

OPINION

THE BATTALION

Page 9 • Wednesday, October 1, 2003

Missing the target

Lawsuit against manufacturer of video game misplaces the blame for shooting

On the night of June 25, 2003, 16-year-old William Buckner and his 14-year-old stepbrother Joshua took shotguns to Interstate 40 outside of Newport, Tenn., and opened fire on passing vehicles. A 19-year-old girl was shot in the pelvis while riding in her boyfriend's car and ended up with eight bullet fragments in her body. Aaron Hamel, a 45-year-old registered nurse, was shot in the head and bled to death in the arms of his cousin, who had been traveling with him, according to ABCNews.com.



JENELLE WILSON

The two boys, who told police they were imitating scenes from the video game "Grand Theft Auto," pled guilty to reckless homicide, aggravated assault and reckless endangerment. They will be held in juvenile detention centers until they are 18.

Hamel's family filed suit in early September against Take2interactive, the manufacturer of the game, for \$100 million.

The pain the Hamel family is feeling after this tragic loss is understandable. However, they are attempting to hold the wrong people accountable for Hamel's death. The game's manufacturer is not responsible for what happened this summer.

Retailers and, more importantly, parents are responsible for these kinds of violent video games getting into the hands of children.

Everyone who has seen one of the "Grand Theft Auto" games knows how violent they are. In truth, some parts are revolting. In "Vice City," gamers can pick up prostitutes and take them to secluded areas for a little extra "life energy," pedestrians can be run over, leaving bloody tire trails and gamers have weapons such as rocket launchers and flame throwers that can be used on pedestrians or the police.

According to the Athens Banner-Herald, the sole objection in one of the "Vice City" missions is to kill as many police officers as possible in two minutes.

Clearly, "Grand Theft Auto" should not be in the hands of children.

Craig A. Anderson, chairman of the psychology department

at Iowa State University, has found that violent video games do have a negative effect on children. The games can cause temporary increased aggressive thinking and behavior, as well as anger. This is easily explained. Anyone who has taken an introductory psychology or sociology class is familiar with vicarious learning. Children imitate what they see in video games because there are no real consequences. Nothing bad happens when a gamer opens fire on police officers in "Vice City;" in fact, one is positively reinforced for his brutality.

This can affect a child's thought process regarding real situations, especially if he has developmental problems, which is why "Grand Theft Auto" isn't rated for minors.

Games are evaluated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board. Three trained raters with no connections to the interactive entertainment

industry review each game and assign a rating. According to Amazon.com, these raters include retired school principals, parents and businesspeople.

Ratings vary from Early Childhood (for children 3 and up) to Adults Only. "Grand Theft Auto" has a Mature rating, meaning it is unsuitable for anyone under 17. The package says the game contains "extreme gore, blood, language and sexual situations."

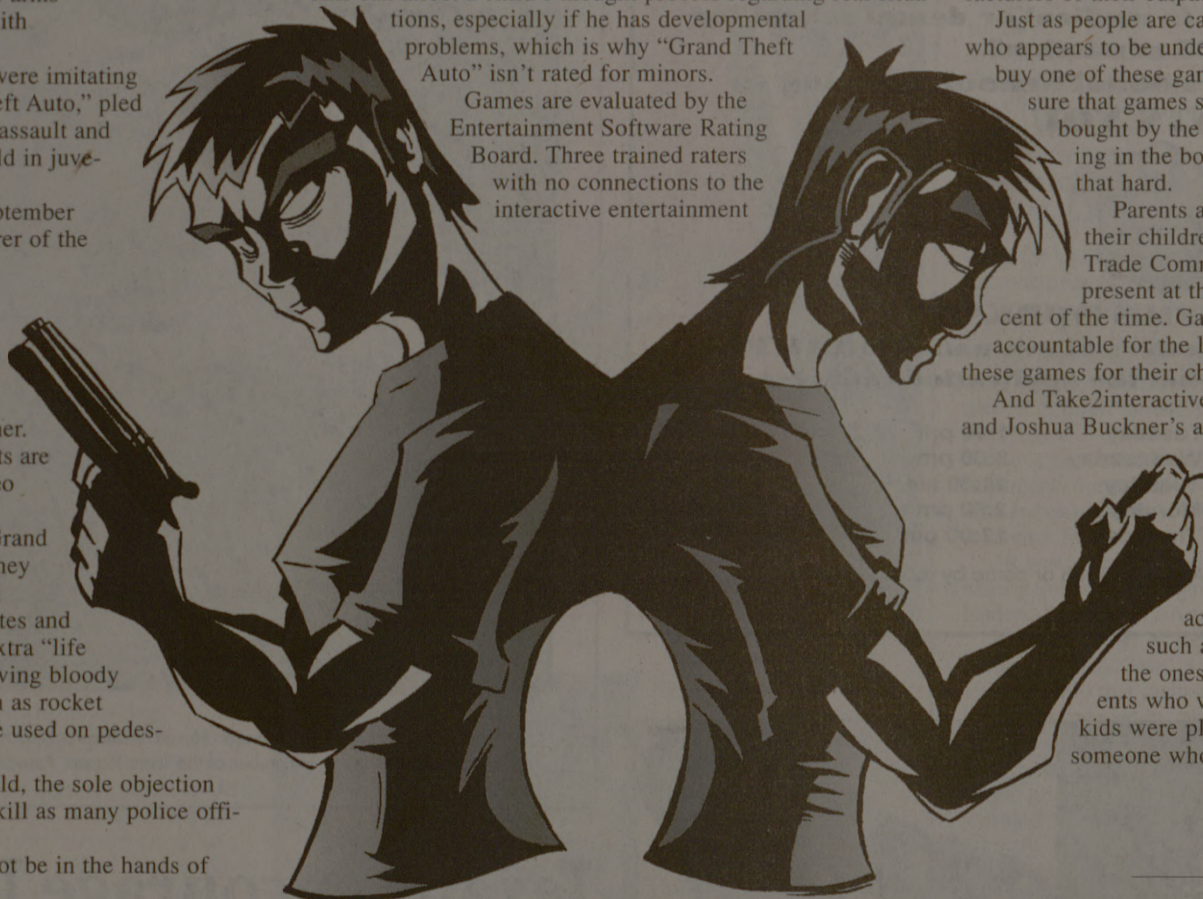
These ratings, which are printed on the game packages, are there for a reason, and they should and do relieve game manufacturers of their culpability.

