

Olympic showdown

Texas not suited for Olympic competition; Dallas should stop fighting Houston for bid

Lake Placid, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Salt Lake City and Houston?

What do these cities have in common? Nothing except the Olympics.

Well, Houston doesn't have the Olympics yet, and hopefully they never will, but all the other cities have been awarded the honor of hosting the pinnacle of international athletic competition.

Now, not one, but two, Texas cities are vying for the 2012 Summer Olympic Games — Houston and Dallas.

Lord save us all.

Sure, if the Olympics came to either town it would mean all sorts of honors being bestowed on the state.

Take Atlanta, for instance. Before the 1996 games, Atlanta was one of three things to people: the town close to Scarlett's plantation, the city where the Braves play or the town Ted Turner has turned into his own personal playground. Now, ask any American about Atlanta and they will mention either the Olympics or prostitutes for Super Bowl players.

What a great town.

But face facts: the chances of Dallas or Houston organizers coaxing the Summer Olympics to the Lone Star State is about as likely as the Winter Olympics being awarded to El Paso.

First, there is a little thing Texans like to call humidity.

With things like heat indices and humidity factors thrown into the 95-degree heat, no athlete in his/her right mind is going to want to run a marathon through downtown Houston, unless there is an air conditioning unit duct taped to their back.

Even during the Atlanta games, athletes complained that the humidity there hindered their performance and this resulted in fewer world records being set as compared to past games.

Another problem with the Olympics coming to Texas is a complete and total lack of football, and I don't mean soccer.

There are two things Texans like to hear — "touchdown" and "free barbecue." Texans are so rabid over football they would probably fill a high school stadium just to watch a movie about football,

such as *Varsity Blues*. Sure fans would watch a few hours of 10-year old girls folding themselves in half on the floor exercise competition, but as soon as a football fan confused the rhythmic gymnastics ball for a pig skin, there would be mayhem as little girls are punted over the high bar for the extra point.

Besides that, what would either city do for the opening ceremonies — the big spectacle that sets the tone for the rest of the games?

Barcelona depicted the tale of Hercules on one of his legendary journeys, founding the city.

Atlanta's closing ceremonies metaphorically depicted the destruction and rebirth of the city following the Civil War.

Maybe Houston should put forth the heroic tale of Mattress Mac opening his first store so he can "save you money."

Perhaps it could have Marvin Zindler tell all the attendees which restaurants in town had "slime in the ice machine," and then follow with Tommy Tune taking on Dolly Parton's role in "The Best Little Whore House in Texas."

Not that Dallas has anything better to offer. Reenacting the Kennedy assassination would not really go over too well, even if Oliver Stone produced it.

Another obstacle in the road to Olympic fever is the recent Salt Lake City scandals.

Accusations of International Olympic Committee corruption and city-sponsored kickbacks in order to acquire the 2002 Winter Olympics have turned the town that Brigham Young built into a laughing stock, aside from the entire polygamy thing.

But you shouldn't send a bunch of Mormons to do what Texans have been doing since the creation of the republic. How else would Lyndon Johnson have been elected to the Senate?

The only conceivable way for either town to win the Olympics in 2012 is for them to possibly join forces and turn it into a statewide bid.

Heck, have George W. Bush lead the committee. He is pretty good at being popular for absolutely no reason.

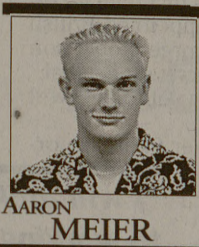
Just have him saunter into a few IOC meetings, shake some hands, show pictures of him and dad at Kennebunkport, and boom — the state will be

flooded with 10-gallon-hat wearers scarfing down fajitas and chili.

