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July 30, 2007

If you ain't cheatin', you're welcome in Slive's SEC



July 26, 2007

By [Dennis Dodd](#)

CBS SportsLine.com Senior Writer

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HOOVER, Ala. -- When Mike Slive replaced Richard Petty as SEC commissioner five years ago, the news passed most of us by.



A 62-year-old former divorce court lawyer taking over college athletics' most prestigious league from a NASCAR legend? Sure. Don't think of Petty the man, but the culture he represented.

If you ain't cheatin', you ain't tryin'.

The King and his high-banked racin' court live by those words. The Commissioner, though, has been determined to walk softly and parry the big hick.

SEC recruiters were known to swear allegiance to their school with one hand on the Bible and the other on their wallet.

You never knew when a recruit was going to need a \$200 dinner. Or rent. Or a "date."

Slive on the SEC: 'There is no doubt there has been a change in the culture.' (AP)

When Slive arrived on the job in 2002 (actually replacing the venerable Roy Kramer), he had this crazy idea to clean up the league's lawless image.

Image? Well, it was more stone-cold encyclopedic fact.

A "change in the culture," he politely put it.

Might as well try to teach Petty grammar. Cheating is so ingrained in the SEC that Southern culture was on the skids. It's also why it's amazing that Slive is tantalizingly close to achieving the inconceivable.

The magic date is June 11, 2008 -- 325 days and counting. If everyone behaves, that's when every SEC school will be out of NCAA jail, as a group, for the first time in 26 years.

Slive is crossing his fingers, toes and probably himself in the name of the Father, the Son and ... Holy Cow, let's pray it doesn't happen again.

"You've got to try," Auburn's Tommy Tuberville said. "Our league hasn't had a great reputation."

The SEC turns 75 this academic year, which has less to do with academics and more to do with survival instinct. For the first 19 of those years the NCAA didn't have an enforcement arm. Maybe the SEC's head start -- perfecting the art, if you will -- caused the NCAA to wake up one day and realize it didn't want its games to become game-fixing, scandal-ridden farces.

Or, translated: Today's NBA.

There is the football greatness of the SEC and the subtext of how it was achieved. Consider one of the lowest of the low points: Early 2002 when, in a three-day period, both Alabama and Kentucky football were placed on multiyear probations. Lives were ruined. One life eventually ended -- that of the late Alabama booster Logan

Young, who the NCAA said financially enticed a high school coach to guide defensive star Albert Means to the Crimson Tide.

That wasn't the end of the rules bending but, with Slive on the job, the league has been, incredibly, happily, quiet lately. The man who turns 67 on Thursday is moving the SEC slowly toward the kind of clean that dare not speak its name.

Compliance.

It's no secret that part of the reason he was hired was because Slive started a cottage industry a quarter century ago. In 1983, the practicing attorney had the idea of assisting schools through NCAA investigations. Paying six-figure fees to Slive -- and, later his partner Mike Glazier -- to keep their schools from crippling bowl and TV sanctions became de rigeur for college presidents.

Mostly it worked, essentially leaving SMU, 21 years ago, as the only school to suffer the death penalty.

So, the current situation was summarized for the commish: Either his SEC pro-activeness is kicking in or the cheatin' moles have learned to dig deeper underground to get their job done.

"I'm not going to answer your question," Slive said, "but there is no doubt there has been a change in the culture."

Maybe, but this league has to own its legacy before finding religion. History suggests a wildfire could break out at any time. Among major conferences, only the Big 12 (with four) has more schools currently on probation than the SEC (three).

Alabama, Mississippi State, Kentucky, Georgia and Auburn are among the most penalized schools in NCAA history. Auburn is tied for second overall with seven major infractions cases. Since expansion in 1992, every SEC school has either been on probation or hit with sanctions. Half the league has been nailed twice. At least.

In one wild 2½-month period next year Georgia men's basketball, South Carolina football and Mississippi State football come off probation. Trying to make it to the checkered flag of compliance without any rubbin' is a quiet goal.

Unfortunately, in the SEC, rubbin' is racin'.

"If we don't (make it to five years)," Slive said with some resignation, "it will be close.

"(But) we are in a position to put to rest to the old chestnut, 'If you don't cheat, you can't win.'"

It seems that Slive already should be celebrating. If an NCAA beef started from scratch in his league today, the case probably wouldn't be resolved by June 11. Technically, the stint in rehab has worked. The SEC's Lohan days of relapse are over, at least for those five years.

Except that deep, deep throats suggest all might not be well on the league's compliance horizon. It's not a football or basketball thing, but enough for a guy like Slive to realize 325 days is a long, long time.

You won't find hints to its dark history in the league's gala 75th anniversary video on its website. Well, except for the title: *Stories of Character*, which is a bit too obvious to ignore.

So is Darius Rucker (that noted South Carolina alum) of Hootie and the Blowfish getting all preachy.

"Character," he says on the video, "is something you can't buy."

Neither are defensive linemen, if Slive is able to blow out the candles on his five-year-old wish.



Sorensen has active role in Gamecocks' athletics

By Travis Haney
The Post and Courier
Sunday, July 29, 2007

COLUMBIA — Andrew Sorensen and Steve Spurrier began work the very same day at the University of Florida — July 1, 1990. Locations and times have changed, but, a little more than 17 years later, the mission is the same for both men.

The University of South Carolina's president and head football coach are working, in conjunction with athletic director Eric Hyman, to push Gamecocks sports into a new era of success, on the field and off.

Sorensen recently spent 45 minutes reflecting and looking forward, discussing a wide range of topics, including the "Head Ball Coach" himself.

Is Spurrier different now than he was when you first met him?

"I think he's a little less sure of himself than he was back then. Or at least he appears to be. He told me he found coaching the (NFL's Washington) Redskins to be a humbling experience ... I'm delighted that he's here. It happens to us all, we mellow with age. He's not an exception to that."

What do you think his presence has done for the athletic department and school in two-plus years?

"One thing is for sure, he's helped us with our visibility. We have 240,000 living alumni, and as I go around the world, every one of them is aware of who's coaching our football team. There's no question about the fact that, with the football team, it can enhance the visibility of the university nationally."

As head of the Southeastern Conference presidents, in May you helped to oversee a meeting of your peers about a college football playoff. Florida's Bernie Machen was set to present his plans, and yet the concept was shut down rather quickly by the group. What, to you, stood in the way of Machen's plan and a playoff?

"The (SEC) commissioner (Mike Slive) and I had contacted the Big 10 commissioner and the Pac-10 commissioner, and they said they were committed to stay with the Rose Bowl through 2014. And they would not back off that commitment one iota. After Bernie gave his presentation, I think the answer is very clear ... We put it to a vote and Bernie came around and said that he agreed with me, that there was no way we could do it."

Does a playoff stand a chance after that?

"By 2014, I'll be retired and won't have to worry about that."

What's the latest on the new baseball stadium? After discovering a large deposit of granite, does it have a chance to open on time for the 2008 season?

"The baseball season starts in February. We'd like to be there in February, but we're not making any promises. We're not going to demolish Sarge Frye or do anything to that stadium until we're ready to completely move out. Our backup plan is starting there and then moving to the new stadium during the season. We still hope it will be open for the beginning of the season, but it's a tight schedule."

The baseball stadium is a part of an ambitious facilities plan being put in motion by Hyman. What are your feelings about what's going on in terms of the facilities boom nationwide?

"The regrettable part is that we're all caught up in an arms race. But it applies to non-student-athletes as well. One would wish we weren't in that kind of competitive environment, but we are. When (baseball coach) Ray Tanner tries to earn a recruit, he's mentioned that a new stadium is on the way. Likewise, there's a building going up at the corner of Blossom and Main streets. I call it the next energy lab, researching in hydrogen and manufacturing. When I recruit faculty, I point and say, 'Hey, you could be in that new building. It's brand new, state-of-the-art.' It's inevitable that we all do that."

How does athletic facilities factor into the overall plan for the campus, considering your research initiatives and projects?

"There's \$400 million worth of construction going on, and that's including the \$26-28 million estimated for the baseball stadium. So, there's a huge amount of construction going on on campus. We're doing it in all areas. People shouldn't pick on athletics as being peculiar in that aspect. One might wish it were that way. Six or 7 percent of our construction is athletic-related. That's about the same as the total budget. It fits."

