

Opinion

Go ahead and pick a number, any number

Ya' know, being a student at here at Texas A&M is a lot like being in Las Vegas. Now wait a minute! Before you go ranting, raving and wondering what I've been smoking that would make me say such an absurd thing, let me present my argument.



Suna Purser

Just as the student pays big bucks, hoping to win a piece of paper called a diploma. Nothing says the gambler's bet will pay off. Likewise, nothing guarantees the student will win a diploma. Unless, of course, the student has studied the odds and calculated the probability of graduating, and thus successfully played the numbers.

"Ridiculous!" you say. "What is all this wild stuff about playing the numbers? What does that have to do with me here at A&M?"

Consider this: you pay a certain number of dollars to take a certain Scholastic Aptitude Test, the objective of which is to win big and score the highest possible number of points. If you beat the odds and win this numbers game, you submit your winnings to University X, in the form of SAT scores and an application.

Depending on University X's minimum wager (lowest possible SAT scores required for admission) you are either allowed to raise the bet (enter University X) or fold and go home.

Let's say you get lucky: you decide to raise the bet. Suppose you decide to go to Texas A&M, which has a student population of say, some 38,000 — give or take a few hundred. This is a LARGE number indeed. You must then play an intricate numbers game called phone registration.

On any given registration day, several thousand students may be trying to access a total number of (?) phone lines, which yields of poor probability of winning on the first hand. Should you decide to stay in the game and eventually DO win a hand, you must proceed v-e-r-y carefully in order to keep your winnings or you'll be "cut off" so to speak.

First you must enter your social security number, followed by your personal identification number. Then you must enter the correct code numbers for subject, course, section, and any additional fees such as parking or meal plans. Suppose you win this hand.

Feeling cocky, you move to the next higher level of risk called paying tuition

and registration fees. At this point, you must wager a V-E-R-Y large number of dollars or else you're out of the game: a grim prospect after having done so well thus far. But suppose you go ahead and place your bet. This keeps you in and the pressure to win — called taking classes — intensifies.

When you show up for class, you find that there is INDEED a very large number of students taking the same class — say 200. Clearly, you are not only playing a numbers game, you ARE a number. Obviously, the object of this game is, again, to win big by scoring the largest possible number of points on a specified number of exams. This is where homework comes in: figuring the probabilities and the odds — for or against — of beating the house.

Suppose you decide to go for broke and give it all you have. You do well that semester and win a 2.95746802 GPR. But it isn't over yet. You must continue playing the numbers, figuring the odds and calculating the probabilities for a minimum number of semesters: a total of eight if you're on the four-year plan.

