

COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:
 Andrew Adams
 Associate Editors:
 Peter Hockaday
 Jeremy Lang

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Editorial

UO shouldn't let athletics success harm its humility

It was a bad idea to begin with, and fortunately Athletic Director Bill Moos and other top administrators realized their proposed changes to the University's broadcast policy would do more harm than good.

At a time when our Duck athletes, and even their Beaver counterparts, are strutting proudly in the national spotlight, it's understandable that the University's top administrators are feeling a little proud. But for those who fly too high, there's always a chance of getting burned, and this University was soundly burned by national journalism groups and even the ACLU for proposing to limit the media to only 20 seconds of footage and 20 seconds of interviews for two days after any Duck game.

To be fair, the Athletic Department was attempting only to deal with one news show, local broadcaster KVAL's "Inside the PAC," that it and its contractee ESPN believed was an infringement on the exclusive broadcast rights of the cable sports-news channel. But its heavy-handed approach was met with the ire of the journalism community and the criticism of almost every member of the media in the state.

Journalists and anyone interested in the Ducks had a legitimate reason to be critical of the policy. Not only did it raise concerns that the University was ignoring constitutional rights, but it also opened the University to speculation that it was setting a policy to protect lucrative contract deals.

So while it may make sense that the University is taking a more active and vigorous stance on protecting and managing its image because of the national prominence it has achieved through athletics, our administration and Athletic Department must remember that that same recognition is a double-edged sword. Finally near the top in the world of intercollegiate athletics, our University leaders need to realize they must hold themselves and this institution to a higher standard as well, or they will face again the firestorm of national and local criticism their misguided media policy received.

That proposal made the University look foolish, and there is a risk the other instruments of the University's hype machine may have the same result. Right now, motorists in the California Bay Area and Los Angeles are being treated to billboards tout-

ing the athletic prowess of Ducks Rashad Bauman and Maurice Morris. These follow an imposing billboard of Joey "Heisman" Harrington in New York City. One wonders why generous donors would spend thousands of dollars to erect the billboards in places where folks likely cannot even pronounce "Oregon" or "Willamette" correctly. Is it an attempt to intimidate other athletes of the Pac-10 in their home cities or to drum up a wider fan base for Oregon football outside the state? Either reason is rather doubtful, and so it likely is an attempt to create a football legacy on one record season, a bowl game victory and pure hype.

Legacies aren't bought — they are earned. The University should keep in mind that this campaign will look arrogant and foolish if this upcoming football season falls flat.

Competition good for campus media

It is good to hear that the Oregon Voice magazine will be resurrected. While the publication's new backers admit they won't have a new issue out for quite some time, they appear dedicated to giving new life to the troubled magazine.

Any community benefits by vibrant and vocal news outlets, and while in recent memory the Voice never really has been a heavy hitter in campus news and politics, it is encouraging to hear that some students think they can turn the now-defunct paper into a quality product. For a school with supposedly one of the best journalism programs on the West Coast, it was somewhat perplexing to see the Oregon Voice steadily decline in quality to the point of irrelevance and become the butt of constant jokes by the other campus magazine, the Oregon Commentator.

These jokes most likely will not end, as most on the staff of the new Voice are former Commentator staffers, but one can hope that will mean the jokes won't be one-sided.

The new editors of the magazine say the Voice will be a mix of left-leaning news features and entertainment stories. And while this is definitely not a new formula for the Eugene community, at least one more news outlet on campus will, ideally, improve the quality of all campus publications.

This editorial represents the views of the Emerald's editor in chief and does not necessarily represent the views of the Oregon Daily Emerald.

Stem-cell decision serves everyone

GUEST COMMENTARY

Pat Payne

It took President Bush half a year, but we finally have a decision. Last Thursday, he finally made the toughest choice so far in his young presidency: the government funding of research on embryonic stem cells. No matter what side you're on in this debate, the decision is the best you are going to get.

In a speech from his Crawford, Texas, ranch, Bush announced that federal funds would be used to support research for stem-cell lines that have already been created, but that there would be no funding for any new extraction of embryonic stem cells. These are cells that come from blastocysts, the dividing of the union of sperm and egg that becomes an embryo and eventually a human. These cells also regenerate indefinitely, making them as close to immortal as anything gets in this world. These cells also have not yet specialized themselves into specific duties in the body, and so can "morph" into any cell in the human body. As it currently stands, stem-cell research has resulted in approximately 60 "lines," or self-replicating colonies of these cells. Supporters of research look to possible miracle cures for everything from spinal injuries to Alzheimer's disease. The main problem, and hence the moral question, is that these blasto-

cysts are made up entirely of stem cells, and so are destroyed as the cells are extracted. Also, because these are the progenitors of humans, there are those who would say that to harvest stem cells is little better than murder.