The University of Georgia has instituted a policy fining student-athletes small amounts of money if they skip classes. Is that something you'd be interested in at USC?

"We decided not to do that. I think the best deterrent to an athlete for improving an athlete's behavior is called P.T., playing time. I tell the coaches that every time I meet with them. It's the most powerful reinforcer of good behavior that's imaginable. I'll bet you that's enormously effective in getting the attention of a student-athlete. I urge coaches to use that."

Do you think there's a distinction, necessarily, between a student or student-athlete in terms of how they're admitted or treated?

"We had that discussion. Is it discriminatory to have higher standards for the student-athlete than for others? As a university, we do not have a class-attendance policy. And, thanks to the media, we have a higher standard for student-athletes. If one of my fraternity guys,

who's a non-football player, gets in a fight down at Five Points, you guys don't write anything about it. But if Stephen Garcia gets in a fight, you put it on the front page. So, he's already susceptible to a different standard. I've told the students that. It seems not to have much of an impact, but I've told them anyway."

What about academically? Do you think there's a different standard for USC students and student-athletes?

"If the standards of all students continue to rise, then, by definition, the standards of student-athletes are going to have to be more competitive as well. They're sitting in class next to kids who've done very well academically. It's imperative that we be relentless in insisting on our student-athletes being students first and athletes second. That's an intentional description."

What do you think the role of a strong university president is in terms of managing an athletic department?

"The president has to embody the integrity of the university. We want to make sure we protect the integrity of the university, keeping an appropriate balance between academics and athletics ... We're happy when our teams do well, we're happy when the conference gets national attention, but we want to make sure we are emphasizing our academic excellence."

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Slive a proud commissioner of SEC's anniversary

By Danny P. Smith
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Mike Slive was a very proud and upbeat commissioner when he stepped to the podium at Southeastern Conference media days on Wednesday afternoon.

Slive does not have to endure the headaches the commissioners on the professional level do and his league is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year.

"These are good times to be the commissioner of the Southeastern Conference," Slive said at the Wynfrey Hotel in Hoover, Ala. "The Southeastern Conference is proud to celebrate 75 years of the student-athlete experience and the promise for the future."



Slive has every reason to have a smile on his face.

Not only does he not have to worry about off-the-field or off-the-court issues that Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig, National Basketball Association commissioner David Stern and National Football League commissioner Roger Goodell do, but many of his sports are enjoying success.

The SEC is the first conference in history to win all in the same year national championships in football, women's basketball and men's basketball. The SEC has won a back-to-back national championship, thanks to Florida.

SEC teams have won five more national titles in the sports of men's swimming, women's swimming, bowling, gymnastics and men's tennis. Not what we would call high-profile sports, but impressive just the same.

Slive bragged about having nine SEC football teams in bowl games with two in Bowl Championship Series bowl games and increased attendance at football games.

"We have established ourselves as the best competitive athletic conference in the country and we did it by walking straight down Main Street, not by wandering through side streets," Slive said.

This starts Slive's fifth year as SEC commissioner and that just doesn't seem possible. It seems like only yesterday when he took over for Roy Kramer, but Slive has done an excellent job keeping the conference strong.

No, the SEC is not perfect and problems do exist. Slive addressed some issues such as rules compliance, the need for more diversity, the need for academic success and the need to continue financial security to name a few.

Slive will continue to work on the weak points and the coaches appear to be on his side.

"Commissioner Slive has done an excellent job," said South Carolina coach Steve Spurrier. "He knows what he's doing. Television money is at an all-time high in the SEC and he's got things headed in the right direction. He's one of the best."

The SEC continues to be one of the strongest and most popular college leagues in the country as evident by the 800 media members who are taking part in media days.

It is a pleasure to be associated so closely with such a successful league.

Danny P. Smith is the assistant sports editor of The Commercial Dispatch. He can be reached by writing dannyp@cdispatch.com.



July 26, 2007

Referee scandal trickles down

SEC may conduct background checks on its officials

BY DAVID JONES
FLORIDA TODAY

SEC commissioner Mike Slive said the league may look into running background checks on officials after the recent NBA controversy in which official Tim Donaghy is being investigated for betting on games, including ones in which he officiated.

"Obviously we talk about it all the time," Slive said. "Having said that, one can't watch what's going on in the NBA without realizing the need to be ever-vigilant.

"As a matter of fact, in three weeks our athletic directors will meet and we will talk with them about what we do and my guess is we'll end even doing more than we've done in the past. A lot of the focus in the NCAA has been on gambling and student-athletes. I think we need to make sure we've got a parallel program that is as intense for our officials as it is for the student-athletes."

As for the future, Slive added: "We'll probably end up doing background checks. Right now, all of our officials in basketball all want to participate in the NCAA tournament, so they all go through background checks (they are mandatory from the NCAA to do postseason games). The NBA has background checks, but one thing a background check can't tell you is what a guy is going to do tomorrow. It can tell you what they did yesterday.

"In football, we started doing random background checks at the NCAA level for officials going to bowl games, but I don't think there's any question now we will expand that coming up as we look ahead to a much more comprehensive program. We're going to look at it as a conference, I can't speak for the NCAA, but I wouldn't be surprised if the NCAA does the same thing."

Slive is meeting with the football officials tonight and said he plans to have a "long chat with them."

"The question really is one of honor and trust," Slive said. "It's one of integrity, it's one of honor, it's one of respect, it's one of respect for the game, for your colleagues and for everyone involved. And that's the kind of thing that we want and expect and are going to demand."

South Carolina coach Steve Spurrier is all for officials being watched closer.

"We'll all have to be careful now about saying it looked like a guy had some money on the game," Spurrier half-joked.

Spurrier was a frequent caller to the SEC offices during his days as Florida coach to complain about calls and regularly sent game tape to the league.

"There have been a few lousy games that should have led to an investigation," he said.

Spurrier added, "Referees need to be scrutinized probably more than us coaches."

Tough summer.

Quarterback Mitch Mustain and receiver Damian Williams transferred from Arkansas to Southern Cal. Razorbacks offensive coordinator Gus Matzahn resigned to take a similar job at Tulsa.

Arkansas coach Houston Nutt had a tough summer for other reasons.

There were reports that Nutt text-messed a female news television anchor over 1,000 times in less than two months, including one just before the opening kickoff of the Capital One Bowl in Orlando.

Fans and even Mustain used Freedom of Information requests to obtain cell phone records of coaches. With Nutt's reputation and future being attacked, players came to him and asked if they could hold a press conference to defend him. He declined.

He said summer booster meetings were positive, however. Some of the best news came recently when his brother's health improved. Danny Nutt, 46, had brain surgery in 1998 for bleeding in his brain stem and there were complications this summer which prompted him to resign as the Hogs' running backs coach. A recent test was more positive with another coming in a couple of weeks.

"Hopefully he can get his life back to normal," Houston Nutt said.

More Brooks.

The first words out of Kentucky coach Rich Brooks on Wednesday: "I'm baaaack." Many expected him to be fired the last two years but the 'Cats won eight games last season.

And he thinks even bigger things are coming in '07.

"I think, without a doubt, this is the best football team that I've had going into a season at Kentucky," Brooks said.

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Article published Jul 26, 2007

Officials under review

By PAT DOOLEY

Sun sports writer

HOOVER, Ala. - The stunning news that an NBA official is being investigated by the FBI for possibly affecting games for gambling purposes has reached to the SEC.

Commissioner Mike Slive said Wednesday that background checks of all officials likely will become a reality for the league.

"We'll probably end up doing that," Slive said. "We talk about it but we can always do more. I would expect it."

Currently, SEC officials are only susceptible to background checks if they wish to officiate in NCAA Tournament games. Starting in 1999, the NCAA required random background checks on football officials in bowl games only.

"I don't think there is any question we'll expand that," Slive said. "What background checks can't tell you is what an individual will do tomorrow. In the end, it's a question of honesty and trust."

"We all hope the issue Commissioner (David) Stern is dealing with is one individual. But we all know we need to do more. Our focus has been on education for the student-athletes but we need to include the officials as well. We'll do everything we can do even if we don't have the problem the NBA has. One can't watch what's going on in the NBA without realizing we need to be ever vigilant."

Asked if SEC officials might be vulnerable to gambling interests because they are independent contractors, Slive disagreed.