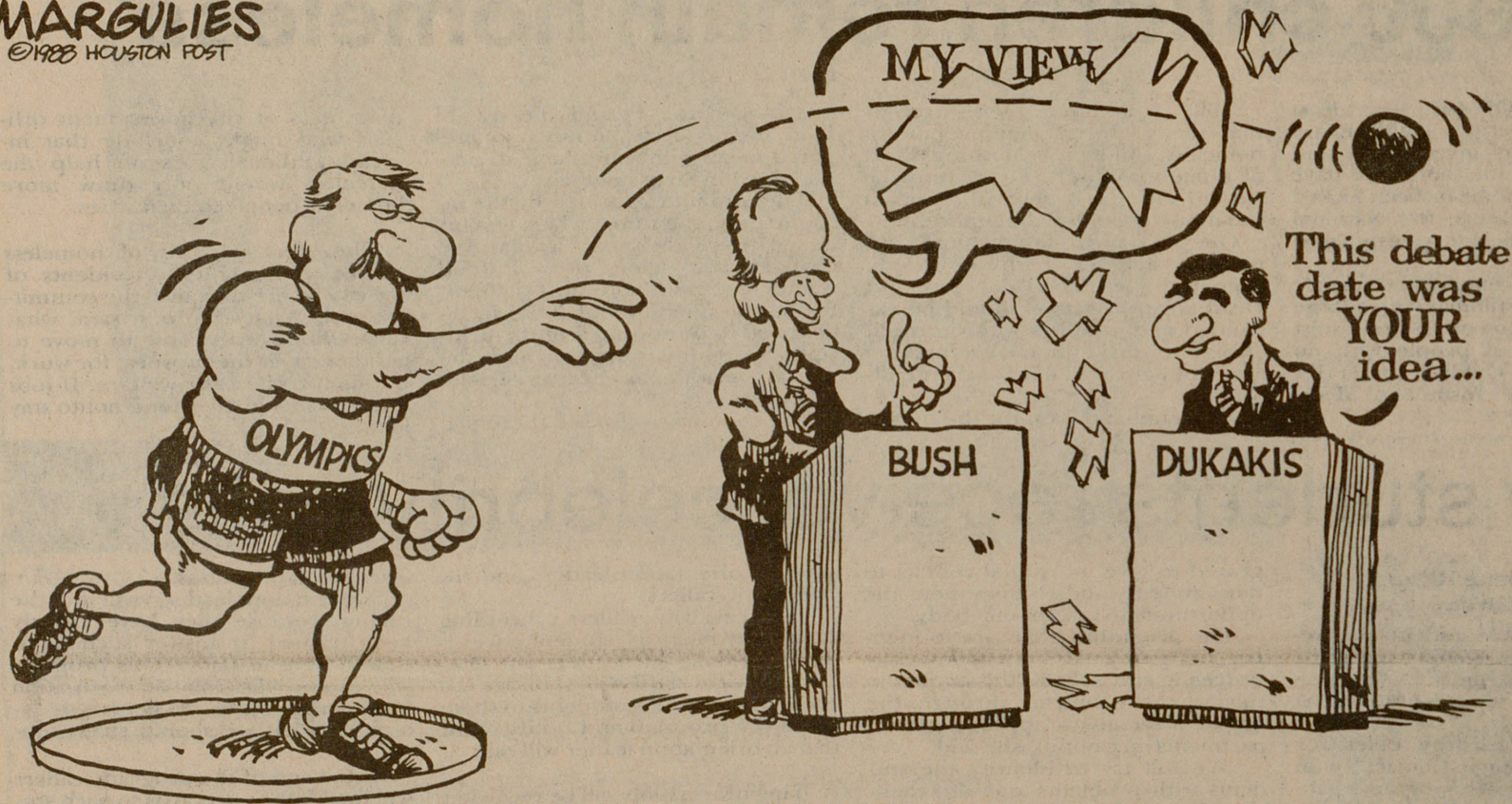
Of course, if you're on the four-year plan (which many of us are), the level of risk increases. The level, then, is a function of time. As time passes, the number of dollars you have to stay in the game increases as the total number of gamblers, which naturally increases the pressure to win at the same time lowers the odds.

BUT, if you do well, this allows you to go to the floor show, commonly known as commencement. This is where winners converge to collect their winnings and to go crazy.

Here, you are definitely a gambler on the roulette wheel of Numbers, numbers, numbers. You gamble, trying to win, betting money. I guess what it all boils down to is that you can be summed up all "just another brick in the wall" numbers game called higher education.

Suna Purser is a journalist, a graduate student in English, and a columnist for The Battalion.

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Good ole Lew for Vice President

Vice president George Bush, the Republican nominee for president, has announced he has chosen as his running mate newspaper columnist Lewis Grizzard.



Shortly after Bush's surprise announcement, however, media attention turned to Grizzard's past, and political experts began to indicate if Bush sticks with his choice he could be in big trouble in the November election.

At Grizzard's first news conference, reporters came down hard on the fact the 41-year-old Atlantan has been married and divorced three times.

"How can a man with your kind of marital record appeal to female voters?" asked a female reporter.

"Why don't you go home and shave and then come back and we'll discuss it," Grizzard said, bringing notice to the unsightly facial hair near the woman's upper lip.

"Did you serve in Vietnam?" was also asked of the candidate.

"No," he replied. "I flunked the physical."

It was learned that doctors diagnosed Grizzard as having a leaking heart valve in 1968. The columnist subsequently has had two heart surgeries to repair the valve.

Grizzard's cardiologist, when asked about the operations, indicated Grizzard used heavy doses of morphine in both instances and often walked the halls of the hospital during his convalescence without snapping all the buttons on his hospital gown.

It was also noted Grizzard currently has a porcine (pig) valve and is known to wallow in mud puddles and make distinct oinking sounds while having his back scratched.

