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College Hoops needs a T.O.

Vitale says NCAA should reexamine scholarship system

By CHRIS FERRELL
Sports editor

Dick Vitale can see a problem in college basketball. He knows it is not the same game it was when he began coaching over three decades ago, and it is not the same game as it was when he began covering college basketball for ESPN in 1979.

Now, the nation's top college basketball analyst, who was in town last weekend to speak at the "Bogey with Barone" dinner, said college basketball and football need to reevaluate their current policies to make them more relevant to modern times.

"We have a problem right now," Vitale said. "We have a major problem in college athletics that people are trying to hide and don't want to address. The problem is in football and basketball, both revenue sports."

"We have too many kids in college today who don't belong here, who don't deserve to be here. Academically, they can't handle it and don't want to be here in any shape or form. They're here because they can stroke the jump shot or they can run with the football. When their eligibilities are gone, they're gone."

Vitale said letting people into college who do not belong there is bad for the university and is unfair to both the players and potential players. "I think it's a crime to take a kid and put him



DAVE HOUSE/THE BATTALION

Dick Vitale speaks at the "Bogey with Barone" dinner Friday night at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

sports can go on to the minor leagues, learn their trade. It's more of a sin to take a kid on the collegiate level and put him on a campus and put him in a classroom with kids who really want to be there and have earned the right to be there with their resume in high school.

"There are a lot of beautiful kids out there who would love that opportunity, who would give their heart and soul. We need more David Robinsons, we need more Grant Hills. We need more people who do it the right way, both as athletes and as students."

With the early jumps to the NBA becoming more and more prevalent, Vitale said he worries about the college game. The players he once labeled 'Diaper Dandies,' the nation's top freshmen, are now NBA lottery picks.

Despite the early exits, Vitale said he was pleasantly surprised by what he found when he started covering games last season.

"The year before we lose Allen Iverson, Stephon Marbury, Ray Allen, we lose Marcus Camby and Shareef Abdur-Rahim, five legitimate big time All-Americans," he said. "I was so down. I said the college game is over, we're never going to have the quality."

"Boy was I wrong. I did my first game. The enthusiasm was unbelievable. Then I started doing

the games Kansas, Cincinnati, Carolina, Duke. You know what, nobody cared that these stars went off to the NBA. The jersey still says Carolina, Duke, Kentucky, Michigan and Iowa and the enthusiasm at all these schools was unbelievable."

The excitement of the college game is not limited to the fans. Many of the players enjoy the experience as well and would stay in school if their circumstances were different.

However, with so many players coming from tough backgrounds, the big dollars of the NBA are often too hard to pass up. Vitale said the NCAA should step forward and give players more than they have in the past.

"The NCAA has to get out of the old school attitude," Vitale said. "I think the players today deserve more than room, board and books. I think we're living in the modern era, most of the kids who dominate the game come from the inner city or rural areas. They deserve room, board, books, tuition and a minimum of \$150 a month spending money. We want to eliminate cheating. We want to eliminate the boosters grabbing the kid. I've had kids tell me they come from places where families can't put three meals on the table. We should give the kids some money."

PLEASE SEE VITALE ON PAGE 10.

Maggert represents A&M around globe

By JAMIE BURCH
Staff writer

For a high school golfer with aspirations of one day joining the PGA Tour, deciding on a college, at which to hone his skills is the biggest decision of his young life. For 10 year PGA Tour Veteran Jeff Maggert, it was no less important.

Maggert chose to attend Oklahoma State University. But after three years as a member of the Cowboy golf team, Maggert transferred to Texas A&M.

Maggert, who attended the Iowa State versus A&M game on Saturday, said he regrets not choosing Aggie land from day one.

"Hindsight is 20/20," Maggert said. "But when your 16,17 years old trying to decide what you're going to do with your life and where to go to school ... I just kick myself everyday that I did not choose A&M when I was at that age. Fortunately I did get to come to school here."

Maggert took full advantage of the transfer and his short tenure at A&M. Maggert was an All-SWC player in '85-86, as well as an All-American for Coach Bob Ellis. He won the 1986 Morris Williams Intercollegiate, setting the existing school record with a 13-under-par total of 203, including a school record of 65. Maggert also led the Aggies to a 23rd place finish in the 1986 NCAA Championships.

"Coach Ellis put out a welcome hand for me," Maggert said. "All the Aggies I have met through my travels have just been super. It's fun to be included as part of the Aggie family everywhere you go, even though I didn't go to school here for all four years. Even over in Spain, there was a few Aggies there cheering us on."

Maggert was selected as a member of the 1997 U.S. Ryder

Cup Team, his second selection. Although the U.S. Team as a whole did not fare well against the Europeans at Valderrama Golf Club in Spain, Maggert finished with a 2-1 record. His singles victory on the final day of competition helped spark the American's spirited rally. Maggert's other victory was a doubles win with partner Scott Hoch against Europe's Nick Faldo and Lee Westwood.

Maggert said the American's loss two years earlier was more disheartening.

"It was much tougher at Oakhill in '95," Maggert said. "We kinda gave it away there playing in the U.S. Everyone was pretty upset. Over there (Spain), I think the way we played on Sunday took a lot of the bad taste out of the week."

"I know everyone was pretty down going into Sunday. But I think we left with an upbeat feeling about the way we played."

After a second straight Ryder Cup loss, many Americans have criticized the American Team selections. Maggert said due to the level of competition in both countries, an automatic American victory is unlikely.

"They (the Europeans) have a good team year in and year out," Maggert said. "Everyone expects the U.S. to win like they use to 20 or 30 years ago. That's not going to happen. There's gonna be victories on both sides. But that's what makes it fun. The competitions close every year."

Regardless of the outcome, Maggert said the Ryder Cup experience is breathtaking.

"It's hard to explain to anyone who plays at my level what that week is like. It's just more unique than any other tournament I have played in."

PLEASE SEE MAGGERT ON PAGE 10.

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DICK VITALE
BASKETBALL ANALYST

in the classroom, put him in calculus, whatever the class may be, and he has no clue," he said. "While their self-esteem is destroyed. The kid's no dummy, he knows."

"I know a lot of beautiful people. Not everyone's made for college. I call them 'Beautiful people that I know,' they didn't go to college."

Vitale said the NBA players also play a role. With the recent jumps of players such as Kevin Garnett, Kobe Bryant and Tracey McGrady making the jump from high school to the pros, Vitale said a minor league system could help the problem.

"I would like to see an NBA subsidized rookie league for kids coming out of high school like they do in baseball and like you have in hockey," he said. "So youngsters coming out in their

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