

A true slugger

Mark McGwire is not only a baseball great, but an admired role model



ADRIAN CALCANEO • THE BATTALION

Times are tough for sports-loving kids in search of heroes. Sports have become a lot more about money than actual talent, and it shows in the actions of many players.

From arguing and picking fights with other players during the games, to using foul language that must be bleeped out during post-game interviews — the examples being set are not the ones parents want their kids admiring. But among the gloomy days of sports heroes, there is one person worthy of waiting in line for an autograph and buying jerseys with his name. Mark McGwire has been in the spotlight for many years, and there is no greater person for America to shine on.

McGwire's dedication and achievements in the sport of baseball make him a truly honorable person — but his dedication to being a great father and a loyal friend are what make him a true hero. Recently, as he has been faced with one of life's greatest decisions, his deeply rooted heroism is guiding him to put his beloved sport above his personal interests and retire while he is more than ahead.

The game-winning home runs and record-breaking stats throughout McGwire's career make him impressive, but do not necessarily make him above and beyond other baseball greats. It is not just the games that he has won, it is the games that he missed in the past and the games that he is giving up his chance for in the future. For McGwire, baseball is a job and a hobby — but it is not his life. All along, he has been a player who loved the game just for the game, not for the money he could make playing it. His priorities throughout his career have shown the love for himself, his family and the game, and really nothing else.

In his announcement of his plans to retire, McGwire said, "For years I have said my motivation for playing wasn't for fame and fortune, but rather the love of competing."

It is easy for any sports player to say that, but now he has become one of the few to actually prove that to be his true desire.

Just like anyone, McGwire's life was filled with opportunities and he did not want to miss out on any experience along his way to the top. In 1984, McGwire was named The Sporting News' College Player of the Year and was a first-round draft pick in Oakland, but he did not

the family of Roger Maris after surpassing the long-standing record of their father. This is not a player that simply tries to depict himself as a "good-guy". This is someone truly worthy of being considered an American icon.

So, every player's time comes to an end and the question of how they will handle that is always an issue. For McGwire, there was no issue. St. Louis offered him a \$30 million contract and he handed it back to them. He has been injured and has not been able to play the game the way he would like to. It was plain and simple — he did not feel right taking the money if his performance was not earning it. His retirement is noble in itself, but throughout this decision, he has put the team absolutely ahead of himself.

By announcing his retirement now (before the period of free-agent signing begins), he is allowing St. Louis to have the chance to purchase a replacement, and he has been very clear in that being his intention.

McGwire said, "I believe I owe it to the Cardinals and the fans of St. Louis to step aside so a talented free agent can be brought in as the final piece of what I expect can be a world championship-caliber team."

Many people are pointing fingers at Jason Giambi, a former A's teammate of McGwire, to possibly be a pick for this position. While the two have been described as being as "close as brothers" it would just be the icing on the cake for this hero to be paving the way for someone else to have a chance to fill his void. All of these actions make him more than worthy of being viewed as a hero. Although he will not be on the field for much longer, hopefully his legacy and fame will still hang within the posters on many little kids' walls.

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enter the pros at that point because of his desire to play for Team USA in the Olympics. In 1987, McGwire hit 49 home runs, 11 more than any other rookie and two more than the season record of Oakland's Reggie Jackson. He might have hit 50, but he skipped the season's final game — that was the day his wife gave birth to their son, Matthew. (And he was still named the American League's Rookie of the Year, so really he did not miss out on much at all). The world watched him cling to his son after he hit the record-breaking 70th home run in 1998, but Matthew was not the only person he wanted to share his victory with. Anyone who pays attention to baseball knows how important and truly honorable it was that he took the time to hug

MAIL CALL

Public versus private is the real issue

In response to Mariano Castillo's Nov. 29th column:

While Castillo does much to discuss his feelings and the feelings of the two administrations involved, the debate over Texas A&M's affiliation with South Texas College of Law should be based on fact. Fact: Texas A&M is a public school, while South Texas College of Law is a private institution. What is not discussed in the half-page article by Castillo is the fact that there is much legal controversy surrounding the idea that a state-funded institution such as A&M, can endorse, work in conjunction with, or fiscally support a private school that does not abide by the federal laws concerned with admissions. Particularly important is the Hopwood decision that ended race-based admissions in Texas public colleges and universities that receive federal funding.

The dean of the UT School of Law, Michael Sharlot, said the policy that the two schools are trying for is steeped in potential problems. "It seems very strange that you'd have a public university, which everyone agrees is subject to Hopwood, affiliated with a law school which is not," Sharlot said. "It seems problematic, dubious as a matter of law." While this school's president

and regents like to pretend that they are only trying to add a law school to A&M through this affiliation, they are also trying to extort a potential loophole in the ban on using quotas and double-standards on the issue of race in admissions.

This is similar to their proposal to set a lower, "25 percent automatic admission" standard at "targeted" schools in Texas. That is the true reason why the Texas Supreme court effectively upheld the lower court's decision not to allow the affiliation, and had nothing to do with "bruised egos" as Castillo suggests. If we want our own law school, then the administration should not be acting on ulterior motives and should not use our tuition money to carry on a legal battle in the name of race-based admissions. While they are wasting time and money, dabbling in politics, we could be on our way to building our own school of law. While the author likens the present court battle to the Fightin' Texas Aggie tradition, he misses the point that we may be fighting on the wrong side.

