

Olympic winnings won't be measured by medals

The Star-Spangled Banner is something many Americans will be humming for the next couple of weeks.



JAMES FRANCIS
STAFF WRITER

From July 19 to Aug. 2, the 26th Olympic Games will hold its 14-day run of events in Atlanta, Ga. While many medal hopefuls will have their eyes focused on gold, silver or bronze and hearts in the United States will be ablaze with red, white and blue, a large number of individuals will only see green.

It's high time for people to start recognizing the Olympic Games for what they really are — an innocent ladybug that the praying mantis of marketing and sales devours every four years.

You've all seen the advertisements, all the commercial endorsements that continuously air on a certain television broadcasting station at least eight hours a day: "This year, watch as superstars Dominique Dawes and Shannon Miller go for the gold at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, and you can see it all here ... on NBC."

What a crock. As athletes strive to achieve their lifelong dreams, the only thing that will be golden are the ratings of network television.

And it's not just NBC's fault for hosting the games, nor is it the blunder of family households that will happen to be connected to their Nielsen box come mid-July — everyone looks forward to seeing a good mix of athletes in tense competition.

The error is brought forth when medalists and those who would overcome personal setbacks are thrust into the spotlight as means to compensate industry high-rollers.

Sure, Michael Jordan can play a mean game of basketball, and he will no doubt be a valuable asset to the Dream Team. And yes, he receives a great deal of payback from his many commercial endorsements.

But just think for a moment. Every time a Nike ad is flashed upon

the screen and faces of kids and adults light up, the return to this shoe-selling giant is tenfold.

Suddenly, Jordan is portrayed as a great athlete because of his shoes and immediately people want to mirror him in their own lives.

This is all fine and dandy for Jordan and Nike, but what about the individual favored to win a gold medal but becomes tragically injured and must wait another four years for a shot at stardom?

Figure skaters, gymnasts and track runners alike can attest to the pains of wrist sprains, torn ligaments and upper respiratory infections that arise at the most unexpected times.

An injured athlete has spent a lifetime preparing, training and mentally strengthening him- or herself for a chance to shine in the spotlight and reach a desired goal.

What happens now? The network (sorry to refer back to television, but it is the 20th century) still gets air time by presenting a short to lengthy history of the fallen athlete.

And although this may seem to have good intentions, the network only doubles its benefits because now, instead of just chronicling the life of the athlete who would have been a medal contender, it can add to its account the story of an unknown, rising to beat out the competition and overcome the odds.

Worldwide, especially in the United States, athletes dedicate lots of money to further their careers in sporting events that are dear to their hearts.

Their money is used and abused whether they win or not, and more lose in the big picture.

For the winners, in come the endorsements that make an unknown face famous.

As for the losers — although keep in mind, no one really loses at the Olympics, for getting there is half a dream come true — some may find themselves replaying taped file footage of their life's dream gone wrong on an NBC special.

James Francis is a Class of '99 accounting major

Tuition hikes will solve problems



JENNI HOWARD
COLUMNIST

In 1995, Texas A&M University was ranked by U.S. News and World Report as 5th among national universities in providing a quality education for what students pay.

There is no question as to A&M's ability to stretch every dollar. However, it seems no one knows what A&M should do when it runs out of dollars to stretch.

Various departments have recently encountered difficulties in providing more sections of classes to students. Among these classes are technical writing (ENGL 210 and 301) and first-year Spanish courses.

Students are justifiably upset that A&M does not provide enough classes for the students who need them. But once the problem has been identified, it is the responsibility of both the administration and the students to figure out a way to solve it.

In the case of the unavailability of classes, the basic problem lies in a lack of funding for more sections of necessary classes. In a recent Battalion article highlighting the lack of technical writing classes, Dr. Woodrow Jones Jr., dean of the College of Liberal Arts, stated the budget for liberal arts "is simply not adequate for a university of this size."

And in a recent guest column, Steve Oberhelman, head of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, cited the source of the unavailability of first-year Spanish classes as a lack of funding from the state legislature. He also added that "the students must realize their share of the costs of their education (currently, 20 percent) should be increased on the national level (25 percent)."

There is no doubt Texas A&M needs more funding for education, and no one seems to have a problem with placing the blame on the lack of funding by the state legislature. But to raise tuition?

The idea of those fee statements getting higher and higher is not a popular idea with the student body or its parents. No one wants to pay more, yet it is clear that money is the root of the problem with class availability.

Among the reasons for our discomfort with the idea of higher tuition is that many students are already struggling to get through school. Another problem is that many don't want to pay for benefits they will never see. Why pay higher tuition rates if you don't have a problem getting into classes?

These problems should be considered when determining whether or not to leave the students with the bill of improving our education. But there is a point where students must stand back from the situation and consider the overall benefits of raising tuition.

Even if it doesn't increase, students are already paying the costs in the form of fewer classes and consequently less preparation for their careers.

