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## Football Spending in Florida Universities - Pell Grant Fraud Not Only at Miami

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Fall is in the air, if you live 400 miles north of here, and all the color and pageantry of college football has returned, as they say on the TV networks. The Bands have hit the fields, the boosters have opened their wallets, and college presidents are doing what they do best, giving pep talks to their scholar-athletes.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill: Never has so much, been expended on so few, for so little.

But that of course is the cynical view. In Florida we know better. Here in the Sunshine State where the legislature pinches pennies on the university system, boosters have spared no expense to produce the strongest football programs in America.

Florida, Florida State, and Miami constitute, in some polls, three of the top five teams in the nation. Over the past decade Florida State and Miami have produced several national champions and along with the Gators have become a leading supplier of labor to the National Football League. If these schools produce other graduates in these numbers who become the best in their fields, Florida university system grads will soon dominate every facet of American economic, political and cultural life.

And now the University of Central Florida has reached the top of their division, with Sports Illustrated making them the number one Division IAA team in the nation. If all goes on schedule the Golden Knights will win a national championship and then move on to compete at Division I with the big boys. And before you know it the Knights could make headlines as the object of an NCAA investigation, and then we will know that UCF has truly entered the big time. All the color and pageantry of college football will be on display in Orlando, and not just on New Year's Day.

In the midst of this breathtaking excitement it might be well to reflect on the color and pageantry which have graced the headlines of newspapers over the past several months. The Florida State story is now well known, the subject of endless jokes throughout the state, and being generally winked away by those who know that if you win, not only must you cheat, but it really is all right to do so if you don't get caught too often.

Down in Miami an even more interesting story is unfolding, not only because it is Miami, but because what is happening there

points to an issue that goes far beyond the mere violation of NCAA rules or even Federal Law.

In Miami there is an investigation of the university that has grown out of federal convictions of fraud in the Pell Grant program at the university. The Pell Grant is a federally funded program to provide assistance for a college education to those who financially qualify. It is a needs based program and part of the legacy of the Great Society, and a good one.

But as with all good programs designed to assist the needy there are those among the non-needy who are able to figure the angles and use these programs to their own benefit. I am not talking about those who defraud the government, but those who operate legally and use the programs for purposes that are generally approved, but were not intended.

I am speaking about how Athletic Departments across America have learned that by recruiting financially disadvantaged athletes they can bring these athletes into their programs at a minimum cost to their university, because most of the expenses of these athletes will be paid by Pell Grants. What this means quite simply is that federal tax dollars through the Pell Grants are subsidizing intercollegiate athletics. It would be interesting to know just how much Pell Grant money goes to athletes at each institution, and how much money that saves athletic departments.

Not only does this happen at the big programs, but in fact it happens on a higher percentage basis at the Division II and especially Division III programs where scholarships are not allowed, and the Pell Grant becomes the chief recruiting tool in attracting the financially disadvantaged athlete.

Also of interest were revelations out of Fresno State University indicating that athletes at Fresno were supplementing their Pell Grants and scholarships with Food Stamps. An ESPN investigation indicated that this was a fairly wide-spread practice across the Western United States in which athletic departments had friends in food stamp offices who were will to list athletes among the homeless and qualify them immediately for this federal program.

Oh the color and the pageantry. Will it never end?

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.

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