with a grade point average which had been raised to a 2.45. No one failed a course, and at the end of the season, twenty-three players signed with colleges and universities. That was believed to be the highest number of signed players in Dade County history. It appeared to be a testament to Albury.

The most startling case was that of Paul Moore. He was

the type of player that many would say could never be eligible under a 2.0 system. He would, according to the argument, be victimized by society's good intentions. Moore was reading on the first or second grade level. Then, Coach Albury got him into a program for the learning disabled. He graduated with an 11th grade reading level, a 2.3 grade point average in core courses, and he exceeded 700 on his SAT's. He was eligible under Proposition 48 at Florida State, scored Florida State's one touchdown against Miami, and graduated in 1991. Albury's own no-pass, no-play rule proved effective.

What can you do? What are the possibilities? The Center for the Study of Sport in Society's dream eleven years ago was outreach to athletics and a hope to focus on college athletes and the possibility of increasing academic standards at the high school level. The Center now has 115 members, 2,163 professionals, 138 Olympians, and 2,308,322 in outreach.

What can you do? Go back to your communities and engage nearby campuses to help impact on students in your communities. If they are not members, talk to the colleges about joining the Consortium.

Sport can educate us and sensitize us. With all due respect to Charles Barkley, society has designed athletes to be role models. Our programs are designed to train athletes to be role models to reach our children. Our communities need all of our help. We must all work together if we hope to use sports as one way to help educate the leaders of tomorrow. Our student-athletes can be among those leaders.

In another respect, Charles Barkley was right on one point: there should be other role models. We cannot afford to leave it all to athletes. It is up to all of us.

As you leave here this afternoon, know that we need you, each and every one of you. You can all be role models. You may never know when you are being chosen or for what you are being chosen.

In 1979, I was interviewed for the position of senior officer for the 1980 World Conference on the United Nations Decade for Women. The position was to study the effects of apartheid and racism on women in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia and to plan the U.N.'s program of action for women in those countries for the next five years. The interviewer, a very senior Indian woman who subsequently became a life-long

friend, told me that other than my gender, race, and nationality, I was perfect for the job. I got the job and was the only American and only male on the twenty-two person secretariat. I got it because this woman understood that we must recognize that sexism is not just the problem of women, that racism is not just the problem of people of color, that apartheid was not just the problem of Africans anymore, and that anti-Semitism is not just the problem of Jews.

We all suffer, either consciously or subconsciously, when anyone is persecuted. Native Americans believe that people of all colors live within one circle of humanity. I dream that someday we will realize that we are all one people and that we are all in the circle together.

It seems like the impossible dream. But in 1963, I dreamt that I would live to see that day that Nelson Mandela would be inaugurated as President of South Africa. On May 10, 1994, I stood on the steps of the Union Buildings in Pretoria, a witness to that dream come true.

If our children learned how to hate, then we can teach them how to love again. If they are at war against each other, then we can give them the tools to make peace.