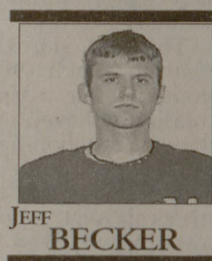


Robbing the cradle

Professional basketball needs rules to prevent players from dunking diplomas for contracts

National Basketball Association (NBA) commissioner David Stern recently told the *Washington Post* he would like to see age requirements for players entering the league.



JEFF BECKER

With more and more players skipping college or leaving early to declare themselves eligible for the NBA draft, this is a much-needed policy. The National Football League Open has a policy in which incoming players must be out of high school for at least three years before entering the draft, and with the overflow of young players trying to enter the NBA, a similar rule is needed for basketball. Stern said the NBA has the right to set the requirement in the collective bargaining agreement, and he believes it is possible to come up with a rule that will withstand legal challenge. Today's NBA draft will have 39 players with at least one year of college eligibility left. This includes two high-school students, five college freshmen and 11 sophomores. Duke University, which has never had a basketball player leave with eligibility remaining in its history, is losing three players

this year to the NBA draft. One of them, freshman Corey Maggette, did not even start for the Blue Devils. The NBA needs to institute an age-requirement rule to curb this influx of young players. Professional basketball is a whole different game than college ball, and it is a universe away from high-school hoops. Players need time to mature and improve their game before taking that leap to the NBA. Today's NBA is rife with show-boating players whose antics and lack of team-oriented basketball skills have led to lower scoring and a dumbed-down style of play. With an age rule, the quality of play in the entire NBA will improve because players will enter with more experience, more proven skills and less of a propensity to kick sideline folding chairs. Tim Duncan is an example of the maturity that can come with a four-year tenure in college. His experience and maturity allowed him to coolly and confidently lead his team to the NBA title this year. While many younger players might have the raw talent to win the championship, they do not have the confidence and mind-set needed that more experience in a less rigorous environment like college would afford. The NBA is different from the sitcom-filled days of high school. Professional players are constantly on the go and on any given night could be anywhere in

America. In this lifestyle, it is incredibly hard to adjust, especially for immature people. Moreover, many younger players have yet to prove themselves in college, and when they are drafted by the NBA, they find out they cannot cut it. Jermaine O'Neil, a budding talent fresh out of high school, averaged under 3 points a game his first season in Portland. Rashard Lewis of Seattle and Tracy McGrady of Toronto, also high schoolers, were stuck in the deep recesses of the bench and saw less court time than the power dance team. With the NBA rule about smaller, three-year contracts for rookies, many young talents find themselves out of the league before they make enough money to split on. Even the better players only have a shelf life of 5 to 10 years and after that, what is left? Just a high-school education and a few minutes of highlight reel. Even the players that do land the million-dollar contracts usually live a lifestyle that leaves them with little to live on after their careers are over. A college education is so much more valuable than a few years in the league. Players who leave college early are not considering their future. The worst part is that many team agents and executives encourage players to leave early to start on their three-year rookie contracts so they can become a



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

free agent that much sooner, primed to make the big bucks. But an education will always help more in the long run, and players are selling themselves short if they do not finish college. Stern has suggested in a press conference a rule that would increase the length of the player's rookie contract by a year for each year a player tries to enter the

league under a suggested age of around 20. This would discourage young players from leaving early in order to get started on that rookie contract and would encourage players to go to college and to stay in college longer. This rule will be good for the players and good for the league. Older players are more experienced, more mature and better

prepared to enter and succeed in the NBA. Players entering the league trying to make the quick bucks should be stopped because they are jeopardizing their own future and are hampering the quality of play in the league. Jeff Becker is a sophomore computer engineering major.

Bush makes best Republican candidate, even if not best president

Unless a miraculous turn of events occurs in the next year, it is obvious that George W. Bush will be the Republican nominee for president. The other candidates are not even close to him in the polls, and Bush has raised more money in the shortest length of time than any other candidate in electoral history. Many in the more conservative camps of the Republican Party are showing caution before supporting Bush because of his avoidance of controversial and divisive social issues. Those fears are most likely unfounded. Bush is a master politician, and his avoidance of certain issues is one of a number of strategies he is employing to appeal to the undecided voters in the 2000 election. Reporters have repeatedly tried to corner him on these divisive issues, and every time he manages to defuse questions that might offend potential voters. From the very beginning, Bush has shown a healthy arrogance toward the

