

Ah, it all begins again...and it's only August...

We're not ready yet!!!!

Mention Ann Arbor, and the first image that probably comes to mind is a crisp, brilliant weekend in the fall . . . walking across campus through the falling leaves to Michigan Stadium . . . gathering at tailgate parties. One recalls the excitement of walking into that magnificent stadium, with 107,000 fans thrilling to the Michigan Marching Band as they step onto the field playing "Hail to the Victors."

Clearly, intercollegiate athletics provide some of the very special moments in our lives. Of course, sports have always been an important part of our civilization. Intercollegiate athletics continue a tradition from ancient times, in which the games allow athletes to test and develop their own abilities in competition with one another. They teach both the player and the spectator some of the most enduring lessons of life: the importance of discipline, perseverance, and teamwork. Sports teach us all that the most important goals are achieved only through effort and sacrifice--and sometimes even these are not enough. And they provide a sense of excitement, pride, and involvement with our institutions.

Tomorrow

Tomorrow we have a very special event...a matchup between two universities that in many ways represent the very best in college traditions...

The University of Virginia...Jefferson's university...the first of the great public universities and one of the finest academic institutions in the nation.

And the University of Michigan...long regarded as one of the flagships of public higher education...ranking along with Virginia...among the finest academic institutions, public or private, in America.

Two institutions with great academic traditions...

Two conferences, the Big Ten and the AAC with great academic and athletic traditions

Competing against one another, yet again...even if a few weeks too early!

When we were offered the opportunity to host the Pigskin Classic, we agreed to do so, but only if our opponent would be chosen as much for their academic tradition and excellence as for their football strength.

In Virginia we have an impressive opponent.

And, in Virginia, we have one of the truly great universities of the world.

The Dark Side of the Force

Of course there are other images of intercollegiate athletics that reflect the concerns that have risen in recent years: the quasi-professional nature of college sports and their apparent inconsistency with our academic priorities; the degree to which college sports are portrayed as taking advantage of our student-athletes; the concern about graduation rates or the awarding of meaningless degrees. Then too, there is a perceived pressure to win at all costs which leads to cheating and scandals; or images of misbehavior, such as when players taunt one another or coaches engage in tirades against officials; or the sordid story of drugs and crime involving college athletes.

And, there is the gross over-commercialization of college sports: the tendency to schedule events every night of the week, the media hype, and the feeding frenzy of the sports press.

But tomorrow we will have a very special event...

The Evolution of College Sports in America

One can distinguish three different stages as college sports evolved in this country. The first stage might be called the classical or amateur model. From ancient times it has been recognized that athletics are an important opportunity for teaching values of character, motivation, endurance, loyalty, and striving for one's personal best--all qualities of great value in citizens. Hence the first ideal for college sports was the scholar-athlete. The objective was the education of the whole person. Athletics were viewed as an extracurricular activity. This particular model continues to be regarded as the ideal by the Ivy League, but even here, it is really only an ideal. As Cornell's President White a century ago observed when his students sought to play football against Michigan, "I will not permit thirty men to travel to Ann Arbor just to agitate a bag of wind."

Earlier in this century in many larger universities, college sports evolved from a participatory to a spectator activity. Athletic events were increasingly used as a vehicle to bring together the complex campuses characterizing the American university--Clark Kerr's "multiversity"--where people who were connected only by a common heating plant or a need for parking became connected as well by identification with major sporting events and athletic activities. This continues today since many of the most stolid alumni and faculty take pride in the success of an institution's athletic teams. However, such events tended to promote the institution, giving it visibility and assisting with its enhancement. As Chief Justice Earl

Warren observed, "At the breakfast table I always open the newspaper to the sports pages first. The sports pages record people's accomplishments. The front page reports nothing but man's failures."

In the 1960s and 1970s such spectator events turned into entertainment on a national scale. Of course, television was the principal reason. College sports represented a very attractive opportunity for television since most of the costs of production were borne by the institutions themselves--at least subsidized by spectators. Furthermore, television found that by promoting and marketing college sports much as they would other commercial activities--generating great media hype, hiring sensationalistic broadcasters, urging colleges to arrange more spectacular events--they could build major nationwide audiences.

Fundamental Question #1: Why should we conduct intercollegiate athletics in the first place?

Answer: First, and foremost, we should use such programs to provide an opportunity for participation in athletics as one component of the education we provide our students. We should embrace the ideal of a scholar-athlete and its objective of educating the whole person. Of course we also utilize athletics as a spectator activity to unite our campuses, and those who identify with them, through our programs. And it is true that intercollegiate athletics has become a major form of entertainment to the public at large. But these latter purposes, of community-unifying events and providing public entertainment, should be secondary to the educational character of college sports.

Some Final Comments

In conclusion, it is my belief that intercollegiate athletics should be and, indeed, are an important part of higher education. College sports provide an important educational opportunity to the student-athlete. They are important as a unifying force for the university

communities and beyond. However, I do not believe that intercollegiate athletics has any obligation to be responsive or subservient to armchair America, particularly if this conflicts with the fundamental educational missions of our programs.

Indeed, I believe that the key to the control of intercollegiate athletics and to proper alignment with the academic priorities of the institution will be the effort of universities to strongly resist media pressure--whether electronic or print--to transform college sports into an entertainment industry. The academy simply must recapture control of college sports from the media.

More specifically, universities must first establish their own priorities, objectives, and principles for college sports and then commit themselves to holding fast to these objectives in the face of the enormous pressure that will be exerted by the media and the public-at-large. In the end, athletics must reflect the fundamental academic values of the university. There is no other alternative acceptable to higher education.