

PERSPECTIVES

NBA under fire

Actions, reinstatement of Latrell Sprewell hints at crumbling character

Some sports seem to be filled with upstanding athletes. Race-car driving, for example, is filled with well-mannered men who would never consider refusing a fan's request for an autograph. Other sports are overshadowed by celebrities whose lives are in shambles. College and professional football are both associated with long lists of arrest warrants, drug use and violence, though some officials are trying to remedy the terrible reputations associated with their sports. Some NFL coaches are cracking down on players' behavior off the field.



DAVID JOHNSTON
columnist

Basketball, on the other hand, is a different story. From the "Bad as I wanna be" Rodmans to the "I am not a role model" Barkleys, basketball teams have few players with upstanding character. Celebrities are role models. From movie stars to politicians, our notorious members of society set the example and create the trends the rest of society follows. If America wants to teach the next generation that certain actions are unacceptable, citizens should not tolerate those actions from celebrities. Sports stars are doing a disservice to the community when they demonstrate their lack of discipline. Sports are competitive events, and tempers run high. It's not surprising to see a player shove an opponent around or vent his frustrations on a referee, but recently a more shocking account has surfaced. Last December, Latrell Sprewell, a player for the Golden State Warriors, wrapped his fingers around his own coach's neck in an attempt to choke him. Sprewell had to be forcibly pulled off the coach, but the player returned later in the day to again threaten his coach's life. The public's sensibilities were not dulled enough to ignore

this heinous act. Sprewell was heavily criticized. The Warriors ended Sprewell's three-year contract and the NBA suspended him for a year.

Unfortunately, arbitration ended the firm stance which authorities had taken against Sprewell.

Sprewell felt the penalties levied against him were too extreme for attempted murder, so he appealed the rulings.

An arbitrator ruled the Golden State Warriors could not break their contract with Sprewell, and decided the NBA's one-year suspension was too harsh, shortening it to five months.

Despite any opinions about Sprewell's skills, a player who cannot control his anger toward someone on his own team should not be allowed on a basketball court.

The NBA must send a clear message that basketball is not a place for murderous tendencies.

Even if Sprewell was "stressed-out" or apologized profusely (which he did not), someone needs to speak up on behalf of the coaches.

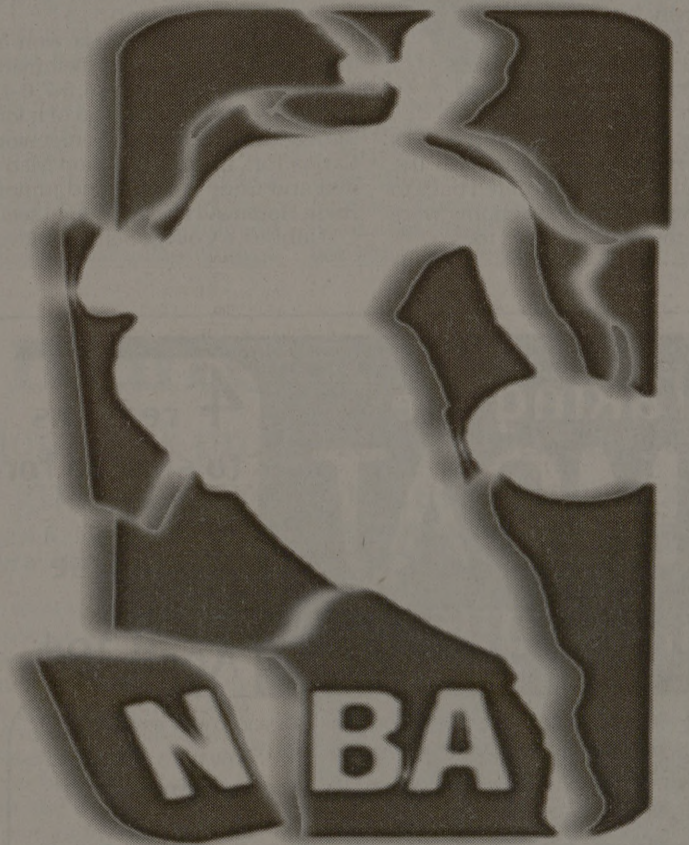
The coach was threatened, attacked and physically harmed by a player. Now the arbitrator says the Warriors have to keep Sprewell on the team unless they find some place to trade him. The arbitrator has failed to consider the coach. Hopefully no teams will insult their coaches by suggesting they accept Sprewell in a trade.

This event should not be forgotten too soon. Such miscarriages of justice often come back to haunt the decision makers.

Last week in Paducah, Kentucky, an 18-year old high school senior was charged with a misdemeanor for threatening the life of his basketball coach. Where do kids get these ideas?

Children cannot be expected to perform better than the examples they must follow. It's time for citizens to show that certain behavior is intolerable, only then can society expect improvements.

David Johnston is a senior mathematics major.



RYAN ROGERS/THE BATTALION

STUDENT LIFE

Committee offers students new option

It looks like Texas A&M students will have one less worry in the coming year.

In an effort to continue looking into matters that no one really cares about, it was announced yesterday that a new committee is being formed, Students Making Up Pointless Insane Delusions (STUPID).

STUPID was formed in an effort to provide a committee for students who are not yet in a committee.

Toby M. Portant, the newly appointed director of STUPID, is very excited about the organization.

"The lack of committees on campus has been a problem we have ignored for far too long.

I am very excited that we have finally decided to deal with the problem instead of turning it over to another committee to study," Portant said.