press. He has made it clear that he defines the issues, the timetable and the conditions regarding his campaign. Another concern of economically oriented Republicans is Bush's touting of "compassionate conservatism." Their worries are well-founded in the context of political history. In the past, whenever a candidate has talked about "compassion" what he has really meant was the mass re-distribution of wealth from producers to non-producers. However, Bush is merely brilliantly re-framing a classic conservative principal, that charity should be the responsibility of private organizations and not entitlements from a centralized government. Bush emphasizes "compassion" because of the word's extremely positive connotation, so that prejudices portraying Republicans as cold, uncaring capitalists can be erased in the minds of undecided voters. Bush is masterfully giving extra attention to those issues where Republicans suffer the greatest politically. Everyone knows that Republicans are the most qualified to run an economy or fight a war, but few would agree that a Republican is the preferred leader to

help the poor. Bush is confronting and defeating that bias head-on. This is not to say Bush would be an ideal president. He is a believer in destructive free trade, which cripples American manufacturing, and he also supports liberal immigration policies. If political realities were a non-issue, there is a better choice for president. If one could pick anyone from the field of candidates to be president, assuming he or she would win the election, the best choice would be Pat Buchanan. Unfortunately, he is perceived by many to be a "right-wing extremist," thanks to a press smear job welcomed by the mainstream of both parties. Buchanan represents a threat to the power brokers of both parties because he supports issues that could unify the core constituencies of both Democrats and Republicans. By supporting protectionist trade policy and being extremely conservative on social issues such as abortion, Buchanan could have united both Union Democrats and Religious Right Republicans into a populist majority which would serve the interests of neither mainstream Republicans nor liberal Democrats.

The parties "use" both fringe groups politically. The big business Republicans will occasionally throw crumbs of conservative social policy to Christians to keep them appeased, and liberal Democrats will offer nominal support in labor disputes to keep unions happy. "For conservatives, there is a simple question that reveals the best nominee, though not necessarily the best president." Since neither party actively serves the people from whom they derive most of their power, the possibility of Buchanan succeeding represented a circumstance unacceptable to the political power structure. This became painfully obvious in the 1996 campaign as normally polite Robert Dole publicly called Buchanan an "extremist," while being as docile as a puppy in his dialog with President Clinton.

It is a shame Buchanan has been politically blacklisted by the establishment, because unlike Bush, he has only a few minor skeletons in his closet. As an overzealous Catholic youth, Buchanan once burned down a newspaper stand that sold pornography and egged the Soviet embassy. When revelations of Bush's past come to light, the public reaction will be more than just passing amusement. Politics, however, is the art of the possible, and Bush fits the bill better than any other candidate. For conservatives, there is a simple question that reveals the best nominee, though not necessarily the best president: who is the most conservative candidate that can still garner a majority of the electoral votes against the Democratic opponent? Bush, though not the best potential president among them, is the best candidate for president. If one wishes to operate within the established political system, one must also observe its realities, for better and, most often, for worse.

Tom Owens is a senior chemical engineering major.



TOM OWENS

MAIL CALL

Student reacts to honors hall plan
In response to June 29 editorial, "Halls of Justice."
The move to make Clements Hall an upperclass honors hall is a poor decision. As a former resident of Clements, I have seen it grow and mature from one of the least active halls on campus, often

dubbed "the two-percent hall," to a hall with strong cohesiveness and an outstanding tradition of on-campus leadership. Restricting the ability to live in Clements will destroy the community atmosphere that Clements has worked for years to rebuild. It frustrates me to know that the Department of Residential Life and the Honors Program have been planning this for an extended period of time and gathered little to no input from on-campus

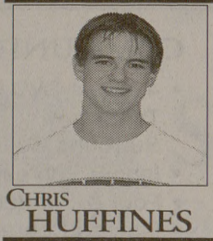
residents. If a decision is going to affect more than 8,000 students, it makes sense to ask for input. While it was presented to the Residence Hall Association, it was presented in a manner leading many to believe that their input would make a difference in the outcome. Apparently, this was just an early warning disguised as a request for feedback. Tara Gray Class of '00

