

Russia Playing snortstop

Baseball too lax in dealing with Darryl Strawberry

In the last two decades, illegal drug use has made a grand showing in the world of Major League Baseball. The list of delinquent athletes continues to grow, including names such as L.A. Dodgers pitcher Steve Lincecum, Atlanta Braves pitcher Tim Lincecum, and Anaheim Angels pitcher Tony Phillips. Unfortunately, the list has come to add Darryl Strawberry's name to the list — again.

The question must be raised whether MLB is turning its back on the ugly problem it has recently regained media attention with last week's announcement that Strawberry had tested positive for cocaine for the second time in five years. This action follows a 30-day suspension for violating the New York Yankees' substance policy.

In his first statement since Bud Selig's announcement of the suspension, Strawberry seemed apologetic and asked for the chance to restore public faith. He declared his intention to indefinitely purge himself of drug addiction.

The irony in Strawberry's decision to submit himself to a rehab program is that he recently published an inspiring book about overcoming cancer and drug addiction called *Recovering Life*. In addition, the troubled pitcher was a spokesperson for the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence just one year ago. Strawberry's earlier apparent interest in being perceived as a model citizen is repeatedly overshadowed by his actions and causes questions to be



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raised concerning his sincerity. Strawberry's one-year banishment from the world of professional baseball is not surprising to those who have followed his history. Beginning with the accusation of breaking the nose of his ex-wife to the most recent cocaine-related suspension, Strawberry has seen the inside of more courtrooms than Perry Mason.

He has been arrested for assault on several occasions, failed to pay child support and threatened suicide. The .259 career hitter was indicted in 1994 for failing to report half a million dollars in income and ordered by a court to pay \$350,000 in back taxes the next spring. In February of 1995, Strawberry received a 60-day suspension for drug-related problems and was released from his contract with the San Francisco Giants. Last June, he was suspended again for a 120-day period but was allowed to return one week early. Evidently, Bud Selig has decided that continuing to extend Strawberry's time away from the game is sufficient punishment.

Fellow teammates have speculated whether their former designated hitter could return to the league at the end of his suspension next season. If Strawberry can rid himself of his drug problems, it remains to be seen if he can rejoin the two-time World Series champions and contribute to a team that may be better off without him in terms of team discipline.

Turning 38 in less than a month, it seems unlikely that Strawberry could make a strong comeback after fighting his addictions and being out of training for 12 months. It is disappointing that a baseball player who exhibits such talent and skill is

left off the Yankee roster because of substance abuse. The life of money and fame is too much for Strawberry to handle, and his exclusion from the game should be permanent. His repeated disregard for MLB policies reflects poorly on the league and sets a negative example for society.

