

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

Critics charge hostess programs with sexism

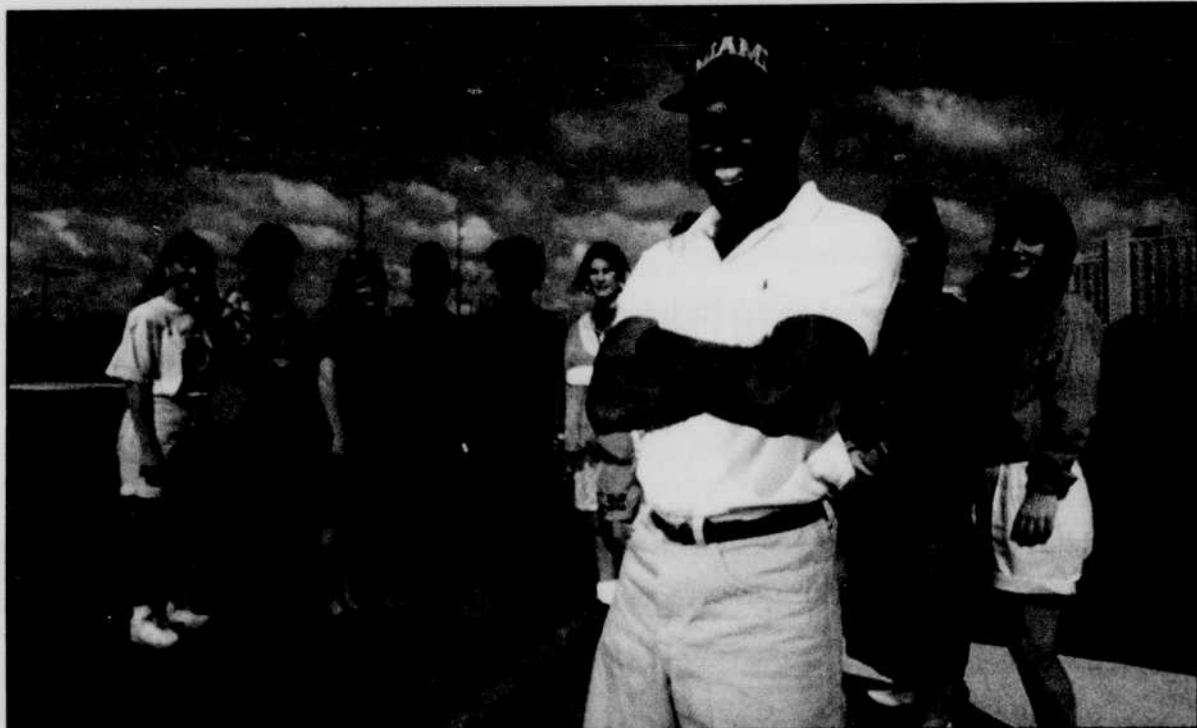
Millicent Whitener came to Clemson U. filled with school spirit. She joined the university hostess program, The Tiger Lilies, to help recruit prospective athletes for the football program. Whitener thought all a woman needed to represent Clemson as a Tiger Lily was a positive attitude, an outgoing personality and a desire to promote the school.

But what the athletic department also was looking for, she says, was a pretty face and a good body.

Universities around the country use women undergraduates to act as tour guides and companions for high school football and basketball recruits visiting the campus. This practice at schools such as Arizona State U., Miami U., the U. of Alabama and the U. of Oklahoma has become a target of scrutiny.

"As Tiger Lilies, we were on the level of ambassadors of the school," Whitener says. "But recently, several girls were asked to leave the team because of their weight. Nothing you do as a hostess has anything to do with your appearance. It's not an athletic activity. It's a hosting activity." So Whitener quit the team.

The Clemson U. athletic department denies the women were released because of their weight. Hazel Modica, football program secretary, says attitude problems, not appearances, were the basis for the department's decision. The current Tiger Lily application procedure does



Troy Bell stands out as the only male student member of U. of Miami's Cane Connection, an athletic recruiting program.

Liz Szabo, *The Cavalier Daily*, U. of Virginia

require the women to submit a photograph of themselves, she says, and one of the requirements for the team is a "neat, attractive, pleasant appearance." Modica denies women are cut from the team because of weight.

Many athletic departments who offer hostess programs see them as a valuable part of their recruiting efforts.

