



Photo courtesy University of Oregon archives

Play-for-pay in athletics

Sometimes there's compromise

By Carol Morton
Of the Emerald

It's no secret that, in the struggle to maintain winning and profitable teams, college officials are willing to compromise the academic integrity of a university.

They often concede to the athlete a package deal that includes lower academic standards, relaxed entrance requirements, doctored transcripts, the failure of many athletes to graduate despite a free ride, and an end to scholarship funds once the athlete ceases to perform satisfactorily.

Basketball and football are the two sports regularly accused of such transgressions.

As early as 1946, newspaper speculation that UCLA alumni agreed to repay highly recruited running back "Buddy" Young with a job upon graduation caused a minor uproar among Pacific Coast Conference officials.

This was at a time when conference recruiting rules effectively tied the potentially generous financial hands of college alumni. Coaches were not allowed to dangle any monetary or subsidy aid in the faces of prospective well-muscled athletes.

Young allegedly linked his close friend Kenny Washington with a Bruin pay-for-play plan. An Emerald sports column reported, tongue-in-cheek, "Whether Kenny actually was paid \$130 a month for chasing canaries out of the men's gym at Westwood is not important at the moment. He completed his eligibility at UCLA and was acclaimed one of the finest running backs in the country in his season."

America has the dubious distinction of being the only country that demands sports entertainment from schools with academic superiority.

In addition, unlike other sports (baseball and hockey, for example), professional football and basketball teams did not develop until long after colleges had developed highly skilled teams. Professional organizations in these two sports carry no financial burden of maintaining minor leagues, profiting instead from athletes' training and maturing in college sports programs.

Most college athletic budgets are strained by costs of traveling, equipment, recruiting, and scholarships. Inflation and increased spending to keep up with other teams in the confer-



Intercollegiate athletics have come a long way from the good ol' days (above left) to the big-time productions of today.

ence make efforts to keep athletic departments financially afloat a desperate struggle, especially in the face of big-time college sports' attempts, officially at least, to pay for their own programs.

University of Michigan's athletic director, Don Canham estimates that his is one of no more than 20 to 25 schools whose sports programs pay their own way. Big-time college sports equate winning with self-sufficient programs.

Some schools with good sports reputations earn money, but the temptation to recruit highly skilled, ignorant athletes who are totally unfit for

academic work is overpowering when winning is so financially important.

James A Michener divides American athletes into two groups in his book, "Sports in America." In addition to being proud of their all-American honors, the first group of athletes boast all-American brains. The second group of athletes, Michener says, "must not be deluded into believing they are going to get an education. They are going to play for money in a supervised system, and if they have the will, they can gain an education free on the side."

Reacting to a story in the Arizona Daily Star about a

recent report that 27 University of Arizona football players and nine basketball players had remained eligible for intercollegiate sports even though all 36 were on academic probation, Sports Illustrated charged Arizona authorities with reluctance "to weed out athletes incapable of doing college work, with the result that those athletes tend to be academic misfits."

Hitting at the heart of big-time college sports is the oft-cited hypocrisy of describing the inducements offered in bargaining against other colleges for athletes as scholarship aid.

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