"I think it makes them less susceptible," he said. "They have their lives to lead. There's more of a balance in their lives."

One coach who has had his share of battles with SEC officials throughout the years is former Florida and current South Carolina coach Steve Spurrier.

"I've probably been accused of saying some things about (officials)," Spurrier said. "There have been a few lousily-called games that probably should have been investigated. We'll have to be more careful saying that, that a guy must have had money on the game."

"But referees need to be scrutinized more than most of us coaches need to be scrutinized."

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Posted on: Saturday, July 28, 2007

For right price, your name can be put on UH athletics

By [Michael Tsai](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

Picture, if you will, the Island Termite June Jones Office. Or maybe the Diamond Head Video Football Video Room. How about the Hawaii Fence Supply Defensive Conference Room?

Under a new initiative approved Wednesday by the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents that allows the athletic department to sell naming rights for various sections of a new addition to the athletics complex, almost anything is possible if the price is right.

According to UH athletic director Herman Frazier, the board's action paves the way for the construction of a \$3,500-square-foot football office complex with a reception area, 11 individual offices, a video room and two conference rooms completely covered by private donations.

The board also approved a new schedule of salary ranges for 12 coaching positions, including the head coaching positions for football, baseball, women's volleyball, softball, soccer, water polo, men's and women's tennis and cross-country/track and field.

Frazier said he expects that selling the naming rights to the new facility will generate 110 percent of the total cost of renovation, which he projects at about \$1 million. The surplus would be used to establish an endowment to cover the cost of maintenance.

"That's the minimum we would expect," Frazier said.

Frazier said naming rights would be available starting at around \$50,000 for a single assistant coach's office.

"The football video room might be somewhere around \$100,000 to \$200,000," he said.

Jones' office?

"If someone wants to give us \$1 million to have his name on June Jones' office, we would be able to do that," Frazier said. "This enables us to do renovations and construction and put a plaque on the wall the name of the individuals."

The new facility would be on the third floor of Health and Physical Education and Recreation building on the Manoa campus.

The most notable change in the salary ranges for coaches provided for a range between \$329,1423 and \$935,544 for Jones, up from a range of \$99,996 to \$199,992. Frazier characterized the shift as a "housekeeping" move, noting that no adjustment had been made the last time Jones negotiated a contract.

Frazier also emphasized that the ranges approved aren't necessarily a hard cap on what Jones or the other coaches could potentially make.

"(The ranges) the board of regents approved are for the athletic director and chancellor to take to the president for approval, without the president having to go to the board," Frazier said. "The president has the flexibility to go above that ceiling is he sees fit, but that would require board approval."

"It gives us a lot of leeway," he said. "We know what our sandbox is, what we can do and the kind of people we can attract to come here."

Boise State coach Chris Petersen got a new contract earlier this year that included a base salary of \$850,000 a year, plus an additional \$161,500 if the Broncos win 12 games. Another \$100,000 will be added if the team plays another Bowl Championship Series game.

The Broncos, a member of the Western Athletic Conference along with UH, went 13-0 last season and was the only NCAA Division I-A team to go undefeated.

Frazier said he was pleased but not surprised that the board approved both measures.

"This has been in the works for a long time," he said. "Things don't just happen. We needed to get approval and the timing was right. We've had good success with the board in taking proposals to them successfully because they understand everything we're doing."

Reach Michael Tsai at mtsai@honoluluadvertiser.com.

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APPROVED SALARY RANGES

	Current	Approved
Football, head coach	\$99,996-\$199,992	\$329,142-\$935,544
Baseball, head coach	\$51,000-\$75,000	\$72,384-\$221,316
Women's basketball, associate coach	\$37,620-\$67,716	\$61,428-\$100,116
Women's volleyball, head coach	\$53,820-\$107,640	\$76,440-\$143,472
Softball, head coach	\$35,868-\$68,148	\$56,916-\$89,952
Swimming and diving, assistant coach	\$24,000-\$36,000	\$31,380-\$40,752
Diving coach	\$30,000-\$45,000	\$30,804-\$54,084
Women's soccer, head coach	\$33,000-\$51,000	\$51,288-\$82,524
Water polo, head coach	\$33,000-\$48,000	\$54,108-\$86,244
Men's tennis, head coach	\$33,000-\$55,572	\$52,308-\$82,404
Women's tennis, head coach	\$33,000-\$55,572	\$42,096-\$69,480
Cross country/track and field, head coach	\$36,876-\$62,700	\$53,004-\$83,496

Source: University of Hawai'i

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July 29, 2007

Q&A: Pete Boone, Ole Miss AD

 By Robbie Neiswanger
rneiswanger@clarionledger.com

In 2004, Ole Miss athletic director Pete Boone made a controversial change at the top of the Rebels' football program when he fired David Cutcliffe and tabbed Southern California assistant Ed Orgeron as his replacement. The past two years haven't produced many wins, but Boone is confident the program is progressing - on and off the field - as Orgeron's third season begins when practice kicks off this week.

Q: What are your thoughts on the football program as it enters Ed Orgeron's third year?

A: As always, I try to look at the basic issues of a program and the foundation of how it's structured and how solid is that? There's no question, eventually it comes down to wins and losses. In rebuilding, you've got to look at how it's being built from the group up.

I don't think I could be more pleased with the key components. Certainly, the recruiting aspect of it, but also the attitude that Coach O is bringing to the players about the competitiveness, work ethic. The other thing is, I think he's got a great group of coaches now. They're on the same page. Most of them have worked together for awhile.

Q: When you hired Orgeron, you knew you were getting a guy that hadn't been a head coach. In what areas has he grown?

A: He'll tell you that being a head coach was different than maybe he thought it was. All of the little things that head coaches do have to deal with that are relentless. You can't just be a coach.

But I will say it's been about 180 degrees where he came in and the knowledge he had of what a head coach had to do to where he is now. ... He's very inquisitive. If I have some comments or thoughts or questions he listens intently. He'll think about them a few days and come back and discuss them again. He just has done a remarkable job in turning into what I think will be an excellent head coach.

Q: In college football everybody wants to win now. From your perspective does he need to win now? Or are you looking for more progress?

A: I think it's foolish to ever say you've got to win 'X' number of games. That makes no sense at all. Too many things can happen. From a referee's call to a fumble at the wrong time, the wrong place, that has nothing to do with the progress of your team. And every year I've seen tremendous progress with the program.

Q: Orgeron has made plenty of changes to his coaching staff the past two years. How important are assistants in producing a winner?

A: It is essential for you to have a successful program that every one of the assistant coaches is very good at what they do. You can't have a weak link in your coaching. You have to have all your cylinders firing. You cannot have a spark plug that's not hitting. You can't do it seven out of eight. The other teams are too good.

The problem is sometimes head coaches place more on loyalty to them than they do the quality of the coaching skills. That's where a head coach has to recognize their job as a CEO.

Q: Coaching salaries continue to rise. Is it getting harder to compete with pay?

A: I applaud the increase and think it's deserved. The newspaper headlines are going to be the \$4 million contract. You're going to focus on those, but you're talking about three or four programs. Five programs. Those are not going to set the standard for 85 percent of the Division I programs out there as far as salaries.

Q: A lot of facility upgrades are in progress on campus? Where does football stand? Are there plans for more?

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A: I can't imagine in the next five or six years doing a whole lot with stadium expansion. One of the things that we continue to look at is the north end zone for a couple reasons: One, is trying to make it a more attractive look from the outside because that's a major thoroughfare of our campus.

There are things we might do from a facade standpoint there. Also, we might have the opportunity in the next year or two to expand the video board in the north end zone. Putting those kind of things together and maybe bowling in what is left there.

Wrapping it up to have a bowl look. But as far as major expansion, I can't see that happening until we get our program turned around, our season ticket sales back to where they were two or three years ago and there's a demand for a ticket."

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From the Los Angeles Times

Young and out on the field

An emerging generation of gay athletes in high school and college is changing the rules.

By David Wharton
Times Staff Writer

July 28, 2007

Seattle — THE guys in his boat took to calling him "Badger" because of the grimace he wore during races. Part of a junior rowing club that ranked among the fastest in the nation, Lucas Goodman was relentless on the water.

It was a different story on land.

