

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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EDITORIAL

MEET THE BATTALION

Today in the Forsyth Gallery from 1-3 p.m.

The role of a newspaper is a beautiful thing. While it informs, entertains and spreads the news of the day to its readers, its primary purpose is much greater. Like any good business, a newspaper is there to serve its community.

Texas A&M's community is one of the most diverse, remarkable and exciting groups that can be found anywhere in the country. The Battalion serves 44,000 students and 2,500 faculty, staff and administrators. The number of people The Battalion touches every day is remarkable.

Serving A&M's community is a tremendous responsibility, one that is taken seriously by every editor and staffer who works each day to bring the A&M community a reliable and accurate news source. Newspapers would not exist without readers, and that is why we must do everything we can to stay in touch with who our readers are and what they expect from us. Recent misunderstandings between the A&M community and The Battalion have led to changes that will help the students who work at The Battalion better understand the community they serve.

Simply put, we want to get to know you. We will be in the Forsyth Gallery in the Memorial Student Center this afternoon from 1-3 p.m., and we would like to take this opportunity to meet as many A&M students, faculty and administrators as possible. Snacks will be provided, so please take some time and stop by. We look forward to getting to know you.

THE BATTALION

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BORED OF THE RING

Students have right to sell college rings to others

The recent actions by members of the Georgia football team have done little to quell a debate that raged on in the Texas A&M community last semester: do students have the right to sell rings and other merchandise earned through personal college achievements?

Last month, nine Georgia football players sold their 2002 Southeastern Conference championship rings, Sugar Bowl rings and Sugar Bowl jerseys to a private buyer who then sold the items on eBay, according to The Associated Press. The players were given these items based on their remarkable athletic success.

But disappointingly, the players were declared ineligible by the NCAA pending an investigation and attempts to reacquire the merchandise, a decision that undermines the entire capitalist system on which this country is based. Georgia is appealing the NCAA's decision, and rightfully so, as these young men had every right to sell possessions that were legally their own.

Even more alarming, though, is the fact that the NCAA is citing an ambiguous rule in declaring the players ineligible. NCAA rules don't prohibit student athletes from selling rings as long as those athletes get no more than "fair market value" for their merchandise, according to the AP. But defining "fair market value" is hopelessly subjective. While critics say the rings are worth no more than \$350 apiece, diehard Georgia football fans clearly attach much greater significance to an SEC championship ring, the first of which Georgia fans have seen in 20 years. For example, defensive tackle Kedric Golston received \$3,500 for his ring and jerseys. So clearly, determining "fair market value" can be hugely problematic. The NCAA is interpreting its rules in a strict, even unreasonable, manner and is quick to take action if there is even



GEORGE DEUTSCH



hint of wrongdoing. It should come as no surprise, then, that six of the SEC's 12 teams are under NCAA investigation, though not all for selling athletic merchandise. So if the NCAA's actions are not fair, at least they are equitable.

But in truth, those nine Georgia players had every right to do what they did. Did their decision to sell their rings fail to show integrity and team unity? Perhaps, but the issue shouldn't simply be reduced to an ethical dilemma. Fortunately for those who aren't student athletes, the NCAA cannot restrict free trade between average college students. Still, when A&M student Matt Shomer attempted selling his Aggie ring on eBay in April, he was met with unwarranted criticism and harassment from members of the student body, as was evident in an April 9 Battalion mail call. Shomer was singled out, embarrassed and called "disgraceful" in print by another Aggie. It was this Aggie who did a disservice to the A&M community through needless harassment; Shomer was just a victim of others' overzealous criticism and his own ambition.

Shomer and Georgia football coach Mark Richt have apologized, but apologies really aren't in order. The decision was made to exchange money for merchandise, and in the real world, transactions such as this happen by the thousands every day.

If a ring's owner cannot sell it, who can? The achievement and emotion associated with these rings, whether an SEC ring or an Aggie ring, doesn't somehow make them sacred or priceless, it only makes them valuable. These students were aware of the value their belongings held and simply wanted to capitalize off of it. Really, what is more American than that?

George Deutsch is a senior journalism major. Graphic by Angelique Ford.

Iran presents a delicate issue for the U.S.

For the past 20 years, one of the primary foreign policy problems for the United States has been what to do about Iran. Iran's relationship with the United States has been poor, even to the point of brushes with the U.S. military in the 1980s, but reformers in Iran in the 90s sought to improve things. But now that the United States' long term policy problem in Iraq has receded, some in U.S. foreign policy have decided to reevaluate their stance toward Iran. This, coupled with recent events involving Iran, has led to a split in opinion on whether to take a harsher stance in dealing with the country. The United States should not let its victory in Iraq lead to hasty policy decisions about Iran.

Any changes in U.S. policy toward Iran should be made with as much evidence to support them as possible and not simply on impulse or limited intelligence. Last week, in an article from the BBC, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld gave a warning to Iranians concerning their involvement in Iraq, with al-Qaida and in developing nuclear weapons. Rumsfeld was



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quoted as saying "efforts to try to remake Iraq in Iran's image will be aggressively put down," a very blunt comment from such a senior official on the situation.

Although Iran should not meddle in Iraqi affairs, it seems premature to use such strong language in public. On the matter of Iran and its possible harboring or coordinating with al-Qaida, the issue is a bit murkier. According to an article from The New York Times, there is disagreement in the intelligence community about whether there is a reliable link between Iran and the recent bombings in Saudi Arabia, although according to the BBC article, Rumsfeld believes a link exists. Other western diplomats in Iran agree that senior al-Qaida figures are in the country, but are unsure if Iran is aiding them or even aware of which ones might be in the country.