An example is the Modern and Classical Language Department's decision to decrease the foreign language requirement for B.A. students to only six hours. The problem is that they've designated those six hours to be in second-year Spanish. They did this to decrease the demand for first-year Spanish courses, hoping to deflect some of the demand to Blinn Community College. The only problem is if a student takes Spanish 101 and 102 at Blinn, it is difficult to continue at Texas A&M because the programs progress at different paces.

What is most unfortunate about this change in requirements is that most students will need to rely on speaking Spanish more than any other foreign language if they plan to work in Texas. The requirements at Texas A&M for learning to speak Spanish may decrease, but life beyond college has not changed its demands.

The subject of funding increases in our education is complex, and the idea of tuition hikes is a solution most people would like to avoid. The last thing I want to do is write home and tell my dad my latest column topic is on why he should pay even more money for me to go to school. I don't even have a problem getting the classes I want and could easily say this is not my problem.

But when the administration makes decisions, I don't expect it to consider whether it is a problem for me, but whether it is a cost to the student body as a whole. The solutions seem to lie in getting more funding from the legislature, raising tuition rates or student fees, or a combination of both. If one is not open to the idea of raising tuition rates, then he or she should contact our representatives in the state legislature.

Jenni Howard is a Class of '96 economics and international studies major



MAIL CALL

Rock climbers regularly damage the environment

The article by April Towery in the July 9 Battalion was very interesting and well-written, but I must take extreme exception with one statement in the article attributed to Gene Kim. He stated that rock climbers were not responsible for damaged and spray-painted rocks. This statement is so untrue that I am amazed that Kim could say this with a straight face.

Anyone who has ever been close to an area that is frequented by climbers will not see a pristine rock. Instead, there will see hundreds to thousands of white marks and circles drawn on the rock faces by climbers who feel the need to mark their routes. Many rock climbers now often carry portable electric drills so they can drill finger holds to make their climbing easier. Some are even so lazy that they rapel down the rock so they can prepare new routes marking each newly drilled hole with spray paint.

Admittedly, many more environmentally conscious climbers decry such defacement of climbing areas, but it still occurs and was even chronicled in some climbing magazines as of a few years ago when I last looked at a climbing magazine. Nothing defaces my pleasure at going to some almost pristine spot than seeing the white blotches barking climbing routes up rock faces. No one can convince me that white spray-painted circles over a hundred feet up a sheer rock wall is the result of campers or teenagers.

It is time for rock climbers to clean up their act and quit lying to the public and hiding their heads in the sand to prevent admitting accountability for their actions. If climbers cannot climb a rock without using a spray-painted route and an electric drill, they should give up the sport. If the real climbers cannot accept responsibility for the actions of the less pure climbers, then all climbing should be prohibited.

Norman White
Research Associate

Battalion misleads readers about Reveille's health

In the July 1 issue of The Battalion, the front page contained a photograph of Reveille VI. This picture showed her with various ailments. This letter is to explain that our mascot is not suffering and has not suffered from any of these ailments. I assure you that the first lady of Texas A&M is in fine health and is in good care with the mascot corporal, Lance Hill, and Company E-2. Hopefully this will clear up any misconceptions that might have been formed due to negligence by The Battalion staff.

Harold Brent
Class of '98

Lowering standards hurts University retention rates

Thursday's Batt ran an article on Dean of Faculties and Associate Provost William Perry's recommendations concerning the Hopwood decision. He planned to enrich our wonderful University with diversity by lowering the influence of SAT scores and high school GPAs in admission considerations. Elsewhere in that issue a report stated that a number of surveyed schools have a college graduation rate that is at its lowest level in more than a decade.