The teenager with the powerful build and close-set eyes had to be careful. He hung back ever so slightly when teammates shot the breeze, talking about girls.

"You get tired of constantly watching what you say, constantly watching how you act," he said. "You're almost paranoid."

Goodman felt so uneasy that he finally told the Green Lake Crew his secret: He is gay.

The 18-year-old belongs to an emerging generation of openly gay and lesbian athletes on high school and college campuses across the country. These young men and women are quietly venturing where no pro football or baseball star has gone, challenging the conformist, if not downright homophobic, tradition of the playing fields.

Their numbers are difficult to gauge because many confide only in peers. Experts chart the trend anecdotally through athletes who join gay rights clubs at school, e-mail gay rights advocates for advice or announce their sexual orientation on websites such as Facebook and MySpace.

"This is an issue that's in transition even as we speak," said Jay Coakley, a noted scholar and author on sports culture. "We're looking at how the world is changing."

Not all the stories have happy endings — a high school football player in Northern California tells of being ostracized. But others, such as a Delaware runner and a Georgia hockey player, say they were welcomed by their teams.

Sociologists see the openness as a generational shift. Polls suggest a growing percentage of young people have more relaxed views about sexual orientation than their parents did.

In Seattle, Goodman began dropping hints around his eight-man boat more than a year ago. He talked with his best friend, and with another rower who seemed both understanding and physically large enough to make a good ally.

When word spread, no one teased or whispered about him. The crew saves money by sharing hotel beds on the road, and the teammate who bunks with Goodman didn't mind.

"So what if I sleep in the same bed with a straight guy or with Lucas?" Casey Ellis asked. "Either way, there's going to be another guy there with me."

Within a few weeks, Goodman figures, the surprise of his announcement wore off and "it ended up not being that big a deal."

Which is what makes his story, and others like it, a very big deal.

ALLAN Acevedo tends to speak hurriedly, words stacking up against each other. Finished with his morning run of three miles, sitting in a coffeehouse, the thin young man with dark sideburns rushes through a telling anecdote.

Two years ago, he and the rest of the track team from Bonita High School in La Verne were talking idly before a meet.

"When I get married," he recalled saying, "the guy has to be — "

A teammate interrupted. "Did you say guy?"

"Oh," Acevedo replied. "You didn't know?"

Young athletes come out for various reasons. Goodman tired of pretending to like girls. Acevedo had something different in mind.

He volunteers for gay rights groups and said he once tried to enlist in the military to confront the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. When he insisted on telling, he said, the recruiter declined to complete his paperwork.

Acevedo joined the track team partly for love of the sport and partly to break stereotypes: "I wanted to say that I'm more than just gay."

Some teammates at Bonita High quietly switched aisles in the locker room, he said. Others seemed to run harder in practice, apparently determined not to lose to a gay guy.

Acevedo was undeterred, and was open about his sexual orientation when he transferred to a Chula Vista school. At 18, he finds support in a development that encourages other young gay athletes: a shift in public opinion.

A 2007 Gallup poll found that 57% of Americans viewed homosexuality as an "acceptable alternative lifestyle," an increase of 11 percentage points from four years ago. The percentage was higher among 18- to 29-year-olds.

Almost three-quarters of heterosexual adults said they would not change their feelings toward a favorite male athlete if he came out, according to a recent survey by Harris Interactive and Witeck-Combs Communications.

"It's not like the old days," said David Kopay, a former National Football League player who stirred controversy by announcing he was homosexual in 1975.

Back then, gay athletes felt compelled to keep quiet, fearing hostile locker rooms and coaches who might cut them from the team.

Like Kopay, others waited until retirement to come out. In baseball, there were former Dodgers Glenn Burke and Billy Bean; in football, Roy Simmons of the Washington Redskins and, five years ago, Esera Tuaolo of the Green Bay Packers.

John Amaechi revealed his sexual orientation in a recent autobiography, "Man in the Middle," published after he left the Utah Jazz of the National Basketball Assn. He sensed the change in attitude when he visited a Southern college campus during a promotional tour.

"A bunch of shirtless frat guys playing volleyball recognized me and started yelling," he said. "They were saying that they love what I'm doing."

Joey Fisher encountered a similar response at the University of Georgia, where his teammates recall thinking, *Wow, gay people play hockey?* when the goalie came out. No one mentioned anything to him at first.

But then, Fisher said, "about three days into training camp, one of my teammates tried to set me up with a friend of his. A guy."

Heterosexuals aren't the only ones acclimating to the idea of homosexuals in sports, Acevedo said. His gay friends were initially shocked when he ventured into the world of jocks.

"They said, 'You should wear a pink shirt,' " he recalled. "But then a lot of my friends went to my races."

Acevedo possesses a resilience common to athletes interviewed for this article. A fight with his parents — mainly over his sexual orientation — prompted him to move in with an older sister. He worked two jobs to support himself, which meant skipping track his senior year.

After graduating in the spring, he took a summer internship with a gay rights group in Washington, D.C., where he continues running on his own, staying in shape to try out for the team at San Diego State this fall.

"When I get there," he said, "I'll come out again."

THERE were no big announcements, no heartfelt talks in the locker room. As a freshman at Harvard, Sarah Vaillancourt simply decided to stop hiding her sexual orientation.

Whenever the subject of dating or relationships arose, she spoke frankly.

"If they weren't going to accept me on the team," she said, "I wasn't going to stay."

It helped that Vaillancourt quickly established herself among the top scorers on her college hockey squad and a rising star for Team Canada back home in Quebec. But she knew that as a lesbian, she would encounter challenges different from those facing gay male athletes.

On the plus side, she grew up with role models such as Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova in tennis, Sheryl Swoopes in basketball and Rosie Jones in golf. Fans have come to expect a certain percentage of lesbians in women's sports.

This expectation also counts as a negative. In some circles, athletic women are automatically presumed to be lesbians, which can spark resentment among straight athletes.

Caitlin Cahow, a Harvard player and member of the U.S. women's hockey team, said: "Rumors get started and that makes everyone defensive about their sexuality, gay or straight. That's when it becomes a problem."

Vaillancourt, so candid at Harvard, acknowledges she is more cautious around the Canadian national team.

"They don't want me to talk about it so much, because if one person comes out, everyone's [going to be labeled] a lesbian," she said. "My whole team is *not* lesbian."

In college sports, negative recruiting is another concern. Some coaches try to scare high school prospects away from rival programs by suggesting those teams are predominantly lesbian. Kathy Olivier, the UCLA women's basketball coach, blames a hyper-competitiveness fueled by large coaching salaries.

"These are big-time positions," Olivier said. "I feel like some coaches would do anything."

At the University of Delaware, runner Lauren Stephenson said that coming out brought her closer to teammates.

Stephenson announced her sexual orientation as a junior, trying to soften the blow by saying she was bisexual. Soon, she found herself consoled in the locker room after a girlfriend cheated on her.

"All my teammates were telling me, 'You're so much hotter than she is, what is she thinking?' " Stephenson said. "It was just amazing."

Vaillancourt has had similar experiences in hockey, a sport she discovered as a toddler watching her brother play.

She has always been strong-willed, with a hint of defiance in her French Canadian accent and the arch of her eyebrows. Her parents worried when she came out in college.

"I know how people react sometimes," her mother, Monique, said. "People can be bad and mean."

Harvard players said they quickly warmed to Vaillancourt's wit and self-confidence and her straightforward manner in speaking about her sexual orientation. Off the team, some classmates did not react as kindly.

"I think it's because they don't have gay friends," said Laura Brady, a Harvard forward. "They just don't know."

Vaillancourt, now a 22-year-old junior, occasionally wonders about all the fuss. With so much of her time spent playing hockey and studying, "being gay is only a small part of who I am," she said.

In moments of impatience, she reminds herself that some people struggle to accept homosexuality for religious and other deep-seated reasons.

"You have to give people a chance to get used to all this," she said.

THE gym door was locked when Brian Schwind and his football teammates trudged off the practice field that day almost three years ago. As they waited for coaches with a key, Schwind realized he was surrounded.

The sophomore was new to Foothill High School near Redding. By football standards he was smallish, a special teams player who stood only 5 feet 7. The larger players crowding around him demanded to know: Was he gay?

"Either I could tell the truth and have the crap beat out of me or I could lie and save myself," Schwind said. "My mom always told me to stand up for what I believe, so I told them."