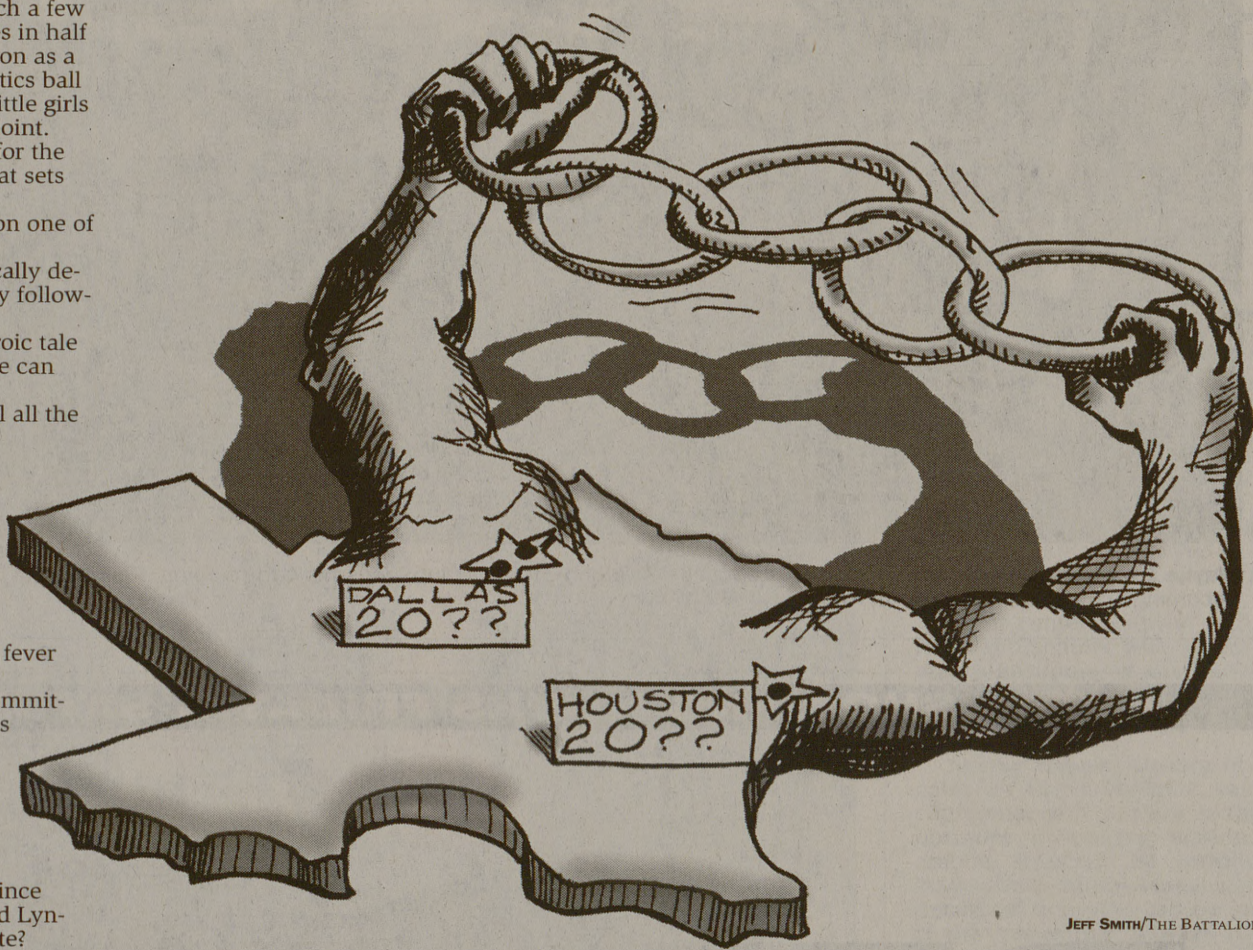
It would also make the creation of an official Olympic mascot much easier. Get some A&M scientists to join forces with UT and create the first long-horned collie. They could call it Revo.

And what would happen if a Texan won a gold medal. Would they play "The Star Spangled Banner" or "Texas, Our Texas?"

Aaron Meier is a senior political science major.



AARON MEIER



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

Diversity proven to help students

The 1996 Hopwood decision, which abolished an affirmative-action program at the University of Texas Law School, did not settle the debate over race-weighted university admissions.

Instead, it has only unleashed a firestorm of controversy over the justification of consciously admitting minority members to diversify a student population.

Those who disagree with Hopwood's precedent have argued learning from multicultural diversity is a crucial feature in a student's education.

A report released yesterday by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University offered long-awaited proof that they are right.

Researchers conducted a Gallup Poll survey of 81 percent of the students enrolled in law school at Harvard University and the University of Michigan.

Almost 65 percent of those polled said ethnic and racial diversity in the classroom has improved class discussions.

A staggering 87 percent changed their views about civil rights because of interaction with students from diverse multicultural backgrounds.

The report, which offered results similar to other studies gathering faculty opinions on campus diversity, gives some important quantitative support to race-based admissions policies.

Its testimony should reinvigorate the debate over affirmative action in law schools and universities. This debate is desperately in need of new insights.

The controversy has generally stagnated into a stalemate between merit being the sole factor in admissions decisions and using affirmative action to help minority applicants.

The Harvard report should shift the debate away from these issues of fairness toward equally important educational issues.

The prevailing question has been whether affirmative action is just, but the pressing question of whether affirmative action enhances the educational environment has largely been ignored.

The pro-diversity responses of nearly 90 percent of the surveyed students should bring this question to the fore.

The debate can finally recenter around the opinions of the most interested party in the debate — real students.

Thus far, those students who have gone to court protesting the unfairness of affirmative action have dominated the discussion. This report, however, reveals these angry litigants are not necessarily representative of students as a whole.

