

Student-Athletes

Sports addiction hinders academic concentration

By KEVIN INDA
Reporter

"I get out of class at noon, eat, go to a football meeting at 2 p.m., practice, eat dinner and eventually get back to my room about 7 p.m. Then I have to study," says Craig Stump, A&M's starting quarterback. "It's really tough because I don't have a lot of time."

That type of statement typifies what it's like to be a student-athlete.

Student-athletes face more problems than just a lack of time. They are expected to perform on the playing field as well as in the classroom. Improper academic counseling in dealing with this type of pressure can result in both academic and athletic failure.

Student-athletes have their personal views as to what it's like to be both an athlete and a student. The major problem that arises within this group is the development of role-conflict, says J. Steven Picou, a sociologist and former student-athlete who teaches a course on sports sociology at Texas A&M.

"The problem essentially is how you integrate the two roles," Picou says. "You integrate the two through career choices."

When a scholarship athlete comes to college, they feel they have made the minor leagues. This reinforces the fantasy choice of being a professional athlete.

"There are a very limited number of athletes in professional sports," Picou says. "You have got a better chance of being in an automobile accident, or getting cancer, or even getting hit over the head by a meteorite than becoming a professional athlete."

When some athletes make it to college on a scholarship, they feel they need to invest more time in athletics because it's their career choice. No one tells them it's really their fantasy choice.

"If a kid comes in to college to



Photo by DEAN SAITO

A&M student athletes face the dual pressures and triumphs of succeeding on their team and in their academic studies.

play football and he tells the coach he really wants to be a physician and he might be late to practice because he has to study, the coach will perceive that person as not having a commitment to athletics and probably will not play him or even cut him," he says.

Picou says when athletes enter a university, they should get career counseling within the academic branch of the university.

NCAA Proposition 56 — relating to Division I teams — which went into effect this year, specifies that students on athletic scholarship must declare a major by the end of their sophomore year.

"The spirit of this proposition is that we have to get people over in the academic arm of the university where they can start thinking about their future," he says. "It's common knowledge that many student-athletes take 180 hours of nothing and they don't have 10 hours in (any) one degree."

With college serving as a minor league or professional sports talent pool, even the college athlete who isn't starting feels he can make it in professional sports.

"You have all these one-in-a-zillion examples of walk-ons who made it in the pros," he says. "These college athletes who don't start try to

walk-on and if they don't make it they'll go back to the weights and try next year."

Picou says athletes are affected by a de-socialization factor created by sports. When an athlete has been successful or glorified in a role, they put more and more effort into that role.

"It's almost like a drug because they get hooked," he says. "The problem is how to get them unhooked."

Picou cited cases of athletes making 360-degree turns in academic performance after a career-ending injury.

"When an athlete has an injury

that is life threatening, he knows his athletic career is over," he says. "Usually their academic performance goes up, and you have a different person performing an academic role."

Picou says an athletes' academic performance improves because playing professional sports is no longer feasible.

The key to being both a student and an athlete is to have a separate career that is unrelated to sports.

"I see the whole problem in terms of role-conflict, in terms of guidance, and people realistically getting assessments of their chance for filling that glamour (pro sports)

occupation," he says.

The bottom line for student-athletes at A&M is to be able to get a degree, says Jackie Sherrill, Athletic Director and Head Football Coach.

"We make ways and means through our athletic counseling service to give them all the support they need to progress toward a degree," Sherrill says. "We also try to involve the academic community to give us support."

Sherrill says the student-athlete faces more pressures in their college career.

"The student-athlete is a unique type of person," Sherrill says. "Not only does he carry the responsibility of a student, but he also carries the responsibility of an athlete. The pressures are a lot greater than a regular student."

Trying to mix social and academic life with athletics is the student-athlete's biggest problem.

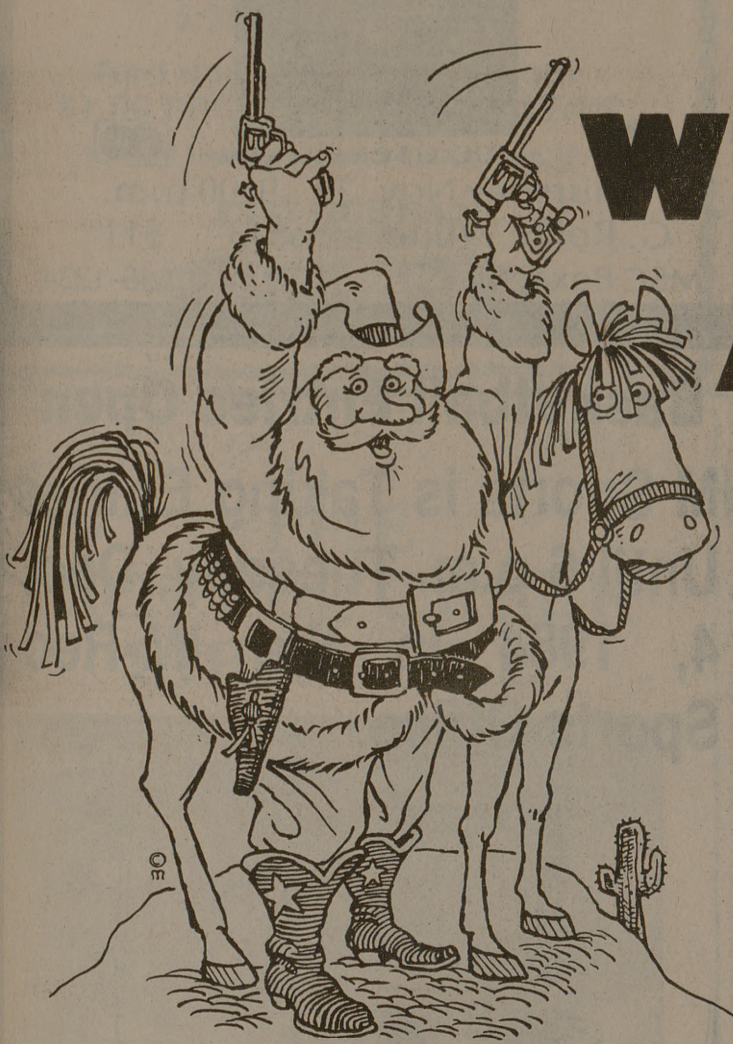
"You get an athlete who comes out of high school into college and all of sudden he tries to study like he did in high school and it just doesn't work," he says. "It's the first time these athletes have been away from home and the demands as well as the peer pressure are greater."

NCAA Proposition 48, 49-B and 56, which deal with creating standards that promote academic preparation of prospective high school athletes, will benefit the current athletic system.

"These propositions will help us because we are pretty much along those lines anyway," he says. "We have a committee made up of faculty, assistant deans and so forth who review possible incoming athlete's transcripts to see if they are admitted or not."

Once incoming student-athletes are admitted to Texas A&M, it is up to Don Hunt, academic counselor for the Texas A&M athletic department.

See ATHLETES, page 8



What's The Holdup? Are You Waiting for Christmas?

THIS IS THE LAST WEEK.

Junior Senior & Grad Class
Pictures for The Yearbook ARE NOW
Being Taken At The **PAVILION**
Through Friday Nov. 30th