Just as people are carded going into movie theaters, anyone who appears to be under 17 should be carded while trying to buy one of these games. Retailers must do their best to make sure that games such as "Grand Theft Auto" are only bought by the intended audiences. Glancing at the rating in the bottom left cover of the box should not be that hard.

Parents also have to take responsibility for what their children play. A September 2000 Federal Trade Commission report shows that parents are present at the purchase or rental of games 83 percent of the time. Game manufacturers cannot be held accountable for the lack of responsibility of parents buying these games for their children.

And Take2interactive is certainly not responsible for William and Joshua Buckner's access to .22 caliber rifles.

Lawsuits against manufacturers of video games — even extraordinarily violent video games such as "Grand Theft Auto" — are not the way to prevent these kind of incidents. If civil actions are going to be initiated in cases such as these, those directly responsible are the ones who need to be held accountable: parents who weren't paying attention to what their kids were playing or retailers who sold the game to someone who it was clearly not intended for.



SETH FREEMAN • THE BATTALION

Jenelle Wilson is a senior political science major.

Skyrocket yell's lift-off should be grounded

This year, the yell leaders have decided to launch a new Aggie yell called "Skyrocket."

Unfortunately, a good number of Aggies were unprepared for its lift-off. Worse still, many who have heard the yell do not want to go along for the ride.

The yell leaders should be commended for trying to induce change to their position, but the Skyrocket yell may not be the appropriate way to accomplish this. They should consider dropping the yell.

Tim Bailey, head yell leader and a senior agricultural development major, said the Skyrocket yell was done between the 1940s and 1960s. He said he does not know why it is no longer performed as an Aggie yell.

In explaining why the yell leaders decided to revive the yell, Bailey said it was "a great yell." Memorial Student Center assistant director and yell leader adviser Rusty Thompson also said the Skyrocket yell was a way to "bring back the old and the new."

Trying to unite "Old Army" and "New Army" traditions is indeed a noble goal. But there are three reasons why the Skyrocket yell may not be



COLLINS EZEANYIM

the best way to do this.

The first involves the deployment of the yell. Bailey said Skyrocket was first performed at Midnight Yell Practice for the Maroon and White game during Parents' Weekend last spring semester. It was also taught to freshmen during new student conferences and Fish Camp. Thompson said that the yell was also performed during the summer.

Still, a good number of Aggies returned in the fall surprised by the yell's presence and did not know the words. Furthermore, there was no ready resource they could turn to learn the words to the yell. The Web site yell.tamu.edu and the All-University calendar sold in the MSC have the words and the hand-signals for the other yells, but Skyrocket is not included in either case.

This situation is put most succinctly by David White, a sophomore electrical engineering major. "When were we supposed to have learned that yell?"

To their credit, the yell leaders went over the words at the Midnight Yell Practice before the Pittsburgh game on Sept. 27. But that still excludes those Aggies who were unable to go attend the yell practice.

Another important reason why the Skyrocket yell may not be the best yell to bring back is that it introduces incongruity into

the Aggie yell system.

Aggies will notice that the yells performed have strong connections to the A&M community. For example, the "Military" yell recognizes A&M's penchant to produce heroes in the armed services. "Farmer's Fight" obviously alludes to A&M's roots as an agricultural school. Even "Locomotive" recognizes the trains that frequently pass right through the middle of campus.