Before Rumsfeld's remarks, Iran had been asked to cooperate with the Saudi investigation of the bombings. Although public pressure may be useful in getting Iran to cooperate, it can also build tension over a subject (such as al-Qaida

that might have been a point where U.S. and Iranian objectives coincide.

But with regard to Iran's nuclear program, the United States has a more immediate reason for concern. According to the BBC, it is expected that the International Atomic Energy Agency will issue a report soon that will provide information casting doubt upon the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program. This area is one of legitimate concern for the United States and Iran's neighbors. However, the United States should wait for the IAEA report before turning the heat up too much. The findings may not be as damaging as expected, and the end result of all this public fuss may not be what those pushing the hard line want to see.

It may prove more harmful to push a hard line on Iran now than later with the current situation in the Middle East. If the Iranians feel threatened, they may try to increase efforts in Iraq, Israel and Afghanistan to obstruct U.S. goals to gain leverage against the Bush administration.

Recently, Iran had two antagonistic neighboring Sunni regimes removed by the United

States. But now, even reformist Iranian President Mohammed Khatami has criticized recent U.S. statements as "unilateralist," according to the BBC. The United States should not squander the good will of those in Iran willing to work for a democratic society against Iranian theocrats. The reformers and theocrats have been enemies of al-Qaida in the past due to that organization's Sunni Muslim orientation, and although this might have changed recently, such antipathy could have been put to use by the Bush Administration before Rumsfeld's comments. On the nuclear issue, it may prove hard to negotiate nuclear dismantling with the Iranians, but even so, they will be easier to deal with than North Korea. Which brings up a final consideration — that with a just-finished war in Iraq and uncertainty on the Korean peninsula, now is probably not the best time to pick new fights in the Middle East.

David Shoemaker is a junior management major.

Hollywood serving up same mundane fare

Limitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Hollywood's summer lineup is a virtual hallway of mirrors. Looking at the films being released in summer 2003, more than a dozen are adaptations, sequels or prequels of past movies spanning every genre. Hollywood sees this as a production agenda ensuring a viable fan base that will likely buy into the subsequent franchise of a previously successful movie or TV show. But in reality, the summer lineup is indicative of an increasing lack of fresh ideas in the entertainment industry, resulting in the pounding of pop culture mainstays into the ground. By trying to cover up its lack of creativity with ballooning budgets, computer graphics and peppy soundtracks, Hollywood has cranked out tired, plastic shadows of previous hits.

The adaptation list continues following the spring success of X2: X-Men United and The Matrix Reloaded. Continuing the trend of turning a comic book into a glossy, big-budget, special effect-laden production comes The Hulk and The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. This time around, Jennifer Connelly and Sean Connery, both previous Oscar winners, hope to prove their acting worth to the Academy by sparring with a simulated green blob and/or Captain Nemo in front of a bluescreen.

The adaptation's bothersome cousin, who never fails to keep replicating herself, is the sequel. Sequels are rarely as good as The Godfather Part II or T2: Judgement Day and are often exponentially



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worse as more are made. Consider the failings of Beverly Hills Cop III, Rocky V and the Police Academy franchise. June brings audiences three sequels: 2Fast 2Furious, Rugrats Go Wild and Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle. Expect Paul Walker and a bevy of Total Request Live rappers to flare nostrils and grind gears in a homoerotic testosterone-fest of macho underground drag racers. The Angels will continue to rip off every Matrix graphic as they again prove that you can be a top secret agent and a vixen as long as you wear revealing clothes and say "hi-ah" approximately 350 times.

July brings five more sequels into the troubled summer fray: Legally Blonde 2: Red, White, and Blonde; Terminator III: Rise of the Machines; Bad Boys 2; Lara Croft, Tomb Raider: Cradle of Life and Spy Kids 3-D: Game Over. Reese Witherspoon continues her pattern of sticky-sweet chick flicks as her character, Elle Woods, the sorority girl with brains, goes to Congress, obviously mistaking the West Mall for an actual mall. Arnold is back after more than a decade (and a really obvious facelift) as the Terminator, this time battling a female Terminatrix. After a decade without a certifiable hit, Mr. Universe himself must prove that he can still play his most challenging role: a robot.

Fortunately, August sees only two sequels: American Wedding, the third installment of the American Pie franchise, and Jeepers Creepers II. The American Pie producers must have realized that none of the original cast has done much since putting the franchise on their resumes, so squeezing one more flute joke and penis calamity out of the cast would not present a big challenge. And who even saw the first Jeepers Creepers? If the first movie stinks,

why does Hollywood crank out another one? Of all the sequels this summer, most were made too long after the previous film, leaving the stars older and more grizzled (Terminator), or too soon after the previous film, refusing to let the public rest from the glut of merchandising (Lara Croft).

At last, there is the in-bred cousin of the family: the prequel, made only after the sequels have gleaned any interest from the American public. This summer brings Dumb and Dumber: When Harry Met Lloyd. Granted, the first movie was good, mainly from Jim Carrey's facial ticks and Jeff Daniel's unkempt manner. The prequel, however, stars two unknowns who are expected to fill the former actors' shoes. If there is one thing the prequel has proved in the past five years, it is that they don't work (see Star Wars: Episodes I, II). When the original film teeters on the edge of mediocrity and only survives because of the talent of the cast, introducing new actors in a prequel will assuredly fail to live up to the audience's expectations.

The selections at the theater this summer look bleak in terms of fresh plots, intriguing characters and original direction. What they do provide are lots of sparkly clothes, computer graphics and a bevy of love themes from MTV's latest pop princess or SoCal punk bands. These producers are spending a lot of money to ensure these movies are a success in terms of profit, so prepare to gorge yourself on mundane fare for as long as you can stand the Matrix's hold.

Brooke Corso is a senior English and speech communication major.