

## Skewed priorities give athletes millions

Real heroes compensated by personal satisfaction, not fame or fortune

Athletes are paid too much for the work they do - period. Putting down the heroes of our popular culture is potential social suicide, but some perspective is needed after watching the latest hockey and basketball playoff games. Athletes are put on such high pedestals that when they do fall - or are knocked down - they are destroyed when they hit rock bottom. Having the ability to put a ball through a hoop, hit a ball far or run fast with a pigskin are admirable traits. The problem lies in that other heroes, legitimate heroes, are everywhere and are too often overlooked.

**CHRIS S. COBB**

Columnist



For instance, can you remember the person who taught you how to read? Was it a parent, a relative, your first-grade teacher? This person, whoever it was, is certainly worthy of praise. They contributed much to your life, probably more than you will ever know. Are they not worthy of being remembered? Of course they are. That person deserves to hear the roar of a crowd as much as Michael Jordan, Wayne Gretzky or any other professional athlete.

Athletes can make great role models. Just ask Charles "I am not a role model" Barkley - but many do not seem to live up to the standards that society places upon them, even if the athletes want the responsibility.

Dennis Rodman is definitely not an upstanding citizen on the basketball court. Off the court he may resemble Mother Teresa, but even if he does, the general public will never hear about his acts of goodwill. We are more concerned about how many points he scores, his number of rebounds, how many other players he injures...

The main problem with athletes is not the players as individuals. They have talents and should be rewarded for their abilities. They are only a small part of the law of supply and demand. People pay to see them and, by performing, the athletes are just living up to their fans' expectations. But, professional athletes' salaries are ridiculously high. Shaquille O'Neal's earnings in his first year of playing professional basketball, including commercials and endorsements, will be more than many people ever dream about. To equal O'Neal and Michael Jordan's combined

something out of their class. These people are happy to know the work they do is appreciated. They are happy to know their message is being heard. They are happy to know how many are making a positive impact on people's lives.

How many people know how much their favorite sports star gets paid? More are interested in knowing this than the average salary of a teacher, firefighter or police officer. The pay scale is very lopsided. The starting salary for a teacher in Texas is only \$17,000 a year. The starting salary for a firefighter is only \$24,500 and the maximum salary in Dallas is \$32,025. A police officer's starting salary in San Antonio is only \$24,048 and the maximum salary is \$36,108. This is almost nothing compared to athletes' salaries. For instance, the minimum salary for a professional baseball player is \$109,000 a year. Last year, Ryne Sandberg signed a contract worth \$6,329,213.

Sports fans are not surprised to hear that athletes regularly renegotiate their contracts for more money. It is an expected activity for sports stars. Those people working regular jobs to support their families constantly face obstacles which often prevent even "token" pay raises. Are our priorities straight?

We must ask ourselves, aren't all the regular, everyday heroes in our lives worth more to us than these wages? Are athletes more deserving of our adoration? Who do we depend on more on a daily basis? Who educated us? Who will educate future generations? Who will do their best to keep us safe? Do they not earn their modest salaries? They deserve more than just higher salaries. They deserve our respect - as much as any athlete.

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## EDITORIAL

# STILL ASKING, TELLING

Military ignores sexual orientation policy

A federal judge's June 1 order for the Washington National Guard to reinstate Col. Margarethe Cammermeyer poignantly coincided with news of the U.S. military's lack of compliance with the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. At least two instances indicate that more than a few officers have refused to follow that order.

Robert S. Nadel, a Marine sergeant stationed in Okinawa, was court-martialed for "alleged homosexual acts." The Marines also moved to discharge

ask confidential questions about his sexual orientation. The psychologist found him "fit for full duty," but Blaessing's superiors used the report to "prove" that he was gay.

These witch hunts are continuing long after they were ordered to stop. Homosexuals are being denied the equal opportunity to serve in the armed forces.

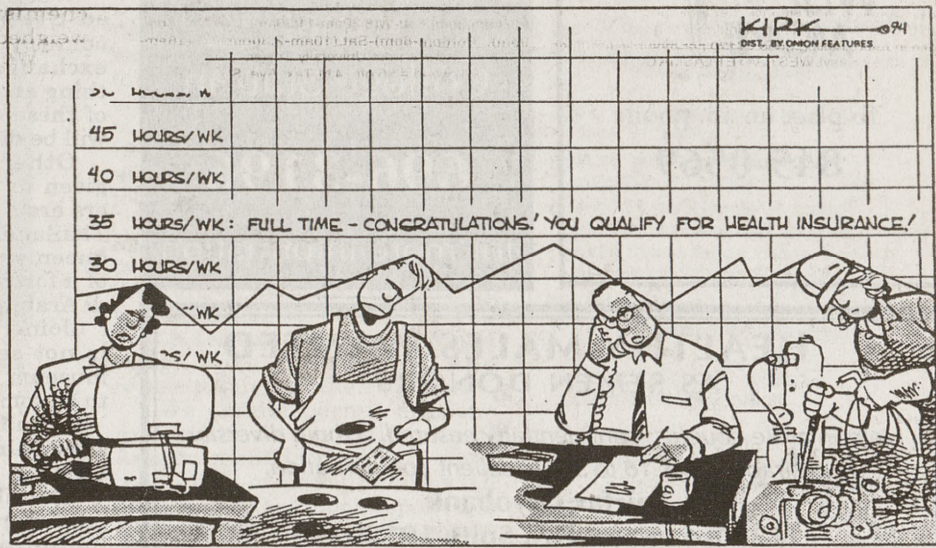
It is time for the American military to realize that homosexuals can serve the United States with as much distinction,

bravery or valor as heterosexuals.

