

6-16-2009

More corruption in college sports

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Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "More corruption in college sports" (2009). *On Sport and Society*. 798.
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety/798>

SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
More corruption in college sports
JUNE 16, 2009

The story began with this line:

The NCAA placed Alabama's football program and 15 other of the school's athletic teams on three years' probation for major violations due to misuse of free textbooks.

"Misuse of textbooks," what could that mean? Were the players caught reading them? Or did they just claim to have read them? Actually reading textbooks would place the athletes outside the cohort of their peers. It has been a rare thing that any college student has actually read a textbook in over a decade, although some still claim to have done so. I must apologize. I am being much too cynical about the student athlete, especially at an intellectual center like Tuscaloosa where "Roll Tide" is an exercise in symbolic communication.

Of course they weren't reading those books or even claiming to read them. They were selling them. It was a simple process. The student athlete is able to convert textbook credit in their stipend into cold hard cash by buying books for other students and then pocketing the money from the students. Given the fact that there was no limit on the amount of money a student athlete could spend in one semester for books, it was easy to create a sizeable revenue stream. And of course the more they spent on books, the more of a student the student athlete would appear to be.

Goodness, here it is mid-June and we're talking about intercollegiate athletics. Indeed. And there is much more.

The ongoing sore that is the University of Southern California athletic program produced more drainage in the last week when USC basketball coach Tim Floyd resigned, saying he no longer had "full enthusiasm" for his job. It seems that a story was about to break that Coach Floyd had given \$1,000 to a street agent to obtain the services of hoop sensation O. J. Mayo. Apparently this is what curbed Floyd's enthusiasm. Why is it that this sort of money is so often delivered in a brown paper bag? Since Eddie Sutton's time, FedEx has been taboo.

The USC Athletic Department was quick to point out that it is actively pursuing an investigation of the O. J. Mayo case. I

assume that this is the same investigative team that has been probing the Reggie Bush charges for the past decade or so. Of course USC officials can not make any comments on the specifics of the case because there is an ongoing investigation. And of course USC is anxious for the case to be resolved. This would allow all of us to move on and give O. J. Mayo some closure. Then again maybe O. J. cases involving USC athletes never achieve closure.

Moving across the country the names of John Calipari, Robert Dozier, and Derrick Rose were found in the same story. It seems that Robert Dozier was not admitted to the University of Georgia because there were questions about the legitimacy of his SAT scores. Dozier landed at the University of Memphis and helped take them to the NCAA Final Four in March of 2008. Dozier is the second Memphis player whose SAT scores have been questioned in the past few weeks. The first was Derrick Rose who also was on that 2008 Memphis team. The NCAA has opened an investigation into charges that Rose cheated on the SAT.

University of Memphis coach John Calipari who vigorously recruited both players denies knowledge of any improprieties surrounding the SAT issues. Why would anyone expect the head coach to know anything about the SATs of two of the players he was most anxious to get admitted to Memphis State, one of whom had been denied admission at Georgia over his SAT scores?

This is the same John Calipari who in 1996 presided over the University of Massachusetts basketball program where one of his star players, Marcus Camby, was being paid in cash and in kind while leading U. Mass to the Final Four. Of course Calipari knew nothing about this either, and was cleared of all wrongdoing. U. Mass had to pay back all its revenue from the NCAA tournament and its wins were purged from the record book. As for Calipari he moved on to a bigger stage, at higher pay, in the pros.

Calipari appears to have made a career playing the piano at the house of ill repute never knowing what was going on upstairs. This time he has moved from the University of Memphis on to yet another new house, leaving Memphis officials to face the consequences of this scandal. Calipari will again collect a bigger paycheck, \$32M for eight years, at the University of Kentucky.

What is remarkable to those not acquainted with the normal practices of intercollegiate athletic programs, is the idea that the people at the University of Kentucky were fully aware of the

fact that the NCAA had already begun their investigation of the Memphis improprieties before UK had even talked to Calipari. Corruption surrounding a coach who is a "winner" and who is a "great recruiter" has never been an issue for those who must win at all costs. Thus Calipari's career trajectory remains on a steady upward course and his lack of knowledge of any wrongdoing remains a complete and total void.

In the end what all this tells us is what we have come to know from decades of experience with elite level intercollegiate athletics.

Crime pays!

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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