Time for affirmative action to go

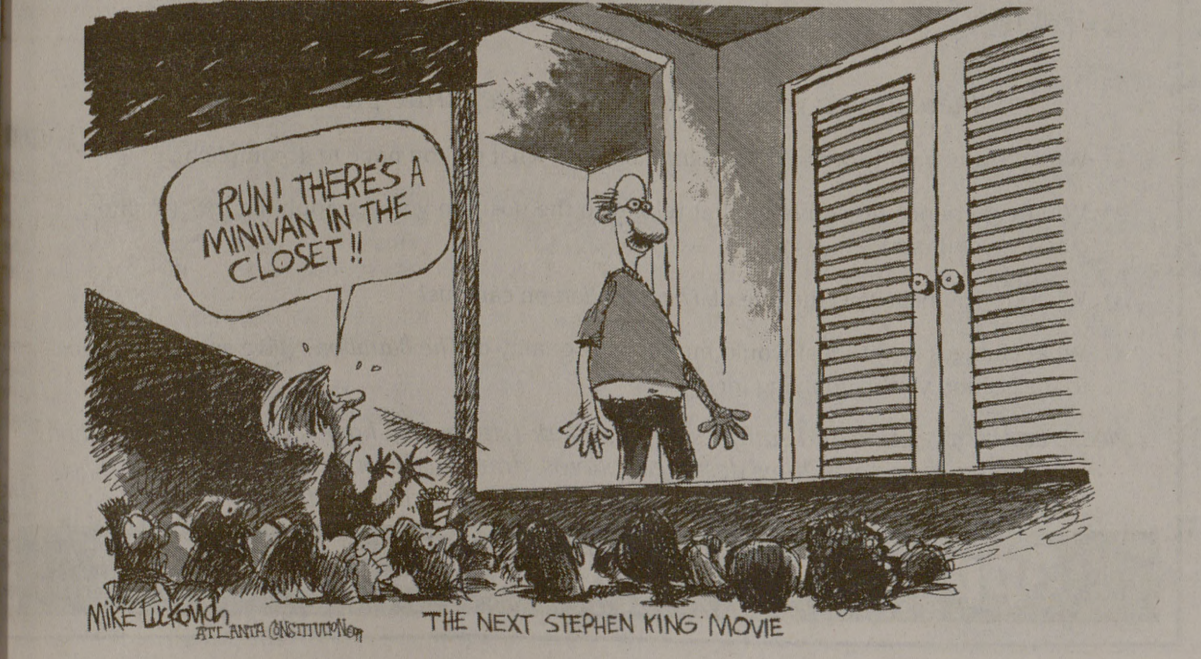
It looks like affirmative action just hit the glass ceiling. According to a study released recently by the University of Michigan, individuals who possess an implicit racial prejudice but are not aware of it tend to unconsciously discriminate. This is yet another proof that Affirmative Action, passed in the sixties, has come to the end of its operational lifetime. The study was performed on college students who were tested for conscious and unconscious racial bias. The college students, who were all white, were then asked to interact with black peers, in cahoots with the researchers, to perform simple tasks. Researcher Penelope Espinoza summed up the results by stating, "results indicate that our implicit prejudice scale was a significant predictor of the nature of the social interactions between white subjects and the black participants. Subjects who had high levels of hidden prejudice scale were disliked by the black students, their interactions were rated negatively, and they displayed more

negative nonverbal behaviors during the interaction." Espinoza went on to say the subjects who had a lower level of unconscious prejudice were rated much better by black interactors. If this finding is applied to the law, and it will be, it will be like dropping a rabid bull into a china shop. The entire face of affirmative action has just changed because many prejudiced individuals who could be accused of discrimination now have an airtight legal defense. If they are only implicitly prejudiced, then they are not aware of any discrimination arising from their unconscious bias. Therefore, they can argue they are not responsible for their discriminatory behavior. It might not hold up all the time, but this defense will get many bigots off the hook. Affirmative action simply cannot work in this environment. But affirmative action was due to retire soon anyways. Thankfully, the kind of heavy-handed approach to racial equality once necessary in the 1960s is no longer the best approach. What required troops and blood can now be accomplished much more subtly. That is not to say that racism has been conquered. Prejudice is still riding on the

back of this nation. But the claws of this beast are no longer around America's neck. The stick that is affirmative action can finally be replaced by the carrot. Affirmative action remedies discrimination in a reactive manner, primarily through punishing offenders. But that route will only breed resentment — resentment that has already begun to appear. A carrot, a proactive, positive reward for behavior that promotes equality, is what is needed. Whether this carrot comes in the form of tax breaks or government incentives or some other form is irrelevant. What is important is that prejudice is not eliminated by creating a racial schism. Unfortunately, this route is not the easy route. There are individuals who will use race and racism to promote ideologies and politics, and it is in their best interests to keep affirmative action in place, to keep the power that government was forced to shoulder in the years after slavery and again during the Civil Rights Era. That power has corrupted those individuals, and it has begun to corrupt the fabric of society. It is time to break the stick and throw it away. Chris Huffines is a senior speech communication major.



CHRIS HUFFINES



MIKE UCHIDA ATLANTA (COMMEDIA) THE NEXT STEPHEN KING MOVIE