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■ In my opinion

Baseball's FOULED soul

Now that the pope has died and Terri Schiavo no longer provides Republicans a convenient case to exploit, it's time to turn to more important things, like baseball.

Opening day came on the heels of an excellent NCAA Final Four and featured a dominating performance by New York Yankees ace Randy Johnson, who routed the defending national champion Boston Red Sox.

But while the action on the field renews our hope every spring, the soul of the game is hurting.

A Congressional hearing in March involving players' use of steroids marked the greatest collision between baseball and government since Curt Flood brought his free agency case to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1972. Former player Jose Canseco admitted to using steroids and narked on teammates he claimed to have injected.

Steroids tear at the fabric of the game, which looks to its past more than any other sport. It's part of the beauty of baseball that one can compare Albert Pujols' 2004 season with Mickey Mantle's 1956 season and determine their relative abilities with a fair degree of accuracy.

For baseball purists, the steroid revelations were just the latest in a long line of events that undermine the game. The trouble began in 1973, when the first designated hitter strode to the plate.

The DH foreshadowed the development of one-dimensional players such as the reliever who pitches only to left-handed batters between the seventh and ninth innings during full-moon night games on the West Coast — barely an exaggeration. It also provided jobs for geriatric fan



CHUCK SLOTHOWER
TAKING ISSUE

favorites like Edgar Martinez, who last year could have been out-run by an ambitious riding lawnmower.

The DH preceded the reign of Commissioner Bud Selig, who has done all he could to ruin the game since taking over in 1992. His first mistake was expanding into Colorado, where the Rockies can be guaranteed never to win a World Series. No pitcher with half a brain wants to risk his career by pitching in a place that, due to its elevation, inflates offense.

Selig failed to prevent players from going on strike in 1994, resulting in the cancellation of the World Series for the first time since 1904. Then he had the bright idea in 1997 of instituting Interleague Play.

Many fans like it — attendance in Interleague games exceeds that of regular games by about 20 percent, according to SI.com — but it results in an unbalanced schedule. It also destroys the uniqueness of the World Series, which used to be the only place American League and National League teams faced each other in games that mattered.

Selig has also come up short in addressing the competitive imbalance in baseball. Despite revenue sharing, which shifts money from the wealthiest teams to the poorest, imbalance persists.

The Yankees, blessed by a deep-pocketed owner who loves his team, buy their way to the playoffs each year. They paid their players more than \$184 million last year, by far the most in baseball, according to The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer.

Meanwhile, small market teams function as a farm system for teams like the Yankees. The Oakland A's, for instance, have lost a string of their best players in recent years because they couldn't afford them. The list includes top-flight sluggers Mark McGwire, Jason Giambi and Miguel Tejada. Just this offseason, the A's had to let go of two ace pitchers, Tim Lincecum and Mark Mulder.

Until something drastic happens, the Yankees and Red Sox will continue to spend their way to the playoffs, while teams like the Kansas City Royals wistfully look on.

Part of Selig's problem is that he cares more about money than the game itself. He looks at baseball from the perspective of a former team owner, which he is.

Selig's other major problem is the players' union, the most powerful union relative to its industry in the country. The union stands in opposition to several important reforms, including the elimination of the designated hitter, a truly tough steroids policy and regulation of amphetamines, which are widely used in baseball.

One longs for the days of Kenesaw Mountain Landis, baseball's first commissioner, who ruled the game with an iron fist and took seriously his charge to act in the best interests of baseball.

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■ Out loud

"It's less than a latte."

— EMU Board of Directors member **Yoko Silk**, discussing Ballot Measure 21 and the \$2 price tag per student it would take to power the EMU with wind energy.

"He was like a person in everyone's family ... to see a family member pass is about what it's like to see the pope die."

— **Justin Schneider**, senior business administration major, mourning the death of Pope John Paul II.

"I can't say I've been to a meeting. I don't know where they're held; I don't know much about them."