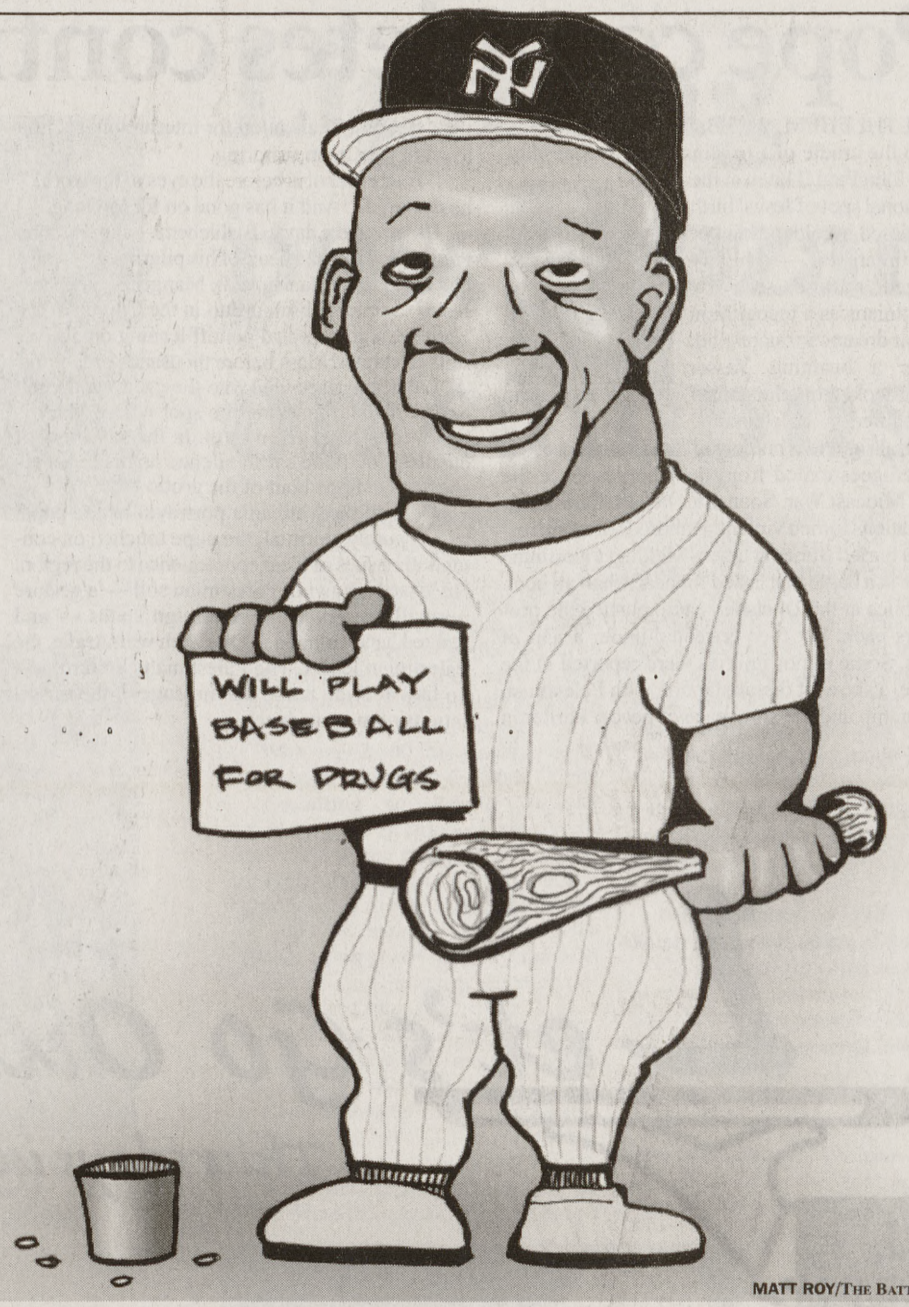
It seems evident that Strawberry may not be able to overcome his drug addiction and return to the game of baseball. The use of suspensions for violators like Strawberry is clearly ineffective because of short terms that are often cut by appeals and lifted soon after their being instated. Making a repeat offender sit out a few games is virtually a slap on the wrist, and considering the length of the regular season, is only a minor setback in the career of a baseball player. For this reason, baseball administrators should consider the possibility of banning him from the game indefinitely.

Strawberry's disrespect for substance abuse policies should result in his use as an example to other players. A new policy of absolute intolerance for violators is essential to ensure the integrity of baseball.

Drug violations are not a new problem to professional baseball, but they seem to be becoming more prominent.

The league needs to take a firm stand on this issue and the necessary course of action is for Bud Selig to make an example of Darryl Strawberry. Burning this baseball great in effigy may seem harsh, but would definitely give new meaning to the term "He's outta there!"

Summer Hicks is a senior English major.



MATT ROY/THE BATTALION

Ignorant celebrities lead way on 'Politically Incorrect'

Believe it or not, there is a television program out there that manages to spew more ignorance and misinformation than *The Touchstone* and *The Reggie Review* combined — that program is "Politically Incorrect" with Bill Maher.

Broadcast weeknights on ABC, "PI" is a never-ending parade of celebrities sitting in on a round-table discussion showcasing their thoughts on politics, current events and pop culture. With stand-up comic Maher serving as host, "PI" has given the late-night network television landscape a real lift with its different framework.

However, there is a serious flaw with this setup — the celebrities that appear on "PI" often appear to be extremely simple-minded and downright ignorant. When they argue a side of a topic, they often rattled off arbitrary numbers and sources in order to support their national logic. Making matters worse, Maher does not serve as an impartial mediator. Instead, he viciously berates his guests when they disagree with him and he takes no effort in hiding his "libertarian" slanted views.

If "PI" and Maher wish to be seen as a somewhat legitimate source of information, they must realize their flaws and fix them. In order to better inform their viewers, an impartial host and better informed guests are needed.

The list of idiotic arguments made on "PI" is mind-bogglingly lengthy. The following is a snapshot of the past month and a half.

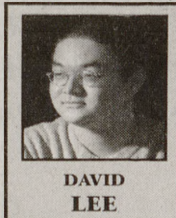
"Don't you think it's kind of risky for George Bush to say that he's pro-life, pro-life, pro-life, pro-life... and then kill a grandma last week?" said actor Tim Hentton.

