

Football and Police

10-25-2014

Richard C. Crepeau

University of Central Florida, richard.crepeau@ucf.edu

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

Part of the [Cultural History Commons](#), [Journalism Studies Commons](#), [Other History Commons](#), [Sports Management Commons](#), and the [Sports Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "Football and Police" (2014). *On Sport and Society*. 90.
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety/90>

This Commentary is brought to you for free and open access by the Public History at STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in On Sport and Society by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact lee.dotson@ucf.edu.

SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR ARETE
OCTOBER 25, 2014

Over the past few weeks college sport has once again taken over the lead in ink and air time; not actually games, of course, but stories that illustrate the corruption of higher education in America by the presence of intercollegiate athletics on campus, or more precisely football on campus.

First, let me say that in no way am I surprised by the report by the *New York Times* that the Tallahassee police have had a very cozy and friendly relationship with the FSU athletic department. Nor am I in any way surprised by the report out of the University of North Carolina that athletes received grades for doing little or no work in vague and bogus courses.

For as long as I can remember police in college towns and cities have had a cozy relationship with athletic programs. Free passes are given for minor offenses such as speeding and parking tickets. Even more serious issues have been handled as private matters between law enforcement agencies and athletic authorities.

This is not new and when I first saw the headline I agreed with a colleague who referenced the film "Casablanca" where the prefect of police expressed "shock" to find out there was gambling in Rick's Café Americain as he then blew his whistle and ordered that all the "usual suspects" be rounded up.

Indeed who could be shocked by any of this?

Then I read the *Times* report, although I was not exactly "shocked," I was impressed by the sheer volume of offenses reported to the Tallahassee police involving the nation's number one football team. The most infamous story involved the charges of rape against Heisman Trophy winner, Jameis Winston. But there were others implicating Winston involving crab legs and public obscenity. Then there were several BB gun incidents involving members of the football team. For the most part these incidents did not reach the arrest or court room level. Nor did they draw much more than minor disciplinary action from campus authorities in or out of the athletic department.

Was it just boys being boys? Perhaps. What is more disturbing were other incidents involving domestic violence, multiple forms of theft and damage on and off the campus. Often these incidents involving Seminole football players were simply buried or dealt with softly by the police as investigations "stalled out."

One of the interesting side notes to this is that BB guns seem to have become the toy of choice among football players. Incidents at the University of Maine, East Carolina University, the University of Kentucky, and Western Michigan have been in the news over the past year. The difference between these incidents and those at Florida State is that players involved in them were suspended for their actions.

As for free grades, the report of academic corruption at the University of North Carolina which stretched over decades and involved thousands of students, was really numbing in its scope. UNC has over the course of several decades built its academic reputation and emerged as an elite academic institution in the United States, and indeed across the globe. Unfortunately for over two decades UNC has created an athletic/academic environment of massive corruption that spilled over into the general student body.

It is not so much that UNC has been giving away grades and sending its athletes to the "easy grade" courses, because that goes on at every campus that needs to keep its athletes academically eligible. In some cases these are just easy courses, and in some cases they are intentionally easy courses serving those who need to boost their grade point average. Academic advisors in athletic departments know what these courses are and what professors are best for the GPA's of their struggling charges.

What is eye catching about the North Carolina case is its duration and volume. From 1993 to 2011 bogus courses were run and athletes were among the primary enrollees. Illiterate "papers" were given high marks and plagiarism was rampant. In some cases no grading was done and grades were simply awarded, occasionally on order. Clearly the major center of the scandal was in the area of academic advisement and in the Afro and African American Studies department.

The question always is how much was known about this in the athletic department and among the coaches. Two general rules operate here. Everyone who has a need not to know is kept free from any paper trail that would implicate them. Second, many in the athletic department and among the coaches knew, although the degree of knowledge varied. Those who knew acted as if they did not know, because they did not want to know and did not pursue further knowledge.

Again in both these examples what is really at stake is the academic and ethical integrity of the university or college. If this is not an important issue in our society then let the band play on and the circus continue while pretending that corruption can be isolated and contained to one corner of the university without corrupting the entire institution.

I assure you that *is not* possible.

Those who have degrees from these institutions and who are proud of them need to let those running these universities into the mud that it needs to stop.

These days I seldom volunteer the information that I have a degree from Florida State. I would hope that other graduates of FSU, UNC, or any other university mired in scandal, feel the same way.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

Copyright 2014 by Richard C. Crepeau