

In trouble? Who cares?

Texas A&M's athletes shouldn't be considered representatives of the University



MATT RIGNEY

Recently, several Texas A&M football players have gotten into legal trouble, leaving A&M students worried not only about whether the Aggies will be winners next season but also whether any of the team will be free to play. These troubles have ignited a whirlwind of criticism from newspapers statewide, which say that this behavior is unacceptable because these athletes tarnish the reputation of the University.

While critics are partially correct — this type of behavior is generally unacceptable — they're missing the bigger picture. It should not matter. Athletes are not student leaders. They represent the University as players of a game, something that has little importance in an academic setting.

Since November, five A&M football players have been arrested, according to The Houston Chronicle. The real question is: Why should anybody care?

Football players are not recruited for their ability to stay out of trouble. And, although an academically strong recruit never hurts, football players are not recruited for their academic prowess. Players are recruited for their ability to play football. They do not represent the University as a whole. In fact, they are a minority compared to the student body.

A problem arises when students and outsiders of a university begin placing too much responsibility on athletes. As soon as a few football players have trouble abiding by the law, everyone starts screaming that the University is full of criminals and the administrators who oversee these students are inept leaders.

In a Dallas Morning News column, sportswriter Gerry Fraley scrutinizes the A&M athletic program, taking a cheap shot at the University. He says colleges should encourage academic development and maturity.

"Too many Aggies, mostly from the football team are learning about the inner workings of the court system," Fraley said.

Although Fraley jests about the A&M team's legal woes, he unknowingly brings up a good point. The purpose of a university is to educate and train for the real world.

Football isn't the real world. As an example, there are about 2,277 players listed on the NFL's Web site. That means one in every 102,000 Americans is an NFL player. In the 2001-2002 school year, there were more than 2.98 million teachers in grades prekindergarten through 12, according to the National Center for Education

Statistics, or one in every 95 Americans is a primary or secondary educator. If teachers make up so much more of the population, why is the emphasis on football players? This illustrates how meaningless football should be in the college world.

If a few students who were education majors were arrested, newspapers all over the state wouldn't report that the University's reputation is tarnished and education administrators must be slacking.

But they should.

When the University cuts programs that educate students and benefit society, newspapers and citizens all over the country should raise their voices. When a state government cuts funding for schools year after year, people should fight it.

These events put a halt on academics and less adequately prepare students for the real world. They tarnish the name of a university, but academics fall so far down on the list of importance that it is often overlooked in lieu of 11 people who run around a grass field.

Sure, athletic programs serve a useful purpose by encouraging friendly competition, providing some entertainment and teaching discipline and respect. But when a program that specifically trains students who end up representing a minuscule fraction of the country gets more publicity and recognition than any other aspect of a school, it points to a larger societal problem.

Real student leaders are those who add to the overall objective of the University. Leaders of student political groups, academic clubs and professional societies drive A&M toward educating students in an academic and a real-world sense. These are the people who bear the reputation of the University on their shoulders. So if the student body president gets arrested for public intoxication, let the uproar commence. But until then, just expect the football players to perform on the field.

Matt Rigney is a junior journalism major. Graphic by Ivan Flores

MAIL CALL

Christians vote conservative because it's a 'lesser evil'

In response to John David Blakley's Feb. 27 column:

Mr. Blakley's conclusion that the Republican Party's agenda does not reflect Christian doctrine is true in some respects; however, I am a Christian and I have always been conservative due to moral issues that arise in most of the liberal candidates.

Take the 2000 presidential election between Bush and Gore. Bush had nearly a spotless record when it came to character issues. From the beginning, Gore fell under question with his fund-raising practices.

Needless to say, Clinton committed adultery with multiple partners (all quite unattractive, strangely enough), and even with a college intern. It was a well-known fact that even Franklin Roosevelt did not keep the sanctity of his marriage.

How are Christians supposed to support a president who has no integrity or character?

When it comes down to it, Christians don't vote conservative solely based on abortion or the gay issue. They vote conservative because it is the lesser of the two evils when it comes to morality.

I've talked to many liberals about morality, but what they don't understand is their definition of morals and values do not line up with the Bible's standards. Their perception of what is right can differ greatly from that of the Bible.

Daniel Davis
Class of 2007

Aggies, not Hotard Hall, define the Aggie Spirit

In response to a March 1 mail call:

The closing of Hotard Hall will not result in a loss of the Aggie Spirit. It will result in the loss of a community, no doubt.

The tone of Ms. Montemayor's letter implies that the redass activities of Hotard Hall will cease if it is reconfigured for faculty. Buildings do not epitomize the Aggie Spirit. Aggies do.