Every time a highly-decorated soldier is discharged on the sole basis of sexual orientation, the military commits an injustice to all Americans and hurts itself by losing a defender who serves this country well.

The argument most often used by opponents of gays in the military maintains they will hurt morale and jeopardize the close bonding which occurs in military units. In some instances this problem might occur, but banning gays is not a just solution. Opponents of racial integration in the armed forces used the same argument.

The only just solution requires others to change their attitude towards accepting homosexuals as fellow soldiers and human beings. As Barry Goldwater, Republican candidate for the 1968 presidential election and staunch conservative, has said: "[Soldiers] don't need to be straight, just shoot straight."



ANOTHER GLASS CEILING



**MAIL CALL**

## Sports view lacks insight

Brian Coats' May 31 sports column lacks insight. A sportswriter's job should be to get people interested in sports, as well as report the facts.

First, the Houston Rockets won the NBA Western Conference with a solid victory over the Utah Jazz, and the Rockets are hosting the majority of the NBA Finals with their home court advantage. Will an apocalypse occur? Next, the Houston Astros were in first place in the National League Central division, and the Texas Rangers first in the American League West division. How can anyone condemn first place for lack of effort? Lastly, Coats describe baseball as "basebrawl," and also labeled a football hit that left a human being in a condition where he is "still eating Jell-O through a straw with a prosthetic jaw" as his fondest memory of Texas A&M football. It is hypocritical to demean baseball for a few fights and then praise football for breaking a man's jaw in multiple places.

Please - find something positive to write about sports.

Quinton Skinner  
Class of '95

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# Christianity, Buddhism offer similar message

About 2,000 years ago a young man dedicated his life to helping other people escape suffering. He became a great teacher and led his followers to freedom from endless earthly toil. Sound like Jesus Christ? It is also the story of a man named Siddhartha, who became known as Buddha.

For many years I thought Eastern religions were synonymous with a trip to the head shop in tie-dye and clouds of pot smoke. It turns out the only hippie peace signs surrounding this religion are put there by sensationalists. I know a Tibetan Buddhist monk who teaches out of an apartment in Houston. He is a kind, normal man with a sense of humor and a diverse following of devoted, intelligent students. Visitors are rarely allowed to leave until they have taken some refreshment. A friend says he sounds like her Methodist pastor. Interesting parallel.

Some of the most interesting people follow the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. Others follow the Japanese branch of Zen Buddhism. Chris Isaac, Harrison Ford, Cindy Crawford and Richard Gere are a few of the unlikely Buddhists whom you may recognize.

It is possible the person sitting next to you in the cowboy hat and Ropers practices the Buddhist religion in theory. I can say this in confidence because Christian and Buddhist tenets are similar. It has been suggested in the book "The Christ and the Bodhisattva" that Jesus and Buddha were both "Bodhisattvas" - people sent to help people gain happiness and enlightenment. The idea of "love your neighbor" echoes throughout both religions. The Buddhists go further by suggesting not only to love your neighbor but also to show compassion for the putz when he plants his car over your mailbox. My Episcopalian texts tell me "God is love," while at the same time a Buddha tells me "Buddha is compassion." Basically, these messages are the same.

Many Christians are terribly disillusioned with Christianity when they learn what Christians do in the name of "love." The Crusades against the Saracens and countless other wars in the name of God, who commanded against killing, came to light

throughout my education. I stopped reading the newspapers and watching the news because of the constant reminder that the root of several conflicts around the world was religion. News reports of holy war after holy war convinced formerly-devout Christians in my circle of friends that practicing the basics of Christian love was fruitless in the light of so much hatred.

Many televangelists gave modern Christianity a bad name through revelations of their fraudulent and hypocritical activities in the face of all they were preaching. While Jesus Christ had some good ideas, many were lost through thousands of

translations of the Bible. I began to study other religions in search of a solution.

There are many parallels between the lives of Jesus and Buddha. The main difference is that Jesus died before his lessons could be written down from his own mouth instead of through stories about him, while Buddha, after reaching enlightenment, lived until he was 82 and made extensive notes before he died on how he discovered enlightenment.

Although the philosophies of both Christianity and Tibetan Buddhism are similar, the compassion at the base of each Buddhist's religion seems to have held through practices as well as preaching. When the Chinese conquered the Tibetan Buddhist capital of Lhasa in 1959, the Buddhists did not fight back. They fled to India rather than kill their invaders in self-defense. Some "draft dodgers" are called "conscientious objectors" because of this religious idea: all life is sacred, and to kill is a sure way to derail a Buddhist on the enlightenment track.

The root of the Mahayana branch of Buddhist philosophy is a slight paradox, but extremely helpful in understanding the religion for me. Through compassion for all things, Buddhist practitioners will reach enlightenment. But because they have compassion for all things, the Mahayana will turn down going to heaven until everyone else gains enlightenment.

A Buddhist very close to me put it this way: "Hell is a room full of piles of delicious and perfectly prepared food, but all of the people in the room are starving because their arms will not bend and they cannot get the food to their mouths. Everyone is wailing and dying of hunger in the midst of all the food. Heaven is the same room, the same food and everyone has the same problem where their arms will not bend to their mouths, but they are all feeding one another. Compassion."

Many ideas in the Christian world have eroded from true brotherly love to Christmas merchandising. Yet closer examination of Christianity and Buddhism - seemingly opposed philosophies - reveals the same message: through compassion and wisdom we all can help each other to glory.



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