The Eastern liberal press, meanwhile, has been having a field day with Grizzard's image as a good ol' boy redneck.

"The man is simply devoid of culture," wrote the Washington Post Style section.

"He eats fried chicken with his fingers, drinks beer out of a can and is consumed with the success of the University of Georgia's football team, the 'Dawgs' — ugh!"

It was reported in Newsweek, mean-

while, that Grizzard is a known gambler who often wagers as much as five dollars on a golf match and has been known to double on the back nine.

Said one of Grizzard's golfing friends, "He'll also move his ball in the rough, if you don't keep an eye on the son-of-a-..."

One of Grizzard's ex-wives, meanwhile, appeared on "Good Morning America" and described life with the vice presidential hopeful.

Said the former Mrs. Grizzard, "He snores, belches, doesn't cut his toenails, leaves his dirty underwear on the floor, won't eat leafy green vegetables, thinks anybody who doesn't like Conway Twitty is a Communist and Spam is his favorite food."

"The only thing Grizzard should be running for," said commentator George Will, also appearing on GMA, "is the city limits."

And this just in: The Bush campaign has scheduled a major news conference for tomorrow morning. Speculation is Grizzard will be dumped from the ticket and will be replaced by, in the words of a high-level Bush aide, an exciting, young family man, patriot and senator from the Midwest.

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Mail Call

Another amendment to Aggie Code

EDITOR:

Indeed, the Aggie Code of Honor has been modified in recent years. In response to recent allegations by our athletic department, W. Marc Connors suggested that the Aggie Code should simply state: "Aggies don't steal."

I would like to remind everyone of the blatant theft in front of a national television audience — by the 12th Man Kickoff Team no less — of Tim Brown's towel during the 1988 Cotton Bowl.

So it would be more appropriate to amend the Code to say: "Aggies don't cheat, or steal except when it pertains to Cotton Bowls."

I have to wonder where the logic is in sacrificing our honor for world peace.

Robert J. Livingston '85
Graduate student

I'm a stand by my coach man

EDITOR:

Where have your whining accusations been for the last four years? Jackie Sherrill has taken a team from the doldrums of complacency to a pinnacle of performance. We hope that you have been off in a library cubicle while the Fightin' Texas Aggies have been winning games on the field. We would not want you to have rooted for a team with a so-called "cloud of shame" hanging over their head.

We are proud of our Aggies and of the coach who brought the winning tradition back to College Station.

Greg Fisher '89

Attention, computer thieves

EDITOR:

A rotten thing happened to friend of mine Saturday, Sept. 10th. Someone stole his Macintosh SE from Rm. 505 Soil Crops Sciences & Entomology.

You may think, "These things happen — even in Aggieland." But this is different. The thief not only took his computer, but his dissertation for his Ph.D. Without a dissertation, he doesn't graduate.

I'd like to make a suggestion to the thief. You've already got his computer about returning his dissertation and software? It's all on the hard disk, as you already be aware. Please make a copy of the material and slip it under the door of SCSE Rm. 505. No questions asked; no accusations made.

Julie Scott
Graduate student

Peace be with you

EDITOR:

While I was on vacation, a fatherly type, conservative man saluted me with his fingers. Although I narrowly missed being included as a baby-boomer, my generation knows what a peace-sign looks like. But I didn't think he did, so I innocently asked, "Two what?"

"No. Peace," he explained, looking somewhat puzzled that I hadn't gotten it. I passed it off as an older man trying to recapture his youth. Then after I returned to College Station, I saw a clunker with faded blue paint and an old peace-sign. It stared at me like a relic out of my past. I smilingly pointed it out to my baby-boomer husband. He smiled, as he too remembered those days.

Then today, on campus, I saw a huge black peace sign on a new, looks-like-never-been-washed white T-shirt. The eight-inch symbol with inch-wide lines couldn't be missed.

Is there something going on that I've missed? Could it be that peace has become an important enough issue that people are dusting off the rebellious symbol of the '60s and '70s here at Texas A&M?

Nah. It must be merely coincidence. But just in case, I know I can still salute others with a peace-sign. I taught my daughter to show people she was two.

Loree Lewis Eubank
Office of Public Information

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The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

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The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.

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