*Matthew Maddox
Class of 2004*

Media should stay out of it

In response to the Nov. 29 editorial:

I was deeply disappointed to read yet another editorial attacking the students and staff of the

Memorial Student Center. The students and staff at the MSC work hard to produce outstanding programs, services and leadership development opportunities for our University, and they do not get a lot of recognition for the work they do. These are good and decent people who deserve your appreciation and your respect. At the very least, they deserve better than what you wrote on Thursday. You may be angry at the MSC Council for shutting the media out of this process, but given the total lack of objectivity you have demonstrated in your coverage of this matter, I can understand why they did.

You have made your disagreement with the MSC Council's actions perfectly clear, and that is your right. However, your disagreement does not give you the right to question their integrity or their commitment to the students of this University. It certainly does not give you the right to call them names. You have done all of these things, and in doing so you have crossed the line that separates responsible journalism from tabloid trash. You are obviously upset that the MSC Council has refused to cooperate with your demands, and because of this your newspaper is acting like a spoiled child. Grow up. If you can not be objective and fair, even when you disagree, you have no business publishing a newspaper. You were right about one thing—Aggies do deserve better than this.

*Chris Williams
Class of 1996*

Time for change

This week, the Department of Journalism met with a team of outside consultants to discuss a plan to improve the department's quality. Journalism, though, will need more than advice from consultants.

The Department of Journalism is facing some tough decisions about enrollment in coming months, and the Texas A&M administration needs to examine and revamp its role in the solution-seeking process.

Journalism, one of the fastest-growing majors at A&M, has swelled above its capacity, enrolling more than 1,000 students this year. The department is designed, equipped and staffed to handle 450 students, less than half the current enrollment.

But despite several years of rapid growth, the department employs only 12 full-time faculty members and has been without a permanent department head for almost three years. This is unfair to students, faculty and staff.

Journalism seniors are still trying to take their 200-level media writing class — the class that is supposed to be taken within the first nine hours of journalism. That is not possible because of overcrowded, understaffed classes.

More money for more faculty (the student-to-faculty ratio is 1:100) is obviously not an option if you talk to the people in charge — the journalism department has been forbidden to hire new faculty.

Advisers are overworked: in the journalism department, rather than registering for mandatory classes, one must apply and be selected by the advising office. These attributes define the forthcoming downfall of the journalism department and must be rectified immediately.

But rather than accommodating the influx of students, the College of Liberal Arts has told the department to develop a solution for proposal to the provost: a method of curtailing and limiting enrollment, the quick fix. This is not the first time such a policy has been adopted, and there are reasons why the College of Liberal Arts should not be so hasty.

For years, the College of Business has been disenfranchising Aggies by shutting its door and not admitting students — students who would have been otherwise qualified and accepted had they chosen business as freshmen.

The University cites the fundamental laws of

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supply and demand as it denies students admission to the College of Business. But supply should meet demand, and the College of Business should not make a habit of turning its back on Aggies. Nor should the College of Liberal Arts or the Department of Journalism.

The College of Business and much of the University have developed a sense of stature that has become a self-propagating beacon of arrogance. Although the College of Business rests comfortably in its lavish and soon-to-be-expanded Taj Mahal, the Department of Journalism occupies a dilapidated building with an odor like that of a nursing home. It is probably the only building on campus without a first floor (no, really — it does not have one).

These are the symptoms of a case of misplaced and poorly distributed resources. Granted, the saga of Texas A&M is not a prince-and-pauper tale, but the University should consider journalism the liberal arts departments as part of the academic community instead of treating them like a diesel-mechanic trade school.

A Vision 2020 imperative claims to focus on enhancing the "letters and the arts," and anyone running the show will tell you that the three new majors in the College of Liberal Arts are a step toward that goal.

But those people are the ringmasters of a circus hidden behind a facade of academia. There seems to be no genuine concern for the well being of liberal arts departments because their grads are not writing donation checks like engineers and businessmen.

Times must change, and tough decisions must be made. A shift in enrollment seems to frighten administrators. But student attitudes and tastes are dynamic, conforming to an ever-changing job market. Rather than curtailing enrollment, administrators should do what is logical: shift resources instead.

Brady Creel is a junior journalism and management major.

CARTOON OF THE DAY

OBITUARIES

Dough Boy was described as a roll model for millions, who never knew how much he was kneaded.

Pillsbury Dough Boy found dead yesterday after suffering a severe yeast infection along with complications from repetitive pokes to the belly area. Dough Boy's funeral will be held at 3:50 for twenty minutes, followed by eulogies from his wife Play Dough, and two children — John Dough, and Jane Dough. Dough Boy will be buried in a lightly greased coffin. Expected guests include: Mrs. Butterworth, Hungry Jack, the California Raisins, Betty Crocker, and possibly Captain Crunch.

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