Katy Henley is a sophomore at the U. of Alabama and an alternate for the Bama Belles, Alabama's hostess group. "Hostesses are responsible for giving tours of campus to the guys who come in to look at the school," Henley says. "We meet them at the athletic department and take them wherever they want to go, to the art museum or the Homecoming parade or whatever. We sit with them in the stands during football games when the coaches are busy."

That's precisely what makes Barbara Harris, chairwoman of the women's studies department at the U. of North Carolina, so angry.

This idea of women attending to men's needs encourages women to be seen as less than equal to men, she says. "I think the whole program is sexist and demeaning," she

says, referring to the UNC hostess program, the Sweet Carolines. "What it does is use attractive women, chosen for their personality and charm, to sell the university to prospective athletes. They are using women the same way an advertiser uses an attractive woman to sell a car."

And they are using them through team names that critics of the programs call unprofessional, if not degrading.

The name of the program at Western Carolina U. is the Catamount Kittens. The U. of Oklahoma calls its hostesses the Crimson and Cream. Such names, Harris says, give little respect to the women involved.

"I don't believe there's anyone in the athletic department who encourages a sexual relationship.... But [the name] does encourage the men to view these women as a pool of sexually available women. It probably leads to sexual harassment," she says.

The labels at least contribute to a jaded perception of the participants. Arizona State U. freshman Jake Batesell says many students look down on the women in the hostess programs. "The ASU group used to be called the Devil's Darlings. The name has been changed to the Devil's Athletic Recruiting Group. But there's still a sarcastic or negative sentiment toward them."

After all, name changes, some say, don't make the programs legitimate.

A male student at the U. of Virginia, who wishes to remain anonymous, says he is skeptical of UVA's hostess program, the Cavalier Connection. "Connection," oh, right," he says. "We know what that means."

What universities hope it will mean is an improved image of the school for recruits, but generally it has meant controversy. Hostess programs have been criticized for promoting men's athletics while ignoring women's sports, generating some changes in recruiting efforts.

The U. of Miami recently changed the name of its hostess program from The Hurricane Honeys to The Cane Connection. Stacy Ostrau, adviser to The Cane Connection, says the program now includes both men and women and has no official uniform or photograph requirement. While The Cane Connection operates out of the football program, Ostrau says other departments such as women's sports could ask the group to help in their recruiting weekends as well. "With our name change, we were trying to attract the sharpest girls and guys on campus," she says. "With a name like Hurricane Honeys, we couldn't attract many guys to the group."

Still, many women involved in hostess programs see nothing wrong with their organizations' name or function. Bama Belle Henley says, "People who think it's sexist are just looking for something that is not there." □



Hardaway makes the grade.

Prop 48 shoots up graduation rate

They're calling him the next Magic Johnson. But in 1990 the NCAA called Memphis State's top basketball prize ineligible.

Anfernee Hardaway, a 6-foot-7 junior swingman for the Tigers, didn't make the grade as a high school senior. So he sat the bench his freshman year of college.

"It was not easy for me to sit out my freshman season because I really wanted to play, and I knew I belonged out there," Hardaway says. "But on the other hand, it was good for me in a sense that I concentrated more on my studies and getting my degree."

That's precisely what Prop 42, the NCAA legislation that replaced Prop 48 and kept Hardaway off the court, intends to do — force college players like him who fail to meet minimum SAT/ACT and GPA requirements to concentrate on school for a year.

According to a recent NCAA study that compares a sample of student-athletes who entered selected Division I institutions before 1986 with a sample who entered in August 1986, it seems to work. The study indicates the graduation rate of the student-athletes jumped from 48.1 percent for student-athletes who entered college in 1984 or 1985 to 56.5 percent for those who started in the fall of 1986.

"When I was in high school, I learned a little too late how important it was to study," Hardaway says. "I was lazy. But sitting out that year made me

realize I had a responsibility to myself, to the university and [to] the basketball program." Last year Hardaway earned the team-high grade point average — a 3.2.

And while his Memphis State coach, Larry Finch, says Prop 42 unfairly strips athletes of a year of eligibility, it does give student-athletes like Hardaway a chance to grow up. "Sitting out a year is not all that bad because it gives a kid a chance to get his priorities straight," Finch says. ■ Geoff Wilson, *Tiger*, Clemson U.