A linebacker stepped in to prevent further trouble, but for the rest of the fall Schwind felt ostracized. After football, he went out for wrestling.

"Nobody wanted to wrestle with me," he recalled. "During weigh-ins, everybody was like, 'Get him out of the room.' "

His experience offers a reminder that poll numbers and television ratings for "Will & Grace" do not always translate to the schoolyard.

A 2005 survey by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network found that 64% of homosexual students had experienced some form of harassment in school. Gay rights groups cite higher suicide rates among homosexual teens, though the statistics are not universally accepted.

In sports, young gays face a paradox. The social status of playing athletics gives them a better chance of being accepted, but they must confront long-held biases.

The locker room can be especially tricky for boys. Corey Johnson, who in 1999 came out to his high school football team in Massachusetts, addressed the issue of shared showers and locker rooms head-on.

"I didn't touch you last year and I'm not going to do it this year," he told his teammates, adding: "And who says you guys are cute enough, anyway?"

The joke elicited a nervous ripple of laughter.

At Washington University in St. Louis, Adam Goslin came out as a sophomore in 2004 and was welcomed by the football team. But the 6-foot-3, 220-pound defensive lineman often overheard teammates toss around homophobic slurs common to the locker room. Even players sensitive to his feelings could not always help themselves.

"I've had a couple of close friends tell me, 'I'm really trying not to, but I've been saying it for so many years and sometimes it slips out,' " he said.

The atmosphere confronting Schwind in Redding was more difficult.

Outed by the football team, he became more assertive, trying to form a club for gay students on the small-town campus. His efforts seemed to antagonize some athletes at a time when wrestling coach Jerry Vallotton was working hard to build Foothill High's program, with team unity a key element.

Schwind was new to the school "and that in itself is difficult," Vallotton said in a recent interview. "Then if you carry a banner for another cause, whatever that cause may be, that's a double whammy."

The coach said he thought "all parties did the best they could."

By his junior year, Schwind gave up football and wrestling, sticking to swimming, where he felt more accepted. The experience has prompted him to consider a career in civil rights law.

"There can be a closed-minded shell around sports," he said. "Definitely, high school had a huge effect on my ideals about how things should be."

WHEN Lucas Goodman thought about coming out, he wasn't terribly concerned about acceptance — not as an accomplished rower and honors student headed to MIT this fall. He knew that Seattle had a large gay population and that crew was "one of the most elitist liberal yuppie sports you could think of."

Goodman was more fearful that his sexual orientation might overshadow everything else.

"I want to be known as a rower," he said. "Not as the gay kid."

Gay rights advocates are just as eager for openly homosexual athletes to become so common that the issue fades away. That is why they place such hope in the new generation.

"A superstar coming out — I think it will happen, but I don't think that's how you create enormous change," said Johnson, the former high school football player, who now works as a media strategist for the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

"You have enormous change with story after story about young people having positive experiences."

Goodman has already made a difference with the Green Lake Crew.

"Your impulse is not to talk about it because you don't know if that's private information or not," Coach Ed Maxwell said. "But the more you know and the more you understand about people who are different from you, the better off you are."

The experience has helped Goodman too.

He still rows fiercely, still bugs teammates about eating right and getting sleep before races. But now he is happier.

On a recent afternoon, the rowers shouldered their sleek boat to the edge of a small lake north of downtown. They were in a good mood after winning a silver medal at the U.S. Rowing Youth National Championship, joking and laughing, talking about parties.

It was the type of chatter that used to make Goodman nervous. Not anymore.

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SEC thriving, SEC Commissioner Slive says

By [Tim Gayle](#)
tgayle@gannett.com

July 26, 2007

HOOVER -- Southeastern Conference Commissioner Mike Slive opened the annual SEC Media Days by praising the conference's compliance and the league's performance in winning eight national championships, including football, men's basketball and women's basketball.

"These are good times to be the commissioner of the Southeastern Conference," Slive said. "When I first spoke to you five years ago in 2002, I talked about the challenges that we faced to be the preeminent conference that we were and that we wanted to be. Challenges such as rules compliance, the need for more diversity, the need for shared governance, the need for more academic success."

Five years ago, nearly half of the 12 conference teams were on probation. Today, just three teams are on probation and all three -- South Carolina and Mississippi State in football and Georgia in basketball -- will conclude their terms in 2008.

"We cannot let up, we cannot fall back in the name of winning," Slive said. "We are not about winning at all costs and the ends do not justify the means."

In addition to becoming the first conference in history to win championships in football and both men's and women's basketball in the same year, the conference also brought home championship hardware in men's swimming, women's swimming, bowling, gymnastics and men's tennis.

The Southeastern Conference also drew 6.5 million football fans, the largest attendance in the nation, and sent nine teams to bowl games.

Slive said the next step for the conference was exploring the possibility of a conference television network, such as those started by the Big 10 and the Mountain West conferences, and exploring new technology in the communication field.

"The concept of new media as a result of the unprecedented explosion in technology makes the matrix of event distribution interesting, to say the least," Slive said. "Where does the event end and where does the blogging begin?"

Slive's remarks were followed by appearances from representatives from Arkansas, South Carolina, Auburn and Kentucky.

The three-day event concludes on Friday.

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SEC considers TV network

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By [LINDSAY JONES](#)

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Thursday, July 26, 2007

HOOVER, ALA. — On any given Saturday, Southeastern Conference football fans can find their team's games on any number of national and regional cable networks.

But SEC officials, including Commissioner Mike Slive, admit they are intrigued about the possibility of eventually broadcasting the league's games themselves.

More on the Gators



[UF picked to win SEC East](#)

HOOVER, Ala. — The SEC media's preseason picks were released this morning, and ...

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Starting next month, they will be able to see if a conference-run network can work when the Big Ten Network launches Aug. 30, just in time for the 2007 football season.

And though a possible SEC network could not become reality until at least the 2009 season, after the league's contracts with CBS, ESPN and Lincoln Financial expire, Slive and Co. will certainly be watching closely.

"It's a question of how best we can maximize for our fans the distribution of our games and other programming," Slive said Wednesday at the SEC football media days. "There are different ways to do that, and one of those is our own network"

The Big Ten Network will broadcast at least 35 football games, 105 men's basketball games, 55 women's basketball and a host of events in other non-revenue sports.

It will also air archived conference games - it plans to show the 2006 football game between Ohio State and Michigan, for example - as well as non-athletic programming produced by the individual universities, said Elizabeth Conlisk, the network's vice president for communications.



[College sports coverage](#)

"It's going to be solely focused on the Big Ten, the events, the passion, the history of the universities," Conlisk said.

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An SEC network would likely mirror the Big Ten Network, which is similar to the Mountain West Conference's network, The Mtn., which started last year.

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But what Slive and other SEC officials will be watching is just how successful the Big Ten Network is at getting its programming on basic cable.

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The network has agreements with about 75 smaller cable providers in the Midwest as well as DirecTV and AT&T's satellite service nationally. But cable subscribers in some of the region's biggest markets - including Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Indianapolis and Minneapolis - might not be able to see the network when it debuts because of an increasingly bitter dispute between the network and Comcast and Time Warner cable companies, which combine to dominate the region's cable market.

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The Big Ten wants its channel to be part of the basic cable lineup in the eight-state conference region, where subscribers would see a \$1.10 increase to their bill. Comcast reportedly thinks that figure is too high, and wants to

include the network as a premium channel available as part of a sports package, similar to the NFL Network.

"We really believe that the relevance of our programming, particularly in the eight states, warrants broadest distribution possible," Conlisk said.

An executive vice president for Comcast told *The New York Times* last month that the company disagrees.

"I have no doubt that the Big Ten will try to rile up their fans and alumni to say that big bad Comcast is denying their content to Big Ten fans and alumni," David Cohen told *The Times*. "We'd like to make the network available to those who want to watch it and not force customers who have no interest in the content to have to pay for it."

Slive said he has no doubt there would be interest in an SEC-specific network, based on the number of fans the league's 12 teams draw not only at football games, but other sports such as baseball and gymnastics as well.

He also pointed to the conference's television contracts with CBS and the ESPN networks that broadcast about 30 SEC games nationally each season, compared with the Big Ten's contract with ABC, which is regional.