No, John. That line of reasoning is completely asinine. The woman in question was sentenced to die by the jury of her peers because she committed a brutal and senseless murder. Without proper justification, Bush is in no position to stop the execution. It is called justice, John — look into it.

In a later airing of "PI," Kristen Short of The Young Americans Foundation made the elementary assumption that President Clinton has something to do with declining prosecution rates.

"The number of prosecutions of people who hold handguns illegally in the United States has dropped 44 percent in the Clinton administration... they aren't enforcing."

News flash, Kristen — the president has nothing to do with district attorneys' jurisdiction. Individual state attorneys preside over the vast majority of illegal handgun prosecutions and even then they are in the judicial branch, not Clinton's executive branch. Her anger for



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the low prosecution rates is seriously misplaced. Furthermore, where did Short get her numbers? The impressionable viewer has no way of confirming their validity. It could really be 3 percent for all they know.

Later in the same show, actor Ben Savage from the television show "Boy Meets World" managed to pull the showstopper — he made the entire college-age population seem clueless with the proud statement, "I think Gore is stupider than Bush."

When asked why he feels that way about Gore, Savage supported his intelligent assertion with, "Because they ask him a question — he goes, 'Well, this is what I think, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.'"

If Savage had the wherewithal to actually listen to the "blah, blah, blah," he would have an intelligent answer as to why he does not support Gore. During his entire line of reasoning, he did not mention a single stance of any candidate. In Savage's case, who says a person needs a clue to vote?

Unfortunately, correcting "PI"'s problems would



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

be an uphill battle. In order to maintain a fresh daily dose of celebrities, "PI" has slowly started to dip lower and lower on the Hollywood totem pole — as of two weeks ago, the celebrity list included the likes of Rick James, Super Dave Osborne and Johnny Rotten. Needless to say, the lower they get on the totem pole, the more beligerent and incoherent the discussion.

In addition, the current low-brow setup has proven to be a great lightning rod for the show's ratings — inflammatory and ignorant remarks tend to raise eyebrows. For instance, when Maher initiated a discussion concerning the bonfire collapse during "PI"'s Super Bowl special, he incorrectly stated that the bonfire had previously "fell on its own" in 1994 and that bonfire as a whole was a "stupid" tradition. With the help of actor Jason Alexander, the unfair stereotyping of the typical Aggie took place — Alexander went as far as putting on a phony redneck accent in imitating the football team's reaction to bonfire.

Needless to say, the negative response to this discussion was tremendous. "PI" and ABC were deluged with email and letters in the following weeks. As morbid as it sounds, however, this whole hullabaloo managed to raise the local awareness and viewership of "PI."

The bottom line is that until Maher and "PI" realize the level of influence they have over their viewers and take some responsibility, there is little hope of the show ever being seen as a legitimate source of intelligent discussion.

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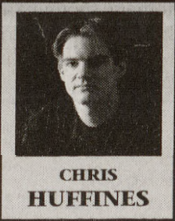
Pradhan's allegations outrageous

Ex-professor's claims of victimization show misconceptions

After reading the evidence accumulated in the case of Dr. Dhiraj Pradhan, former professor of computer science, one is left with the impression that he is either a naive busybody or a slinking weasel trying to play the system. No matter what interpretation is correct, this episode in A&M's history needs to be swept into the same dark hole as '80s big hair, pet rocks and Gidget.

Let no mistake be made — Pradhan's "situation" (as the euphemism goes) is intensely complex, highly charged and about as controversial as a Ku Klux Klan rally in Harlem. It is also probably true, as Pradhan claims, that the University was a bit excessive in its investigation of him. However, the overriding issue here is not the situation that Pradhan found himself in but his reaction to the charges. The allegations of witch hunting, racism, constitutional violations, and official coercion have turned this case into the center ring 'a la P.T. Barnum.

Speaking of suckers born every minute, Pradhan's defense tends to lead one to believe he is simply an innocent victim. Pradhan claims that, while he was out of town, University System officials broke into his office and took his computer. He believes this was a reaction to his recent stand against post-tenure review policies the University adopted as well as an example of overt racism on the part of University officials. Pradhan then claims that the University began something akin to a reign of terror: trumping up charges, forging documents (incidentally, something Pradhan himself pled guilty to), recanting statements and having him arrested on Christmas Day. Unfortunately for Pradhan, he is neither innocent nor a victim. Instead, the claims are a combination of half-truths, pretension and Pradhan's own preconception that he was coming to



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a backwater school where he would be resented and the object of prejudice.

