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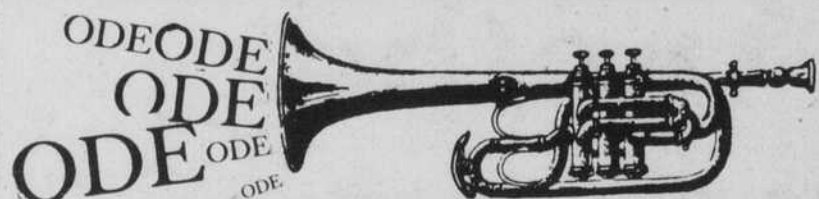
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double play

Sports writers have it easy. Unlike the rest of the journalistic world, most sports stories are easy to cover. Sources wait to be tracked down. Coaches don't high-tail it in another direction when they see a journalist coming.

And the sports information departments. They make life extremely simple. Stats at the half. Stats at the end of the game. Pre-arranged coach/player interviews. Good seats. Food.

For the past year I, and my associate Jody, have been the recipients of many meals, tickets, press row seats and lots of paper (stats, bios, press guides, press releases). Some of the things have made life simple. Games easy to cover.

But I'm not sure about all the freebies.

In early May, John Hulteng,

Stanford journalist and Ruhl fellow, bluntly condemned "acceptance of freebies" in his Ruhl lecture. No self-respecting journalists should accept anything that might compromise their integrity.

Wait a minute. Accept nothing? No tickets to plays, press row seats or books? No meals? Nada?

Many of Hulteng's remarks were aimed specifically at sports writers. And as a self-respecting journalist I agree. As an employee of an impoverished newspaper I say, "You're wrong, John."

The tickets and seats can be written off as doing our job. A sports writer has to SEE the game to write about the game. Besides, as students, Jody and I would get in free anyway. We just get better seats.

But the meals! I'm eating my-

self into disrepute.

It all began during football season. Get to the game an hour before kickoff, read the pre-game stats and have a sandwich or two.

Then there are the award banquets and season opening press luncheons and special banquets.

The best one this year was a cocktail brunch sponsored by Eastman-Kodak during the women's basketball championships at Valley River Inn. Alcohol before noon doesn't make it in my book, but there were plenty of press people there who read a different book.

Then there was the food. VRC can put out a spread. Pineapple boats with cantaloupe, melon, cherries, bananas, papaya. Hot blueberry muffins. Eggs Benedict. Breakfast steak. Coffee, tea, orange juice, tomato juice. Three forks.

The food doesn't make my job easier, just more enjoyable.

But back to ethics.

Freebies have to be approached as simply free, no strings attached. Go ahead and deplore the conduct of the athletic department during a scandal.

Just tell 'em "it's your job" when you belly up to the bar.

After all, at least we didn't accept any free trips with the football team courtesy of the athletic department.

Players' rep claims baseball strike imminent

NEW YORK (AP) — The chief negotiator for major-league players said Tuesday there was no way to avoid a baseball strike unless the club owners put a new plan for free-agent compensation on the bargaining table.

Meanwhile, in Washington, the National Labor Relations Board was reported on the verge of issuing a ruling which could delay the start of the strike, threatened for Friday.

Marvin Miller, chief counsel for the Major League Baseball Players Association, said the owners' latest proposal, put forth last week, was essentially "the same one as has been on the table for 15 months."

The owners' proposal would broaden the basis for deciding which free agents would require player compensation from the signing club. Miller, however, said the players were not buying the plan.

Asked if he saw any way of avoiding the strike after Thursday's five games unless the owners made major changes in their offer, Miller replied, "I do not."

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The logo for Drive-n-Save Market is presented in a stylized, bold font. The words "drive-n-save" are written in a cursive-like script with thick outlines, while "MARKET" is in a clean, sans-serif, all-caps font. The entire logo is set against a dark, trapezoidal background that tapers towards the top.

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