But what significance does a Skyrocket hold for the A&M community? Even though some aerospace engineering majors might disagree, the answer is none. Perhaps there is another yell with stronger roots in A&M's history.

Another reason, and this is admittedly the most subjective of them all, is that there is something about the yell that is disconcerting. Somehow the sound of the yell just doesn't fit. It's the "eeeeeeeeee" in the two "Whistle-eeeeeeeeee" parts. It doesn't sound like a yell that could get the Twelfth man into the mood for a game.

But again, this is an opinion purely based on one's taste. Bailey said he's received more positive feedback about the yell than negative. And he points out, some Aggies are resistant to change.

That is true. But the yell leaders should also consider that Skyrocket may have been grounded because previous Aggie generations decided they

didn't like it.

Granted, there are some in this generation who like the yell. Indeed, the Class of 2007 probably knows and likes the yell the best. For example, George Stowe, a freshman general studies major who stood on second deck during the Pittsburgh Midnight Yell Practice, said he loved the Skyrocket yell.

Still, there are many other Aggies who vehemently disagree with the yell. Perhaps they are not as public with their contempt, but they have taken to the Internet to voice their displeasure, such as the Texags.com football forums.

Most of the comments are against the yell, calling it "stupid." Furthermore, some say they will refuse to do the yell.

It is important for Aggies to express their opinion of the yell, pro or con. But if they are against the yell, they must tell the yell leaders in the most respectful manner possible. Calling the yell "stupid" or hissing when the yell leaders give the pass back serves no purpose.

Ultimately, the yell leaders must evaluate whether the new yell is causing a significant amount of Aggie disunity. If it is, then Skyrocket should be sent on a permanent blastoff.

Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major.

MAIL CALL

Horse laugh means same thing as booing

In response to Sept. 29 mail call:

I don't understand the big deal. What bothers Klepac is knowing that "this behavior exists among my fellow Aggies?" It's not like we were throwing beer at the refs or tearing up the benches in the stands.

The horse laugh means the same exact thing as a boo. They are both signs of displeasure at something in the game.

Trying to convince ourselves that we are somehow better fans because we hiss instead of boo is kind of semantical.

No one was booing at our team, or even the other team for that matter. We were booing because the refs cost us a touchdown on a ridiculous play. They deserved it, and it only happened once.

Sometimes the horse laugh just doesn't effectively convey how irritat-

ed we are. I think a warranted boo now and then is a good thing.

Clint Caughman
Class of 2003

Uncovering should be treated as a tradition

In response to Dallas Shipp's Sept. 30 column:

I admit that I am generally loud and obnoxious at the games, and I have been known to spew out my share of choice expletives. My friends and I do indeed yell out "uncover" at the beginning of each yell. This is the same thing that my father taught me to yell, when I came to my first game in fourth grade. It also was something passed on to me at Moses Hall during the times of Bonfire.

So even though you may not consider this to be a tradition, in my mind it is. You take your hat off in the MSC, you take your hat off during the

National Anthem, you take your hat off in a church and you take your hat off at Kyle Field during a yell.

Usually we only yell out uncover once and then continue with the yell. However, at this particular game there was an individual two to three rows in front of us who refused to remove his camo visor. If he doesn't want to participate, then maybe he would be better suited for the visitor section.

Gerald Goss
Class of 2002

Uncovering is a sign of respect

To begin with, I agree that Aggies should not hurl choice words or comments at fans who do not uncover during yells. However, I do believe that, out of respect, fans should remove their hats during the yells as well as the school songs.

When a fan is asked politely several times to uncover, we expect him to

honor that. Since we are always yelling only for our team, it shows that we have respect for our team by removing our hats while yelling for the Aggies.

I respect this tradition as part of the Aggie Spirit, and in doing so I do not question the origin of it nor the rationale behind it. It is a tradition, and being a school rich in such traditions, I only expect of fellow Aggies what we have been doing for decades — uphold and reinforce our traditions.

Yes, it may seem petty to some, but it's a tradition nonetheless.

Brandon Talbott
Class of 2007

A bad memory of Texas A&M

In response to Sept. 30 mail call:

One of my worst memories from my days at Texas A&M is of the sec-

ond Midnight Yell Practice I attended. A drunken group of Aggies started yelling at a man (who was clearly not a student) to uncover during the yells. He did an admirable job of ignoring their increasingly vulgar taunts. As the crowd began to disperse, one of the Aggies spat on the man's back! I never went back to a yell practice, and I rarely took a friend or family member from outside the University to any sporting events after that.

I have many fond memories of the years I spent at A&M, but I do not miss the small-minded people who felt it necessary to act as policemen for the traditions (real or perceived) of the University.

The Aggies I work with do not harbor such attitudes, so perhaps even the worst offenders, as they mature, will begin to realize what a disservice they are doing to the perception many outsiders have of A&M.

Jason Leifester
Class of 1991