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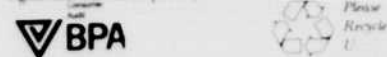
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Read the writing on the Ivy-covered walls

By MARK BABINECK
The Daily Texan, U. of Texas

There was once a time when the reason to attend a college or university was clear: an education. Now, that picture has been fuzzed considerably, particularly where athletics are concerned.



When Harvard U. was established 350 years ago, the mission was simple: to educate. Since then, thousands of universities have sprouted up, and for some, their mission has been bastardized by TV revenue and gate receipts.

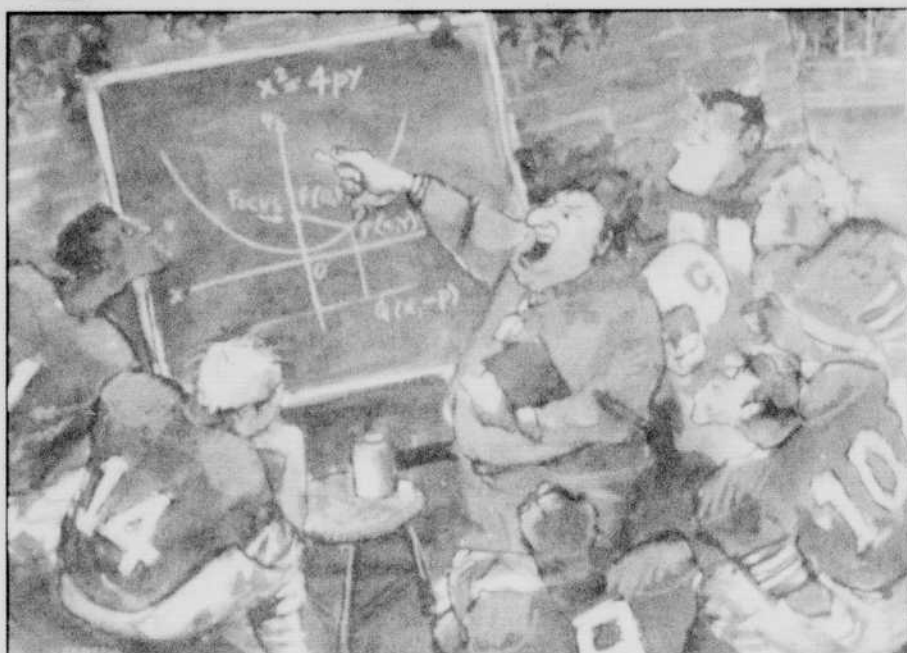
Yet Harvard and its Ivy League partners have stayed the course. To be on an athletic team, recruits must prove first they are capable of handling the schoolwork. And scholarships granted solely on the basis of athletic ability are non-existent.

The very fact that these schools do not reward athletes with scholarship money makes the feats of some Ivy League sports teams in recent times that much more remarkable. Coach Pete Carril's Princeton basketball team has had an extremely successful run over the past two years, and Harvard hockey coach Ronn Tomassoni led his charges to an unexpected national title in 1989.

While it is nothing more than folly to think that all schools will follow their lead, Ivy League schools should stand firm in this tradition.

But to say that athletic scholarships are evil or even wrong would also be misleading. Giving exceptional athletes the means to gain a higher education is an admirable goal, and many student-athletes succeed after college — and not just in the professional sports or broadcasting field, as is the stereotype.

But when high school students who can barely spell SAT repeatedly take the exam trying to break 700 — and you get 400 for merely signing your name — there is a problem. These students should not be denied a chance at college because their primary and secondary educations were subpar, but they should not be taking spots that otherwise may go to more academically



O. K., that's a parabola, and, by the way... Go get 'em in the second half!

JOE CEPEDA, UNION, CALIFORNIA STATE U., LONG BEACH

qualified applicants.

While the Ivy League provides one extreme with its no-athletic scholarship policy and other schools concentrate more on 40-yard dash times than grade-point averages, there are some happy mediums. For example, Rice U. in Houston is the second-smallest Division-I school in the nation, yet the school has managed to compete — if not always win — with the big boys around it.

Listed as the best educational value in America by *U.S. News & World Report* two years running, Rice is no slouch on the academic side either. Yet the school, arguably the most prestigious academic institution in the Southwest, gives out athletic scholarships.

The difference between Rice and other colleges that offer athletic scholarships is that athletes at Rice must meet the same demanding admission standards as other students.

Seemingly, Rice has found a happy medium by not budging on the quality of its academic program while maintaining a competitive athletic program. The fact remains, however, that even studious Rice sees no problem with spending millions on scholarships for these smart students who also happen to be athletically inclined.

But the presidents of Ivy League institutions long ago decided that they would save the millions of dollars in merit-based awards that otherwise might be granted for touchdowns, home runs, vertical leaps or footspeed.

Rather, their admission policies continue to be based on such novel ideas as grades, test scores, extracurricular activities (including athletics) and just being an overall well-rounded person. And financial aid remains a program to help the economically needy and academically gifted.

As priorities in collegiate athletics continue to waver and change, the Ivy League seems to be a constant. Brown will never have a problem with athletes passing classes under questionable circumstances, Columbia will never be nailed for giving their star point guard a car, and football players at Yale will never be arrested for shooting their roommates.

Yes, the absence of athletic scholarships may be a bit extreme, but so what? No one whines about the millions of dollars allotted to athletics — money that could just as well go to an exceptionally bright writer, a proficient musician, or an eloquent public speaker.

In the Ivy League, it's nice to see schools whose standards remain defined by M.A.s and Ph.D.s, not NBC and ESPN.

U. VIEWS

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