


9-22-2003

Rain, Money, Eligibility, and Gordon Gee: All Problems

Richard C. Crepeau

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

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

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

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

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 STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "Rain, Money, Eligibility, and Gordon Gee: All Problems" (2003). *On Sport and Society*. 199.

<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety/199>

SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
September 22, 2003

I tuned in Thursday night to see how bad the weather was in Virginia. I wasn't so much interested in Virginia Beach or Pat Robertson's bunker as I was the situation in Blacksburg. Sure enough the Virginia Tech/Texas A&M game was going ahead in wind and rain, not hurricane force, still and all a fairly formidable downpour.

Tornadoes are one of the dangers as a hurricane comes inland, but that seemed to frighten no one in Blacksburg. The nation's capital shut down for two days, baseball games in Baltimore and Philadelphia were moved to daytime starts, and airports packed it in. But in college football the show must go on. Revenue streams are filled by dollars not by rain.

The one positive is this: we can now say, both literally and figuratively, that the folks who produce college football don't know enough to come in out of the rain.

This meteorological discussion raises a more important question in intercollegiate athletics: Who will stop the rain?

Over the past few weeks we have been deluged with a number of stories indicating that anyone who tries will face a number of formidable forces. A taped interview that Terry Bowden gave to a newspaper reporter two years ago revealed that when he arrived at Auburn in the early 1990's substantial cash payments to football players was a common practice. Bowden has never discussed this publicly, and won't comment on the story, because he was forced to sign a gag order when he was fired at Auburn. Apparently if Bowden talks he faces foreclosure on loans from bankers who double as Auburn trustees. That is generally known as extortion, except in the world of college football.

Even now that the interview is public Bowden continues to hide behind the extortion arrangement and will say nothing, perhaps out of fear, perhaps for convenience. Meanwhile he continues as a resident shill for college football on ABC and ESPN where it is nearly impossible to stop him from talking.

So Auburn pays its players and extorts a former coach, retains trustees such as Bobby Lowder who were key figures in the process, and somehow Bowden continues to serve as a well paid analyst for two networks that have an economic interest in college football. The questions about what Bowden knew and when

he knew it are now multiplying geometrically, as is the downward spiral of integrity.

Then there is an ongoing saga of Maurice Clarett that apparently will never end. Ohio State University continues to bob and weave its way through this story, suspending Maurice, forgiving Maurice, promising to help reinstate Maurice, and never admitting they used an ineligible player to win the national championship. At same time the legs of this story with its NFL draft lawsuit potential, allows Ohio State to ignore the pending questions of their dubious academic practices.

Andy Geiger, Ohio State Athletic Director, in the midst of the Clarett scandal, was quoted as saying that Clarett would not have been suspended if he had cooperated in the investigation and had been "honest, forthright, and bathed in truth." Unfortunately, like Geiger and so many others, Clarett was only bathed by the rain.

This week in a study from the Mellon Foundation researchers found that the athletes at Ivy League schools and 25 other elite institutions feel isolated from their classmates academically, socially and culturally. Athletes are admitted to these institutions with significantly lower SAT scores and performed at a level lower than that anticipated by their SAT scores and high school grades. The problems were the most serious in the sport of football. If this is the case at universities that do not have "big time" programs, what could we expect in those universities that do?

As to the future Chancellor Gordon Gee of Vanderbilt University revealed his plans to abolish the athletic department at Vanderbilt and place intercollegiate athletics in the Office of Recreation, Fitness and Wellness. He hopes that this administrative shuffle will begin a process that will change the culture of intercollegiate athletics. The response in the press has been to ridicule Gee for his naivete, or suggest that Vandy should get out of the Southeastern Conference, proving once again that the sporting press has little or no interest in intercollegiate athletics except as entertainment and titillation.

To describe Gee as nave is to miss the content of his resume. Gordon Gee has presided over Ohio State University, West Virginia, and Colorado. His experience would indicate that he is not without some firsthand knowledge of the perils of major athletic programs. So his efforts at Vanderbilt are not the

result of naivete, but in fact an attempt to begin serious reform in the corrupt world of college athletics. Gordon Gee, too, will be hard pressed to stop the rain.

The possibility of achieving success can be seen in another comment Chancellor Gee made about his reforms to George Vecsey of the New York Times. Gee admitted he could not have attempted such reforms at Ohio State without being sent back to his hometown of Vernal, Utah, to pump gas.

Such a reaction would not be unique to Ohio State. Most other football and basketball schools in the minor leagues of professional athletics would react in the same way. In fact over the years any number of institutions have exiled their reform minded presidents to the Ulaanbaatar of higher education.

The tail does wag the dog in American Higher Education and any list of issues and incidents flows on into infinity.

And I wonder, still I wonder.
Who'll Stop the Rain?
-John Fogerty

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 2003 by Richard C. Crepeau