"The tangible evidence is clear of the interest nationally in our league," Slive said. "Whether that translates into something, I don't know."

Find this article at:

http://www.palmbeachpost.com/sports/content/sports/epaper/2007/07/26/a1c_sec_0726.html

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NO NEW MESSAGES

Abuse overturns convenience as the NCAA will restrict coaches from text messaging potential college athletes

By Matt LaWell
Rocky Mount Telegram

Sunday, July 29, 2007

Some high school recruits received so many text messages during the school day, their cell phone batteries died by the final bell.

Linwan Euwell never even needed to turn off his cell phone.

During the four years Euwell spent in the classrooms and on the athletics fields at SouthWest Edgecombe, the recipient of so much attention from fans and coaches and opponents' game plans, he never received the thousands of text messages that other high school recruits are alleged to have received from college coaches.

In fact, Euwell said he never received more than a few text messages each day from coaches.

"Most of them knew I was going to school," Euwell said in a telephone conversation. "They knew I was focused on my schoolwork."

Because of the relatively tame amount of text messages Euwell received during his recruitment – he signed in February with North Carolina, where he is expected to play at linebacker – he was unaware until earlier this week that the technological advancement had manifested itself throughout the ever-evolving world of recruiting and was about to be banned as a recruiting tool by the NCAA.

Enough coaches abused text messaging during recent years – and enough recruits and parents complained about being inundated with one text after another and having to pay escalating cell phone bills – that the NCAA intervened.

"It was absolutely nuts," Wake Forest football coach Jim Grobe said.

So, in April, the NCAA conferred with the Ivy Group and voted to ban all electronically transmitted correspondences, including text messages but not e-mails or faxes, between coaches and recruits. On Wednesday, the ban will go into effect.

At least for a while.

* * *

For years, high school athletes did not even carry cell phones. Neither did most coaches. And even after more and more players and coaches did sign up for a plan, text messaging was often a luxury and an expensive addition.

But about four years ago, text messaging became more common and a handful of coaches started to use it – anything in order to gain an advantage. Recruits, in turn, were able to communicate more easily with the men who might well be coaching them for the next four or five years.

And then, almost as quickly as it started, text messaging snowballed out of control.

Some recruits received texts during classes. Others received them when they should have been sleeping. Hundreds, thousands – hundreds of thousands – of text messages hurtled from one cell phone, off a satellite dish somewhere in space and into another cell phone. In truth, only a few coaches truly abused the technology and only a few recruits received such an obscene amount of text messages on their phones. But that was enough.

"It just got out of hand," North Carolina men's basketball coach Roy Williams said. "I wish we could get it back. I wish we would put some moderation on it. Still, the cheaters are going to cheat. Having some moderation, guidelines on it, that's what we're trying to revisit. There's no question it's helpful. If a kid doesn't want to answer you back, then he doesn't have to.

"But when one kid says in a 30-day period that he got 10,000 texts, that's asinine. Anybody who does that shouldn't be a coach and they ought to be in an insane asylum."

Now, the cell phones will stop vibrating across desks ... for at least eight days.

Because 47 schools voted to appeal the ban, the NCAA board of directors will readdress – and perhaps reconsider – the issue on Aug. 9. The board is expected to either allow text messaging but limit the number each coach can send to each recruit, or to maintain the present ban.

Even if the ban is upheld, it could be repealed if 204 of the 326 Division I schools (62.5 percent) vote to overturn it in January at their annual convention.

A recent informal poll of ACC football coaches appeared to reveal a split between those who would prefer to continue text messaging recruits and those who said they would be just fine if they never twiddled their thumbs again over a cell phone. But almost every coach who was asked for his opinion on the issue said banning text messaging was like shutting the door on one wave of the future.

"From a convenience standpoint," Duke football coach Ted Roof said, "that's just using technology."

* * *

Ah, technology.

When most of the current crop of college coaches was climbing the professional ladder, technology was a long-distance phone call. Need to send an urgent message? Better use Western Union.

Now the Internet sets the agenda.

Which raises at least one question regarding recruiting, especially in the possible wake of text

messaging: Will the evolution of, and next revolution in, recruiting include the Internet? Will coaches turn to their computers to snare recruits? Will coaches join social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace?

"You'd have to talk to my 14-year-old son about that," North Carolina football coach Butch Davis said. "I am not into MyFace and all that stuff."

MyFace? OK, so maybe coaches won't turn to the Internet. But coaches will continue to hunt for any advantage when the subject turns to recruits.

"Here's what's going to happen," Maryland football coach Ralph Friedgen said. "What's the new phone? The iPhone? Everybody's going to buy iPhones and they're going to e-mail recruits. And (the NCAA is) going to pass a rule that you're going to have to spend more money to do the same thing – which is typical NCAA."

Would Friedgen consider buying an iPhone?

"If I have to, yeah," Friedgen said. "But I'd rather text message than e-mail."

Text messages, e-mail, iPhones, Facebook, MySpace ... so many potential recruiting violations. The NCAA realizes it will need to stay on top of everything.

"We may need to pass rules with higher abstracts that cover all technologies rather than specific ones," NCAA president Myles Brand told the Associated Press in April. "I don't know if we can ever get ahead of the technology."

Matt LaWell can be reached at 407-9952 or mlawell@coxnc.com. Jessie H. Nunery and H. Williams Kellenberger contributed to this report.

A TEXT MESSAGE TIMELINE

October 2006: The NCAA begins preliminary discussions concerning text messages – and how to deal with what was then a growing problem.

April 17: The NCAA Division I board of directors votes to ban all electronic communications, except for e-mails and faxes, between coaches and recruits.

June 27: The Associated Press reports the NCAA will reconsider its imposed ban on text messages at its board of directors meeting in August.

Aug. 1: The ban will go into effect.

Aug. 9: The NCAA board of directors will discuss – and possibly reconsider – the ban.

January 2008: The 326 Division I schools will vote at their annual meeting whether to overturn the ban.

Find this article at:

<http://www.rockymountntelegram.com/sports/content/sports/stories/2007/07/0729/recruiting.html>

Scout.com > Alabama



Most Influential In SEC

Kirk McNair
BamaMag.com

Jul 25, 2007

The Birmingham News didn't let the 75th anniversary of the Southeastern Conference go unnoticed. In the first of a series celebrating the anniversary of the SEC, the News assembled a panel to determine the most influential people in the history of the conference. That effort earns an "A" grade, although some of the choices might be questioned.

It was little surprise that the top two selections were men considered at or near the top of their professions. Former [Alabama](#) Football Coach Paul Bryant was named most influential, followed by former [Kentucky](#) Basketball Coach Adolph Rupp.

While Alabama fans might bristle at the number three selection, former SEC Commissioner Roy Kramer, that is a good pick. He took the SEC to a new level in many areas, particularly financially. And although it probably didn't figure into the equation in his selection, his misdeed in sandbagging SEC member Alabama was also influential.

The list:

1. Alabama Coach Paul Bryant, 2. Kentucky Basketball Coach Adolph Rupp, 3. SEC Commissioner Roy Kramer, 4. [Tennessee](#) Football Coach Robert Neyland, 5. South Carolina Coach Steve Spurrier (but for his play and coaching at [Florida](#)),
6. Tennessee Women's Basketball Coach Pat Summitt, 7. [Georgia](#) Football Coach and Athletics Director Vince Dooley, 8. [LSU](#) basketball player Pete Maravich, 9. Alabama and [Vanderbilt](#) Basketball Coach and Kentucky Athletics Director and Kentucky basketball and baseball player C.M. Newton, 10. SEC Commissioner Roy Kramer,
11. [Ole Miss](#) quarterback Archie Manning, 12. Ole Miss Football Coach John Vaught, 13. Georgia football player Herschel Walker, 14. [Auburn](#) football player Bo Jackson, 15. SEC Commissioner Bernie Moore,
16. [Mississippi State](#) Baseball Coach Ron Polk, 17. Tennessee football player Condredge Holloway, 18. LSU basketball player and Athletics Director and basketball television broadcaster Joe Dean Sr., 19. SEC Commissioner Mike Slive, 20. Mississippi State Basketball Coach Babe McCarthy,
21. SEC Commissioner Harvey Schiller, 22. [Arkansas](#) Athletics Director Frank Broyles, 23. LSU Baseball Coach and Athletics Director Skip Bertman, 24. Auburn Football Coach Shug Jordan, 25. Florida Athletics Director Jeremy Foley.