It was in a way a watershed decision: Bush took a consummately political decision and kept politics out of it. His decision was at once pragmatic and emotional. Everyone comes away with something, apparently, but nobody gets their way completely. In my mind, a decision that neither side is completely happy with is most likely the best. Still, he now has to walk this tightrope for the rest of his administration, and it could still come to backfire on him come election time should either the anti-abortion or pro-choice lobby come to see this stance as a compromise it's not willing to accept.

Furthermore, this decision does leave some big loopholes open. First, Bush barely side-stepped the religion versus science argument that turned stem cells into a surrogate battlefield for the pro-choice/anti-abortion war by acknowledging where the stem-cell lines came from, but realizing that the genie is out of the bottle. His announcement will not sit well with anti-abortion advocates who see Bush as condoning the destruction of embryos for scientific ends. Also, Bush did not prohibit research using new extraction: He merely barred federal money from being spent on it. By not allowing federal funding, or conversely call-

ing for a ban on new extractions outright, Bush puts a chilling question to scientists. We have seen, with the decoding of the human genome, that genetics are a good business if their promises hold out. The problem is that many of these firms place profit before scientific openness. My concern is that, simply put, many of these groups would probably put their research under a veil of industrial secrecy to protect their "intellectual property." This in and of itself is not problematic, as companies often have proprietary knowledge that they want to keep under wraps. Yet scientific knowledge should be out in the public to be checked by scientific peers who can duplicate the experiments or otherwise make sure that what happened actually happened.

There may still be a way for Bush to fund expanded stem-cell research and (miracle of miracles) keep both the anti-abortion and research communities happy. If research now ongoing in Los Angeles and Massachusetts pans out, scientists may actually be able to create blastocysts without conception, which is where theologians believe life begins. No conception equals perhaps no moral headaches for Bush and the religious right.

But still, Bush took a large step toward saving many lives with his decision. Let's hope that someday it will pay off with the cures the medicos promise.

Pat Payne will be a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald in the fall.

Letters to the editor

Marijuana is nothing to fear

The editorial "Glamorization of marijuana poses risks for society" (ODE Aug. 7) expressed fear that increased acceptance of marijuana in Canada would lead to its acceptance here.

This is nothing to fear. Despite the worries expressed in your article, marijuana is, according to DEA Administrative Law Judge Francis Young, "one of the safest therapeutically active substances known to man."

In the editorial, the author points out that most of the millions of people who use marijuana lead successful lives. This being the case, what possible justification do we have to put people in jail for using an herb which, in 5,000 years of recorded use, has never killed even one of its users?

Kevin M. Hebert
 Chicopee, Mass.

Drug policy reform needed

The Aug. 7 editorial is correct in that glamorizing marijuana use is ill-advised. That being said, it's not the relative harmlessness of marijuana that necessitates a rethinking of America's punitive approach to drugs, but rather the dangers posed by the drug war itself. Tough drug laws give rise to a lucrative black market in illegal drugs, effectively subsidizing organized crime. The crime, corrup-

tion and overdose deaths attributed to drugs are all direct results of drug prohibition. With alcohol prohibition repealed, liquor producers no longer gun each other down in drive-by shootings, nor do consumers go blind drinking unregulated bathtub gin.

There are cost-effective alternatives. In Europe, the Netherlands has successfully reduced overall drug use by replacing marijuana prohibition with regulation. Dutch rates of drug use are significantly lower than U.S. rates in every category. Here in the United States, illegal marijuana provides the black market contacts that introduce users to drugs like heroin. This

"gateway" is the direct result of a flawed policy.

Given that marijuana is arguably safer than legal alcohol, it makes no sense to waste tax dollars on failed policies that finance organized crime and facilitate the use of hard drugs. Drug policy reform may send the wrong message to children, but I like to think the children themselves are more important than the message. Opportunistic "tough on drugs" politicians would no doubt disagree.

Robert Sharpe, M.P.A.
 program officer
 The Lindesmith Center-Drug Policy
 Foundation

