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## Raising Standards and Beating the System: Forget Reform

Richard C. Crepeau

University of Central Florida, [richard.crepeau@ucf.edu](mailto:richard.crepeau@ucf.edu)

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The beauty of intercollegiate athletics and the NCAA attempt to control them is that whatever is done, something else follows that will corrupt the solution. In a perfect world it would also produce new and more elaborate levels of corruption. The current case in point revolves around the attempt by the NCAA to mandate minimum SAT and ACT scores and thus guarantee some modicum of brain wave activity in the recruited student athlete.

The initial response, after of course the predictable moaning by coaches over what they term "excessively high standards," was a mad scramble to find ways to increase SAT and ACT scores. Numerous options surfaced from simple fraud (have someone else take the test) to the intense cramming of materials into the heads of student-athletes. Some of these actually worked.

Now comes word that in the American entrepreneurial spirit a method has been developed to beat the system without the actual need to learn very much. According to ESPN's Andy Katz, Tryfon Castritis, a person and not a medical problem, has developed simple formulaic methods to increase SAT and ACT scores, and you don't have to be a rocket scientist to use them. Castritis promises that with his simple formulae most Math and English problems on these national exams can be solved in fifteen seconds. (One wonders about this report as it seems both too good to be true, and too good not to be true)

Build a better mousetrap and the public will beat a path to your door. Tryfon Castritis' door is in Long Beach, California, and although the public may not be beating a path to his door, there are a number of college coaches who are. One can imagine these coaches shouting the now famous "Do You Believe in Miracles" line as they march off to seek some Castritis for their programs.

As one would expect news of Tryfon's miracles has been spread by those most in need of his help, college basketball coaches. His fame has spread across the land and now apparently even across the continent and the oceans. A Toronto based sponsor of four Nigerians has contacted Castritis about working with his clients to get them ready for the fall round of testing.

Calls come in to Castritis from anywhere there is a need, anywhere that eligibility is a few SAT or ACT points away.

Castritis says he has no clue as to how these people get his name. Not only is he a genius, but a profoundly naive one.

Working for several hours each day over the course of a month, Castritis imparts his techniques, although in truth not everyone can grasp them. But enough do. One recruit's score jumped 240 points and this produced a red flag from the NCAA. After considerable investigation, subsequent failures without the techniques, and finally acceptance by the NCAA, the athlete made it to college.

Castritus got his start teaching Asian students coming to the U.S. for college and with his success more students came looking for help. He charges \$30 to \$50 per hour, depending on need. Given the needs of college coaches it is unlikely he will ever be wanting for clients.

The inquiry by the representative of the Nigerians raises another issue. Why do U.S. universities and colleges offer grants to foreign students to play intercollegiate athletics? This is not a new issue. For decades Canadians were recruited to the hockey schools and the world was scoured for track and field athletes. Only the scope has changed.

Athletic recruiting is now global. Golf teams, ski teams, soccer teams, tennis teams, track teams, go to any and all corners of the world in search of student-athletes. As with many on the domestic front it is not always great scholars who receive the scholarships. They are in fact simply hired jocks who will major in eligibility and hedonism, and perhaps master both.

As someone who has lived and taught overseas, who has written grants and administered exchange programs, I am a firm believer in the importance of international diversity within our educational communities. However if we are to spend money to bring foreign students to the U.S. why are we not bringing the best students we can find?

I have friends in Europe and Africa who would love to send their children to study in an American university. These are young men and women of considerable academic achievement, but they can not afford to come. Why should the people of the United States spend money to bring athletes to universities rather than real students from abroad?

The answer I am afraid is clear. Raising the academic quality of the student body has a much lower priority than raising the

winning percentages of our teams. It is another sad comment on the athletic obsessions of our institutions of higher learning.

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

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