The newspaper selected a panel representing each SEC school. Former Alabama Basketball Coach Wimp Sanderson was the Alabama representative. Newton represented Kentucky.

At first blush, Sanderson might appear to be a questionable selection, but he is an astute observer of athletics. A Birmingham News representative said he was an excellent contributor. Broyles was the Arkansas representative and Tom Price, the longtime sports information director at [South Carolina](#), represented the Gamecocks. Neither is likely to have a great grasp of SEC history, but no one can fault the News for the selection of its panel on that basis.

Although a handful of athletes were selected, it is difficult to acknowledge any influence from most of them. An exception is Pete Maravich, the superstar LSU basketball player. It is because of Maravich that SEC schools went on a building boom, erecting large arenas for basketball. (Auburn could have saved a lot of money by not

having to downsize if the league could get a Maravich every few years.)

Dooley would probably sneak on to my list because of his participation in breaking the stanglehold of the NCAA on football television revenues for schools, but has ever there been a head football coach who achieved less with his assets?

There is no question that Summit is the best at what she does, but what she does is coach women's basketball, and only a handful of schools have put near the resources into that non-revenue sport as has Tennessee. In fact, women's athletics has almost no influence other than that required by Title IX. As evidence, is there any women's sport at any school that pays its own way?

Personally, I think both Newton and McWhorter should have been ranked much higher. Both had exceptional vision regarding college athletics and were leaders in implementing them.

It should be noted that Newton, Broyles and Joe Dean, Jr., were panelists, but both Newton and Joe Dean, Sr. are rightful members of the Most Influential List. Broyles more appropriately should be on some Southwest Conference list of achievement for his longtime success as a football coach in that league. And that's giving consideration to Broyles as the color commentator with Keith Jackson on ABC broadcasts of college football in the 1970s.

Putting Archie Manning ahead of his coach, John Vaught, is questionable. Vaught was far more influential in football than most give him credit for. But Archie did have two fine football playing sons.

Putting Condredge Holloway, the Tennessee quarterback from Huntsville, on the list was probably the biggest surprise. He was listed because he was black and a quarterback. It is understandable that a black should be on the list as a pioneer, but former Vanderbilt basketball player Perry Wallace, the first black in a major sport in the SEC, would be a better choice than Holloway. So would Wendell Hudson, the first black scholarshiped athlete at Alabama, who was a bona fide star.

In fact, Joe B. Hall, the man who succeeded Rupp as basketball coach at Kentucky, probably should have had some consideration. I don't subscribe to the notion that Rupp was a racist, but Hall is the one who convinced Kentucky basketball fans that a Wildcasts team could be black.

Bernie Moore, the first commissioner of the SEC, certainly belongs. Harvey Schiller had seen the big bucks available in sports from his Olympic days and if his name had been Bob we'd be referring to him as "Bottom Line Bob." Current Commissioner Mike Slive may make my list on the 100th anniversary of the SEC, but he hasn't done it yet.

Shug Jordan? Hey, it's the Birmingham News. If you're going to pick someone from Auburn, Pat Dye was a better coach. My choice would have been David Housel, who was the Auburn representative on the panel. He was highly-regarded as a longtime sports information director and (by everyone except Auburn Football Coach Tommy Tuberville) athletics director at Auburn.

Herschel and Bo were great players, but for star power they don't compare to Joe Namath. And I can't think of any other reason for selecting good players to this list.

It's hard to fathom how much influence baseball coaches Polk and Bertman have had. A friend suggested that they should have tied for 25th along with, say, Jim Wells of Alabama. Polk would get 3/8 vote, Bertman 3/8, and Wells (or whomever) 1/4, symbolic of the NCAA limits on baseball scholarships that require breaking them into fractions.

The one omission that is beyond belief is former Tennessee Athletics Director Bob Woodruff. He was the leader in turning the SEC from a football conference (plus Kentucky in basketball) into an all-sports conference.

And almost no one would have thought of them, but two men who had a huge influence in the SEC are Elmore "Scoop" Hudgins and Doug Layton. Hudgins was the longtime publicist (he'd been some sort of media relations associate director today) of the SEC. He was very innovative, worked with some tough task-masters, and was

everything media could ask for. The 800 or so at this week's SEC Media Days in Birmingham have grown from Hudgins' idea of the Sky-Writers, a group of journalists who used to fly to each SEC camp in August training days.

Layton, the former Alabama football color broadcaster and basketball play-by-play announcer, was an innovator in two major areas. He hosted the first coach call-in show, convincing Bryant to answer calls from fans on his "Bear Line" show. And Layton was the first to put together a mid-week network of televised basketball in the SEC.

All-in-all an excellent job by the Birmingham News.

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SEC on a roll

Randy Moore
InsideTennessee.com

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There's a great scene in the movie "History of the World, Part 1" in which Mel Brooks turns to the camera and smirks, "It's good to be king."

Mike Slive can relate. After five years as "king" of the powerful Southeastern Conference, he has numerous reasons to feel privileged these days.

"These are good times to be commissioner of the SEC," Slive said in opening the recent 2007 SEC Media Days at Hoover, Ala.

He then offered several achievements that underscore just what "good times" these are to be overseeing the Southeastern Conference.

For instance:

- During the 2006-07 school year the SEC became the first conference in NCAA history to win national titles in football, men's basketball and women's basketball in the same year.
- The SEC also won national titles in men's swimming, women's swimming, bowling, gymnastics and men's tennis.
- "The eight national championships were won by five different SEC institutions," Slive noted. "This means we won national championships in over one-third of the sports the SEC sponsored."
- Nine SEC teams participated in bowl games last football season. Two of these ([Florida](#) and [LSU](#)) took part in BCS games.
- The SEC posted six bowl victories during football's post-season, most in league history.
- The Southeastern Conference has won three of the eight national championships determined since the BCS system began in 1998. The league has claimed five of the last 15 national titles, most of any conference.
- An average of 75,000 fans attended each SEC football game last fall. All told, 96 percent of the seats were filled whenever conference teams took the field.
- A total of 6.5 million people attended SEC football games last season. That made the SEC the biggest draw in college football for the 26th year in a row.
- Counting revenue and non-revenue sports, the SEC sent 159 teams to NCAA post-season play in 2006-07. More than 75 percent of league teams participated in post-season play.

"We have re-established ourselves as the best competitive athletic conference in the country," Slive said, "and we did it by walking straight down Main Street (following the rules)."

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Sports

NCAA HOPES SCHOOLS HAVE LEARNED FROM SCANDALS

By **Jason Anderson**

July 26, 2007

Record Staff Writer

As the NBA reels from the specter of gambling, others realize their leagues' integrity could be jeopardized, as well.

The Big West Conference once had its own brush with the seedy side of sports betting, though it emerged unscathed.

Conference commissioner Dennis Farrell said approximately 10 years ago someone approached a Big West basketball player in an attempt to fix a conference game. Farrell would not identify the player or schools involved because the incident never was made public.

Farrell said the player reported the incident to school officials who then notified local authorities and the FBI, but he does not know whether arrests were made. Farrell said there was no need for the Big West to take action because the player had no culpability.

"The student-athlete came forward and did the right thing," Farrell said. "This was a low-profile game. It showed me that it's not just the high-profile games that could be targeted."

Coach Bob Thomason, whose Pacific men's basketball team is part of the Big West, believes the NCAA and its members have taken the necessary steps to preserve the integrity of the game. He said he does not believe point shaving occurs in college basketball.

"I think coaches are too committed to winning, and I think the players have all bought into winning and doing well," Thomason said. "I just don't see it."

The FBI is investigating former NBA referee Tim Donaghy for allegedly gambling on games over the past two seasons. The developing scandal may prompt the NCAA and its respective conferences to re-examine how they screen officials.

The NCAA has not had a similar controversy involving a referee, but college basketball has been rocked by a number of point-shaving operations over the past 55 years.

Several schools, including the City College of New York, Manhattan, Long Island and Bradley, were implicated in a point-shaving scheme in 1951. A similar scam prompted Kentucky to suspend its basketball program in 1952-53.

Rick Kuhn, a former Boston College player, and four others were found guilty in 1981 of conspiring to fix games in 1978-79.