Some students may believe the benefits of diversity outweigh the disadvantages of affirmative action.

"It's measuring the people who most benefit from diversity," Mark Hass, a spokesperson for the University of Michigan Law School, told *The New York Times*. "It's asking the students about it."

Far from being a blight, multicultural diversity offers an invaluable contribution to the educational experience. Universities who recognize this by implementing race-weighted admissions policies are merely doing what is best for their students. Since they are hired to be good educators, they should be applauded.

Texas A&M, for the first time, is taking really serious steps to improve diversity on campus through Vision 2020. University officials should take note of this research as a validation of their efforts.

They should also consider surveying Aggie students by asking similar questions about the impact of diversity on their academic careers.

And like-minded officials around the country should renew efforts to diversify the college classroom.

Caleb McDaniel is a junior history major.



CALEB MCDANIEL

AOL Instant Messenger policy unfairly restricts competition

Over the past year, the Justice Department has taken aim at the computer software giant Microsoft.

It has accused the company of using strong-arm tactics in an attempt to create a monopoly over the industry.

While the Justice Department's case has shown Microsoft's owner, Bill Gates, is a not-so-nice guy, it has yet to conclusively prove Microsoft is in violation of federal anti-trust laws.

If the Justice Department does succeed in its battle with Microsoft, then it may want to consider making Internet giant America Online (AOL) its next target.

AOL has a history of using its large share of the market (about 40 percent) to its advantage, and its actions in the past couple of weeks are as blatantly monopolistic as anything Microsoft has ever done.

Five years ago, AOL pioneered the America Online Instant Messenger (AIM) system, which is one of the most popular aspects of the Internet company's service.

Instant Messages (IMs) allows two people to communicate over the Internet in real time, imitating a conversation more closely than e-mail messages.

Any AOL user can send an IM to another AOL user, and the company designed their software so an AOL user may also send IMs to non-AOL users who download the program from the Internet.

AOL has allowed other companies, such as Prodigy and Yahoo, to use some of the IM technology for the past few years.

But this spirit of cooperation vanished in an instant on July 25, when Microsoft introduced its own version of the IM system, which would allow people

using Microsoft software to communicate with people on AOL.

As soon as this happened, AOL did the Internet version of taking their ball and going home by blocking anyone using messenger software from Microsoft, Prodigy or Yahoo from sending messages to people on AOL.

In one move, the nation's largest provider of Internet services eliminated the ability of those not using the system to contact those who were.

Of course, AOL users can still send their IMs to AIM users on the outside, giving AOL total competitive advantage in the IM market.

AOL has threatened to sue Microsoft over its actions, saying it is bombarding AOL's 40 million users with unwanted messages.

AOL's "actions in the past couple of weeks are as blatantly monopolistic as anything Microsoft has ever done."

In an ironic twist, Microsoft has threatened to countersue, saying AOL is acting in a fashion which prevents the industry from standardizing and is attempting to destroy other Internet Service Providers (ISPs) — just like a monopoly.

The funny thing is that Microsoft is right on the money. Abishek Gami, an investment analyst with William Blair & Co. in Chicago said in a Washington Post article, "Standardization really isn't in AOL's best interest."

With its IM program, AOL has created the goose with the golden egg and does not want to give it up.

Yahoo and Prodigy are very

small in terms of providing Internet service, so lending them IM technology has done little to damage their market share.

But when a behemoth like Microsoft gets in the ring, the rules are a little different.

AOL now fears it may have some new competition and intends to do anything it can to get rid of it.

Blocking Microsoft from using IM technology also gives AOL a pretext to cancel its deals with Yahoo and Prodigy, thus ensuring its large market share.

While this dispute alone may not be enough to warrant the inspection of the Justice Department, AOL's track record certainly does not help it out.

In the past, AOL has lost lawsuits for price gouging (charging customers for hours that they were not online) and for not providing proper access to customers who signed up for a flat fee and then were unable to get online.

It has also been threatened with suits for attempting to change terms of service for its current customers.

While this is not in itself an uncompetitive trade practice, it does give an idea as to what AOL would do if not properly checked.

If the Justice Department is concerned with Microsoft's unwillingness to share its technology with potential competitors, then AOL should be on the lookout for men in cheap suits with badges showing up at its door.

AOL has a statue in its headquarters in Reston, Va., of a paper Tyrannosaurus Rex which is supposed to be Microsoft.

Apparently, AOL has decided to be king of the ISPs, much like Microsoft has tried to be the king of the software providers.

If the Department of Justice is truly interested in busting up prospective trusts, it may want to send a meteor toward AOL's little world.

Mark Passwaters is an electrical engineering graduate student.



MARK PASSWATERS



MIKE LIXKRAICH ATLANTA CONSTITUTION