— ASUO Vice Presidential candidate **Chris Haak**, at Wednesday's executive debate, answering a question about attendance at Programs Finance Committee meetings earlier this year.

"National identity is being subsumed by national security identity."

— Pacific News Service writer **Roberto Lovato**, about post-Sept. 11 paranoia shaping U.S. policy. Lovato spoke at a symposium last week in the Knight Law Center.

"I'd be pretty cheesed off if I was told I had to go to Rennie's to have a cigarette."

— Graduate teaching fellow **Jacque Polard**, responding to the proposition of a campus-wide smoking ban.

"The state has been disinvesting year after year while the cost of education has gone up at the expense of students."

— ASUO President **Adam Petkun**, explaining the need for a state funding increase for higher education.

"I started crying before I even came in the door."

— Senior **Lin Charpentier**, about her experience at "Eyes Wide Open," a touring Iraq War exhibit that stopped at Lane County on Sunday and Monday.

"Overall, the students don't have much to say in what's going to happen."

— Freshman **Martini Morris**, on University plans regarding the purchase of the vacant car lot near the Williams' bakery site.

"When we respond to a party with a beer bong and a person next to it on the couch and they're passed out, I think they are making a conscious decision at that point to consume large amounts of alcohol."

— Department of Public Safety officer **Mike Eppli**, during Tuesday's debate with the Office of Student Life regarding actions taken toward students with alcohol poisoning.

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CORRECTION

Wednesday's article "25 feet" contained misattributed information. Director of Health Education Paula Staight said she would like to see smoking banned on campus and said she does not support the creation of designated smoking areas. Staight also said she does not want to see large groups of smokers congregated. These statements were incorrectly attributed to Director of Environmental Health and Safety Kay Coots. Coots said she is hopeful changes will be implemented, but did not specifically cite the 25-foot rule change.

The Emerald regrets the error.

■ Guest commentary

Producing constructive liberalism

My parents were not impressed with my attitude following the first term of freshman year. I attacked them for condoning all the problems of the world on which I was now an expert. There were wars I had never heard of, countries I never knew existed and animals receiving rights I did not know even I had. I was in shock. The world college presented to me was nothing, I thought, like the world in which my parents had raised me, and I told them so.

It took me until last week to realize that the critical liberalism that saturates this university is not exclusive to the University of Oregon. An article in The Register-Guard published March 30, "Study backs liberal faculty image," finally supported the general observation I made that the majority of professors I have had are liberal-minded. The study surveyed 1,643 college professors at 183 schools and found that 72 percent considered themselves liberal.

I attribute the shock of freshman year to my assimilation from a

generally moderate environment into a liberal-minded one.

The Independent Women's Forum and the Randolph Foundation, a right leaning support group of Americans for Tax Reform, funded this study to show how one-sided a college education is in America. But why is it that students like me are so shocked at learning these alternative views? Lack of exposure.

I would not argue that the "government bashing" in my political science courses is unwarranted, but it is an injustice to disseminate predominantly liberal views in a governmental institution. As such, I can only assume that the liberalist education serves not to oppose what is known by the general public, but to balance the reality of the future leaders of this country by revealing that which is not commonly known by or taught to the general public. Liberal professors are laying the other half of a foundation so that students can eventually stand up straight.

The Randolph Foundation's findings

should not be misinterpreted. Irrational extremism is not synonymous with liberalism, for if it were, the American government would not continue to support higher education. The freshman student's impassioned extremism is an understandable effect of the transition into college, and it shows the one-sidedness of what is disseminated to the general public. Thankfully, most students learn to articulate their passions in a way that is more rational and systematically thought out than the attacks made to parents during freshman year.

The process begins simply by realizing the futility of reaping all joy of a conversation just to evangelize idealistic solutions to the world's problems. To be in any way progressive and influential, students will integrate liberal views into a still conservative American government. I just hope my grandfather was wrong when he said that liberals are just college graduates who have not yet made any money.

Nicholas Wilbur Lives in Eugene

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