Point-shaving allegations prompted Tulane to suspend its basketball program from 1985-89, and Arizona State basketball players Stevin Smith and Isaac Burton Jr. pleaded guilty in 1997 to charges of conspiracy to commit sports bribery.

The NCAA prohibits student athletes, athletic department staff and conference personnel from engaging in sports wagering. It sends posters and videos to schools warning of the dangers of gambling.

The rules are interpreted so strictly that former Washington football coach Rick Neuheisel was fired in 2003 for participating in an NCAA Tournament pool.

Pacific athletic director Lynn King said NCAA referees may receive more scrutiny as a result of the Donaghy investigation. Some conferences conduct independent background checks on officials. The Big West does not, instead relying on NCAA provisions.

The NCAA covers gambling during its annual officiating clinics for men's and women's basketball. The organization requires officials to provide background information and submit to random background checks before the start of the NCAA Tournament.

"We're reviewing our officiating and gambling education programs to ensure integrity is paramount," NCAA president Myles Brand said in a statement. "This recent development is a reminder of how dangerous sports wagering can be."

Farrell knows attempts to compromise that integrity can occur any time and any place, even in the Big West.

"You can never let your guard down," Farrell said. "We have to be ever vigilant. It's something we have to take very seriously because the credibility of competition is something that's sacred to the public."

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[VISIT HIS BLOG](#)

League plans more background checks

By Antonya English, Times Staff Writer

Published July 26, 2007

HOOVER, Ala. - When SEC commissioner Mike Slive meets with the league's football officials tonight, rest assured the issue of gambling will be on the agenda.

Slive said Wednesday that the league plans to do more background checks in an effort to keep the gambling scandal affecting the NBA from becoming an issue in the SEC.

"Obviously we talk about it all the time," Slive said. "Having said that, one can't watch what's going on in the NBA without realizing the need to be ever-vigilant. In three weeks our athletic directors will meet and we will talk with them about what we do and my guess is we'll end up even doing more than we've done in the past. A lot of the focus in the NCAA has been on gambling and student athletes. I think we need to make sure we've got a parallel program that is as intense for our officials as it is for the student athletes."

The SEC conducts random background checks on football officials, while most of the league's basketball referees undergo checks by the NCAA, which are mandatory to work the NCAA Tournament. Slive said the league most likely will expand those checks to include all football officials, although it's no guarantee.

"The question really is one of honor and trust," Slive said. "It's one of integrity, it's one of honor, it's one of respect for the game, for your colleagues and for everyone involved. And that's the kind of thing that we want, expect and are going to demand."

WHAT ABOUT US?: With the arrival of Nick Saban at Alabama, Auburn has found itself the state's forgotten program. But coach Tommy Tuberville and his players say they are enjoying their time out of the spotlight.

Quarterback Brandon Cox said the lack of preseason media attention may turn out to be a blessing in disguise.

"In the past we've done better when people haven't predicted us to do well," he said. "We have a lot of young guys and hopefully that'll take some of the pressure off of them. As long as we're not in the paper for something bad, that's fine."

SEC TV STILL A POSSIBILITY: Slive said he will be closely watching the developments of the Big Ten and the Mountain West conferences, which have ventured into their own television networks. All but one of the league's television contracts concludes at the end of the 2008-09 season. "Our presidents, chancellors and athletic directors have authorized us to continue to explore the viability of an SEC network," Slive said.

KENTUCKY FEVER: Think winning eight games and the Music City Bowl can't do much for a program? Think again. Last year this time, Kentucky had sold about 15,000 season tickets; this year it's approximately 50,000. It appears fans are finally jumping on the football bandwagon.

"The atmosphere is completely different on a lot of different levels," safety Marcus McClinton said. "The players have

confidence. Anybody who's a Kentucky fan is loving talking about Kentucky football where in the past it was like, ah it's the same old Kentucky. Now you have proof, now you have statistics, now you have a bowl. Now you can say you're something. Everybody's confidence is up and the whole environment around the University of Kentucky, there's just a different aura."

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Kickoff change not as dire as coaches say

HOOVER, Ala.

RULES CHANGES RARELY have their desired effect. A year ago, the tee for kickoffs was reduced by one inch and no one noticed. Several years ago, college football narrowed its goal posts with few consequences.

Now comes a rules change that appears to have some teeth to it, but in time will prove to have little bite. Kickoffs will be moved back 5 yards this season, to the 30-yard line.

"It's going to be one of the most significant rules changes to come about in recent years — maybe in a decade — in college football," said Kentucky coach Rich Brooks. "Very few teams will have a guy who can kick it into the touchback area or out of the end zone."

There are two parts to figuring how this new rule will or will not change the game. First, the general belief among coaches is that fewer kickoffs will sail into the end zone. Second, as a result, coaching staffs will spend much more time working on kickoff coverage and kick returns.

My guess? More kickoffs will be returned, and the impact will be great at the outset, gradually diminishing over the next five seasons. Eventually, college football will move kickoffs even farther back, perhaps to the 20-yard-line.

The reasons for this alteration in the game are two-fold, according to the coaches who served on the NCAA football rules change committee. First, the NCAA was seeking another way to trim the length of games. When a kickoff goes into the end zone for a touchback, the game clock does not run. If it is returned, the clock starts when the receiving team touches the ball.

More importantly, forcing more kickoff returns injects more excitement into the game, according to the committee. Rogers Redding, the supervisor of officials for the SEC, said there is no more boring play in football than a touchback on a kickoff.

It is interesting to note that coaches talked this week at SEC Media Days as if the kickoff return had become a dinosaur. The fact is that only 32.9 percent of kickoffs in the SEC during the 2006 season were touchbacks.

Only two SEC kickers had more than 50 percent of their kickoffs go for touchbacks, and neither kicker is back this season. Matt Clark of Auburn was far and away the best at getting touchbacks at 79 percent. Next was James Wilhoit of Tennessee at 50.7 percent.

South Carolina's Ryan Succop was fourth in the league at 36.9 percent, and he is the only one of the SEC's top five kickoff specialists to tee it up again this season. Mississippi State's Adam Carlson was the worst in the league with only two of his 32 kickoffs going for touchbacks.

Despite the numbers that say otherwise, most SEC coaches went into overstating mode, even pulling out numbers that could not possibly be true.

"It will be very significant," said Georgia coach Mark Richt. "It will be, I wouldn't say it's doubly important, probably three or four times as important."

"I say that because we just were having meetings with our staff yesterday. We were talking about that very thing. I asked (assistant) coach (Tony) Ball, our kick-return coach, about how many kicks were we returning percentage-wise last year. He said we only really returned about 25 percent of the kicks. Now, we predict we'll be returning 75 to 90 percent of the kicks."

Actually, nearly 70 percent of SEC kickoffs were returned a year ago, and the extra 5 yards might push that percentage to the 80-85 percent range. That's just a guess, but it should tell you that it is a rule change that does not merit the kind of attention coaches are giving it.

Urban Meyer, Florida's coach, must have a lot of time on his hands these days because it appears that he has put an inordinate amount of time into finding ways to deal with the new rule.

"We're still evaluating," he said, and he was just getting started. "We kind of charted where that kick's going to land. That kick's going to land about the 9-yard-line now. That's significant. That's when you start talking about the field position, opportunity to score, percentages to score, things that most teams take very seriously, it's going to have a major impact on."

"I think you might see better personnel on kickoffs. You might see more starters. You might see better schemes. You might see, a lot of times it's generic and you hope your kicker kicks it out of the end zone and you move on. But you have to have a horse to kick that thing out of the end zone now."

"That's going to have a major impact. I know we're spending a lot of time on that. Myself, I'm spending a lot of time on it. I'm also evaluating how we defer, take the ball, whatever we do to maintain the plan to win, which we obviously take very seriously."

Let me recap, then. The kickoff is moving back 5 yards. Most kickoffs were returned a season ago. It would stand to reason that the average starting position for an SEC offense will increase by 5 yards, which does not seem particularly significant.

If, indeed, the rule was intended to put more juice into the game, it will not happen. It might have the opposite effect by removing the onside kick, the most exciting play in football. By kicking off from the 30-yard line, teams now will be less likely to attempt an onside kick for fear of giving the opposition a certain chance at a field goal.

So, don't buy the hyperbole of SEC football coaches.

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