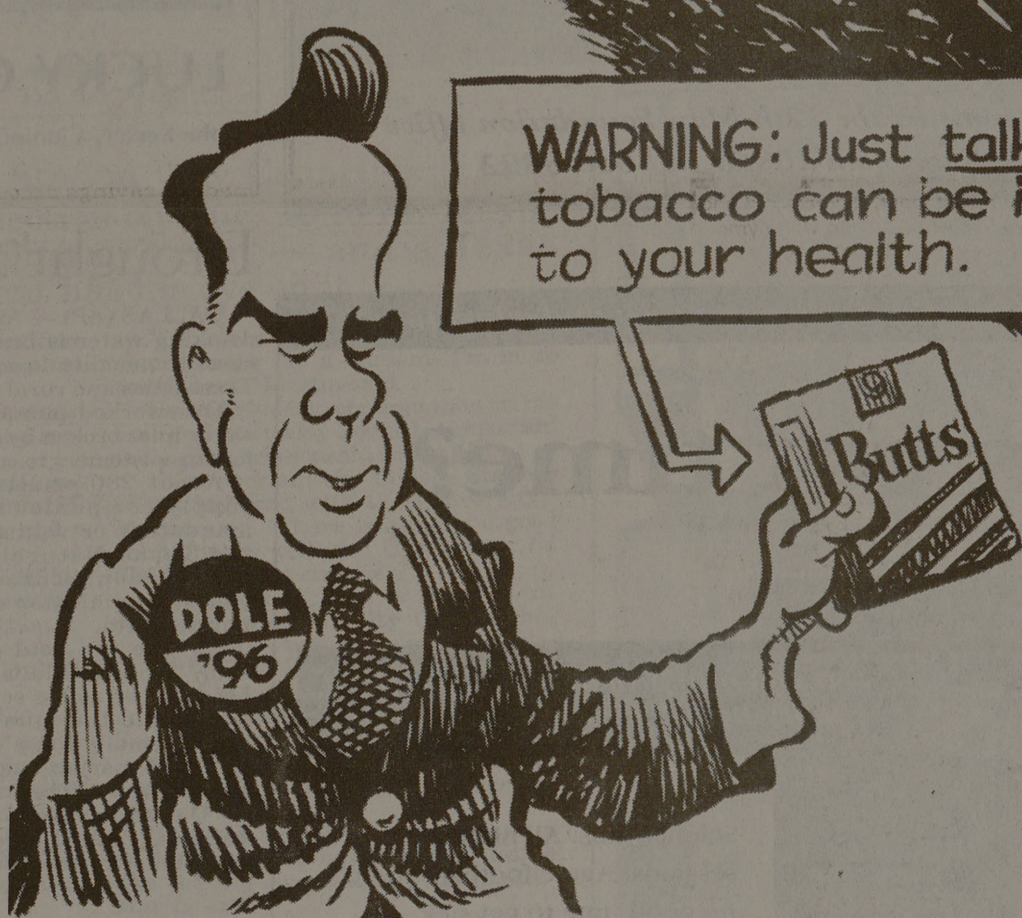
Maybe this curtailing of academic standards in the name of diversity that has been going on for years has an effect on dropout rates. Just maybe.

Kerry Olenick
Class of '99

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald. A valid student ID is required. Letters may also be mailed to:

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A&M employees face on-the-job dangers

It has happened to everyone who has ever worked retail.

The day is passing leisurely — sales are average, crowds are average. Until one irate customer goes insane. The yelling, thrashing monster screams at the sales rep for being a student, for being short-tempered or for just being short.

Scenes like this happen all the time, and what can a pathetic minimum-wage worker do except shrug the whole thing off? Well, the worker can be grateful to be alive.

In a recent study measuring violence in the workplace, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health ranked the most dangerous jobs in the nation. Of course, taxicab driver was number one on the list for homicides. Surprisingly enough, though, most incidents of violence occurred in retail.

As I was reading the study results early one morning over a bagel and coffee, I couldn't help but wonder what the five most dangerous jobs at Texas A&M are. Here are the results of my own very unofficial survey.

5. Retail positions at the local bookstores may not be dangerous on a normal day, but the risk obviously increases during textbook buy-back



MARCUS GOODYEAR
COLUMNIST

time. A student trots down to his or her favorite bookstore hoping for a night on the town in exchange for the \$70 "Mating Practices of Desert Animals," and instead receives 50 cents and the exciting news that a new edition of "Mating Practices" has just been printed.

The student still hopes for at least a movie ticket from a kinesiology text, but the \$20 book on good jogging techniques (still in the plastic wrap) is one of those that bookstores just don't buy back.

Obviously, the safety of this bookstore employee is in serious danger.

4. Only slightly less dangerous than A&M-related retail is the position of gay and lesbian literature professor. Students enrolled in the class would also be in danger were it not for the recently instituted anonymous enrollment plan. For only a few extra fees, students can make use of the A&M-developed disguises: a Corps uniform, Groucho Marx glasses or a paper bag with eye holes.

3. Sometimes danger hides in obscure places such as the J. Wayne Stark Gallery. Since few students ever set foot in this wonderful museum, the job of receptionist can lead to dangerous levels of boredom and, if left unchecked, death.

2. The second most dangerous job at A&M is that of a PTTS officer. Not only does one risk incurring the wrath of many students by giving them parking tickets equal to their tuition, but

one must wear those tight shorts that cut off the circulation to one's legs. The danger is increased by the fact that the irate customer is not behind a counter, but behind the wheel of a car.

1. Finally, the most dangerous job on campus is driving an A&M bus for the simple fact that drivers get paid to drive on Texas Avenue and University Drive. The threats of careless Aggie drivers, inadequate roads and poorly synchronized traffic lights can lead to dangerously intense stress. Those unlucky enough to drive the variety without air-conditioning have the added danger of sweating to death.

Fortunately, none of Aggieand's most dangerous jobs were brutal enough to make the national survey. Unfortunately, the A&M system will probably now believe all of its jobs are utterly safe and euphorically happy. Aggieand employers will pat themselves on the back for taking good care of their workers. And the real dangers of some A&M jobs, such as sales, will continue to remain unaddressed.

As usual, we minimum-wage peons must take care of ourselves. We can't improve the lighting, change cash-handling procedures or increase the late-night staff, but we can be aware of the danger of violent customers. After all, the anticipation of a threat can be the best prevention of workplace violence.

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