For example, Pradhan complains about racial and religious harassment in a memorandum he issued Sep. 8, 1997. Reading Pradhan's own words, the thinness with which his argument is stretched is painfully apparent. Pradhan claims a member of the hiring committee asked about his religion and the religion of his wife (he is Hindu, she is Jewish), and about Pradhan's "mixed marital status." Another professor, unsure of Pradhan's religion due to the different religion his wife espouses, asked him if he was Jewish or Hindu. Pradhan apparently believes these instances constitute the religious harassment of his "ensuing six-year nightmare." It seems Pradhan believes any professor who expresses confusion regarding another's religion and oh-so-casually tries to directly remove his confusion, rather than continue in ignorance, should be immediately fired. Pradhan sets a standard for the most outrageous of his claims. He sends out a shotgun spray of accusations rather than provide objective proof of his claims. It is possible the religious questions were motivated by prejudice, but without evidence, the overwhelmingly more likely conclusion, that the professors were simply confused, should be adhered to.

Pradhan also contends racism in his memoranda, this time with evidence, albeit misleading and out-of-context evidence. Pradhan's chief harasser was apparently Dr. Dick Simmons. An examination of the email Simmons wrote, rather than Pradhan's misleading quotations, reveals that Simmons was offended by, and responded to, apparent impropriety in the hiring of Pradhan and certain offensive, pretentious statements made by Pradhan in a previous email. Simmons is also supposedly a racist for referring to students from Third World nations as "Third World." Aside from the fact that "Third World" is an economic designation and has as much to do with race as the terms "democratic" or "communis-

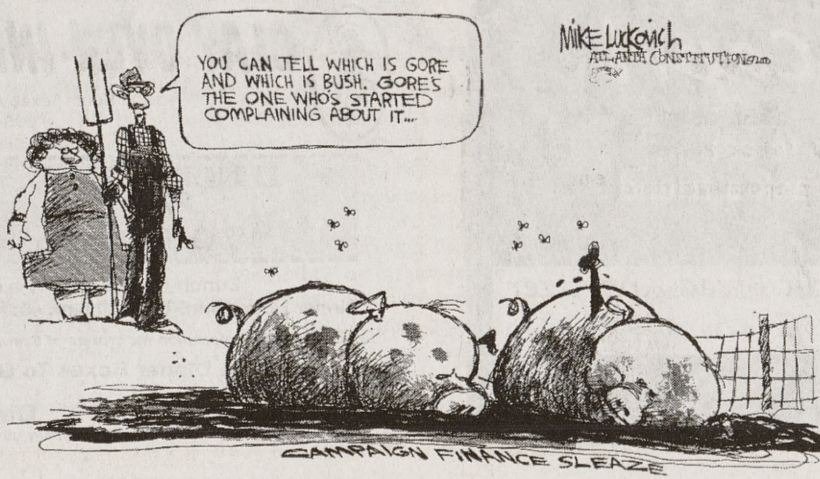
tic," Simmons' actual comments were in reference to the policy of some Third World countries of inflating GRE scores. Concerned about these scores, Simmons advocated serving more native Texans and fewer Third-World students. Frankly, these comments show Simmons' regard for the integrity of his department, high educational standards and the taxpayers of the state of Texas. Racism is not a factor.

Not content with misguided accusations of racism, Pradhan claims his vocal stand against post-tenure review of faculty is what prompted the "witch hunt." Pradhan, who came from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, also claims there is an anti-Yankee bias at work within the University. Those claims are red herrings, meant to distract others from the real issue of Pradhan's misconduct. Circulating a memo calling for the formation of a professor's union certainly did not win him any friends among the administration, but to state that the University went after him simply to stifle his voice of protest is an unfounded claim.

What should be looked at are facts, not the untrue ramblings and misleading accusations of Pradhan. The facts are that Pradhan was placed under investigation and audited and he came out of it dirty. He pled guilty to over 50 felony charges. Pradhan forged documents and printed, even after being fired, over 100,000 pages at University expense. He came to this University expecting to be treated poorly, but he earned that treatment.

No one has come out of this situation smelling like roses. But the situation has become so removed from the truth and so divorced from reality it resembles an episode from "The Twilight Zone." Like the fiction it is, this saga of finger-pointing and mindless accusation should be put back on the shelf and never opened again.

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