Portant added that STUPID has more than one purpose. "Being an outlet for high school overachievers and student body presidents isn't going to be the only purpose of STUPID," Portant said. "STUPID is a necessary addition to the numerous committees on campus because of the fear that the federal government might create more cotton candy committees than Texas A&M."

The newly formed STUPID Directions Committee has already drawn up a mission statement for the organization.

STUPID will be very involved in trying to rival the MSC for the number of new councils created and the SGA for the number of liaisons and committees concerned with studying other committees.

"But our sole mission is not to compete with the MSC and SGA, even though that will take a whole lot of energy in and of itself," Portant added. "We also plan to work hand and hand with them on many important projects."

Some of these projects include trying to get committee members' names published in *The Battalion*, passing out lots of flyers around Rudder Fountain about things which make lit-



MANISHA PAREKH
columnist

er or no sense, making members feel important, and supporting the Bryan-College Station T-shirt industry.

"It is a little known fact that the Bryan-College Station area's T-shirt industry is primarily funded by Texas A&M councils and committees. If we didn't order T-shirts for every single group, the T-shirt business owners would not be the billionaires they are today," Portant said.

STUPID also plans to support higher learning and research. "We will be very involved in helping researchers who are studying the number of committee name acronyms that can be formed using the English alphabet," Portant said.

In an attempt to appear useful, Portant said STUPID meetings will consist of debating about things that have no impact upon the lives of A&M students. The organization will also discuss events that will never take place, changes in rules that will never go into effect, as well as the addition of new committees.

"At our first meeting, I plan to propose the formation of a committee to invent reasons to form other committees," Portant said.

A&M students are divided between being enthusiastic about the new committee and ignoring its existence.

Kelly Green, a sophomore Aggie traditions major, said she thinks STUPID is a good idea.

"We need more committees for students to serve on so that they can properly pad their resumes," Green said.

"Plus so many new committees have been formed that I'm sure it must be an Aggie tradition dating back to the Old Army days."

Revy Lee, a freshman general Howdy major, thinks STUPID is something A&M truly needs.

"Bureaucracy is what has helped make America a world-class leader and bureaucracy is what will help make Texas A&M a world-class university," Lee said.

For now, at least, STUPID appears to be taking its place amongst most other committees on campus by saying little and doing even less.

Manisha Parekh is a sophomore psychology and journalism major.

CAMPUS CONNECTION

Title IX success questioned by attention paid women

"No person in the U.S. shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal aid." (Title IX)



JENNIFER JONES
columnist

The road to equality has not been an easy one for women. Gaining the right to vote, to own property, to have choice regarding our bodies have not been small obstacles to overcome.

One of the most recent wins for women's rights was scored with the 1972 passage of Title IX, a law that made it illegal to discriminate against women in an educational setting.

This meant no more preferential treatment for males. One area most notably affected by this ruling was high school and collegiate athletic departments.

Suddenly it was no longer acceptable to spend 100 percent of sport budgets solely on males.

God forbid, some schools actually had to start a women's sports program.

Although many schools, particularly high schools, still resist change, Texas A&M has definitely done its part to comply with Title IX regulations.

In 1974, two years after the passage of Title IX, A&M established the women's sports program.

In 1975-76, the Athletic Department budgeted approximately \$90,000 for five women's sports. In 1996-97, the department budgeted over \$5 million to support 10 women's sports teams.

In addition to overall budgeting, recruiting for men's and women's teams has become more equitable over the years. In 1993-94 over 72 percent of the recruiting budget was spent on men, 28 percent on women. In 1995-96, the percentages narrowed to 58 percent for men, 42 percent for women.

With all the advances the University has made, with all of the attempts to provide an equitable environment for both genders, why is it that students seem so reticent to support the female athletes on campus?

How many people have been to a football game?

Now, how many of those same people have been to a softball game? A soccer game? A volleyball game?

If numbers are a clear marker for enthusiasm, it is apparent this campus values its football over its volleyball.

Is that such a surprise?

Texas is known for its manic love of football. Driving through the state, it is obvious by giant shadows cast by high-school stadiums that probably cost more than the run-down schools themselves that Texas adores watching football. It is not unheard of for parents to hold children back in school so that they will be bigger than the other kids and consequently more of a threat on the field.

Although it is nearly impossible to justify this type of action on the part of school boards or parents, it does not mean that football is bad and should be abolished. Football is fun, especially on this campus. So many of A&M's traditions revolve around the sport.

From yell practice to yell leaders, students have the opportunity to yell their little hearts out in support of the Fighting Texas Aggies.

The problem comes when the student body ignores all for the sake of one. Football is great, but what about all of the other sports, such as soccer? Do students even know where the soccer complex is? This year the soccer team was Big 12 champion.

Most students probably would not have even realized this except for the small blurb in *The Battalion*.

Students are apathetic. It can be seen in everything from class attendance to game attendance, even in the male sports.

But female sports seem to get the raw end of the deal.

Perhaps it is due to a lack of publicity. Although the Athletic Department provides fairly equal coverage to all of the varying sports, it simply does not appear to be the case. During football season, it is impossible not to be bombarded by advertising. But somehow, during softball season, publicity seems to die down.

So is it that students don't know or that they don't care?

The truth is that there are no ready answers. Perhaps pre-Title IX mentality still exists. Perhaps students simply don't see women's sports as important or exciting.

But if A&M wants to continue to improve as a university, students must follow the University's lead and support female athletes. Otherwise, the intentions and spirit of Title IX will be lost.

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MIKE LUCKOVICH