If the Aggie Spirit, to the residents of Hotard, depends solely on their residence in a building, then the Aggie Spirit is truly dead.

I challenge the residents of Hotard to use this as an opportunity to come closer together as a group and to spread the

"Howdys" and football attendance to the rest of the campus.

Andy Lutten
Class of 2005

Conservative views on race merely strive for equality

In response to Cody Sain's March 1 column:

Mr. Sain's narrow-minded views seem to be a pathetic misunderstanding of race-based scholarships. Groups such as YCT and RWU's opinions have been completely misconstrued.

They are not trying to impose racist or prejudiced views but are merely striving for complete equality and no special treatment among races.

The group's presenting of the whites-only scholarship is not to discriminate but to rather pose a point. Financial aid should not be based on race but on financial need and academic achievement.

Mr. Sain's comment about most minorities needing special treatment scholarships because they are poor is not only distasteful and incorrect but racist in itself.

I am a white male and my opportunities for financial aid are minimal. How many times have you said to yourself: If I just checked this Black, Hispanic, etc. box, my opportunities might increase? So if equality is what everyone wants and what everyone needs then choosing any of these races should not have any effect on how much money one receives or whether or not he wins a scholarship or even to the extent of being admitted to a university. Please quit playing the race card.

Matthew Wyatt
Class of 2006

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@the-battalion.net. Attachments will not be accepted.

Guantanamo detainees are being treated justly

During the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. forces captured numerous suspected terrorists and enemy agents. The legal status of these enemy combatants is being brought into question.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Justice asked the Supreme Court to deny access to lawyers as legal defense for the prisoners. Many claim the detainees' rights are being violated and that they are being treated unfairly. In reality, the United States is being just in its actions with the detainees at Guantanamo Bay.

The primary concern to critics is over the legal status of the detainees. Terrorism is an act of war, but the terrorists are not necessarily prisoners of war. Soldiers fight on the battlefield against other soldiers and, when captured, become prisoners of war. Terrorists wage war against nations by targeting innocent civilians, and according to the Bush administration, this makes them illegal combatants. These detainees have broken international laws regarding warfare and are no longer considered prisoners of war.

Normally, prisoners are guaranteed the rights of the nation where they are imprisoned. However, Guantanamo Bay is located in Cuba, on foreign soil. Thus, the prisoners are not guaranteed the rights of prisoners held in domestic territory.

Also, the detainees are not U.S. citizens. Human rights groups and lawyers lobbying on the prisoners' behalf claim they should be allowed basic constitutional rights. They do not deserve the protection of the U.S. Constitution any more than a citizen of Canada or Mexico does. Perhaps they deserve even less due to the nature of their crimes. Simply put, they aren't citizens of the United States. Terrorists shouldn't be afforded the legal protection of a nation they are trying to destroy.

Legal precedence sides with the U.S. government. According to CNN, "The government cites a 53-year-old case for denying the habeas corpus jurisdiction to hear appeals of non-citizens held on foreign soil." A writ of habeas corpus would force the court to make a ruling on the legality of the suspects' imprisonment. This would hamper efforts to fight the war on terror. The military



DANIEL ROSSELL

reports that interrogations of the suspects have yielded valuable information. Legal maneuverings and access to lawyers would interfere with the military's efforts to gain important intelligence that could potentially save lives.

The prisoners at Guantanamo Bay are being treated humanely. The United States has made every effort to ensure basic human rights to the detainees. The prisoners have been allowed to practice their religion. Some

have learned to read or have had other forms of education. Visits from the Red Cross have proven that the prisoners' conditions are more than acceptable. The United States is committed to protecting the rights that the prisoners do have, but this does not necessarily include legal rights.

Last week, Secretary of Defense Donald

Rumsfeld announced that prisoners would have their status reviewed once a year to determine if it is necessary to keep them detained. The prisoners were also guaranteed some form of representation.

British Broadcasting Corporation News stated that those who "pose no threat to America would be released."

It is for this reason that the panels to review a prisoners status were created. The United States is committed to seeking justice for those guilty and setting free the innocent, but not at the expense of national security.

No legal system is perfect. However, this is not a reason to reject the system entirely. A senior military official points out that many of the prisoners remain committed to killing American civilians and soldiers. It is clear that releasing these men would be a mistake.

The detainees held at Guantanamo Bay are being treated exactly as they should be: as suspected terrorists who are neither prisoners of war nor American citizens. The U.S. government has upheld both the legal and human rights of the detainees.

Daniel Rosell is a junior nuclear engineering and political science major.

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