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Tim Rutten

Newspapers are changing to suit readers' tastes

By TIM RUTTEN
REGARDING MEDIA

August 11, 2007

SOONER rather than later, the newspaper you're holding in your hands will be very different than it is today.

A couple of fascinating new studies out this week suggest just how profound -- and potentially troubling -- some of those differences may be.

One of those surveys comes from Britain, where the media research firm Nielsen/NetRatings reports that the online editions of Britain's two largest "quality" newspapers -- the Guardian and the Times of London -- now have more American than British readers. The Independent, a smaller serious daily, already has twice as many readers in the U.S. as it does in Britain, and, if the current trend holds, even the very Tory Daily Telegraph's online edition shortly will have more readers in the U.S. than in the Home Counties.

What's up?

You can't, of course, entirely exclude the snob factor. It's the same impulse that drives otherwise intelligent people to spend their evenings watching mediocre detective dramas on public television just because they're set in London. It's what drives American men of a certain age and inclination to buy English dress shirts, even though they have no breast pocket.

Still, given the kinds of numbers Nielsen turned up, something else is at work. The quality British papers, particularly in their online editions, are much farther down the road toward what looks like the future of newspaper journalism, one that places a much higher premium on analysis and opinion than do serious American newspapers. When Britain's former Prime Minister Tony Blair complained in one of his farewell addresses that the British broadsheets had transformed themselves from newspapers to "viewpapers," Tony O'Reilly, the Irish magnate who owns the Independent newspaper group, proudly agreed, saying it's what his readers want.

Then there's a new survey by the reliably nonpartisan Pew Research Center for the People and the Press: Roughly a quarter of Americans now use the Internet as their primary news source. Pew's study finds that the Web crowd is younger and better educated than most Americans and far more dissatisfied with their country's news media. It's fair to assume that a substantial number of them are among the British papers' U.S. readers, people who want a "viewpaper."

There's something else about their reading habits worth considering. As Joseph Epstein, a commentator of generally conservative predilections, points out in a forthcoming essay on the future of newspapers: "Not only are we acquiring our information from new places but we are taking it pretty much on our own terms. The magazine Wired recently defined the word 'egocasting' as 'the consumption of on-demand music, movies, television and other media that cater to individual and not mass-market tastes.' The news, too, is now getting to be on-demand."

Pew has been polling on public attitudes toward the news media since 1985, when it was the Times Mirror Center, so its surveys are among the most useful for charting trends in this area. Although Pew's most recent study finds the percentage of Americans who think the press is inaccurate or biased has grown over the last 20 years, the younger, better-educated, Internet-reliant readers have a view more skeptical than most. That's one of Pew's interesting findings; the other is this:

"Opinions about the news media have grown much more partisan, particularly over the past decade. Far more than twice as many Republicans as Democrats say news organizations are too critical of America (63% vs. 23%). There is virtually no measure of press performance on which there is not a substantial gap in the views of political partisans. . .

"While Republicans generally are much more critical of the press than are Democrats, Republicans who rely on Fox News as their main news source have an even less favorable opinion of the press than do other Republicans. Fully 71% of Republicans who list Fox as their main news source hold an unfavorable opinion of major national newspapers, compared with 52% of Republicans who use other sources and 33% of those who are not Republicans."

That may not be too surprising, but this finding is: "As many as 38% of those who rely mostly on the Internet for news [those younger, better-educated readers] say they have an unfavorable opinion of cable news networks, such as CNN, Fox News and MSNBC, compared with 25% of the public overall and just 17% of television news viewers."

In other words, although the younger and better-educated consumers of serious news may be hungry for more analysis and interpretation, they're increasingly turned off not only by Fox's partisanship but also by CNN's and MSNBC's opportunistic attempts to match the ratings success of Rupert Murdoch's network. It's clear all three cable networks, whatever their politics, have decided it's anger that sells in their medium, and that's where they've settled. Thus we have right-wing anger (Fox's Bill O'Reilly), left-wing anger (MSNBC's Keith Olbermann), faux-populist anger (CNN's Lou Dobbs) and crypto-fascist rage (Headline's Nancy Grace).

So, we're back to where we started: Sooner rather than later, the newspaper you're holding in your hands will be very different from what it is today.

Different in what way is the fair and obvious question.

The honest answer is that nobody knows for certain, but the odds are it will be a hybrid publication in which an online edition that's focused mainly on breaking news and service works in tandem with a print edition whose staples are analysis, context and opinion. The former almost surely will have a lot more video and interactivity than it does today; the latter will have to be much more thoughtful and far more intensely and carefully edited.

It's a difficult -- though not impossible -- transition, and the scandal of cable news' failed transformation provides a cautionary example. As Fox and CNN demonstrate to the rest of the news media, it's possible to save your financial skin and forfeit any claim on respect. It's an old problem. Saul of Tarsus, a one-time tentmaker whose letters made him a kind of media celebrity two millennia ago, put it plainly: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

So how do American newspapers manage this passage while holding on to their "souls" -- that sense that they are, uniquely, businesses worthy of constitutional protection because their bottom line reckons service to the common good alongside profit and loss?

One way is to maintain the serious news media's postwar tradition of nonpartisan journalism, leaving advocacy to the editorial pages. As they give themselves over to more analysis and commentary, newspapers will have to be more vigilant about being genuinely honest brokers of ideas, opening their news columns to a far broader spectrum of serious opinions and perspectives -- liberal to conservative -- than even the best of them do now. Politicization is the enemy rather than the logical consequence of that process. Newspapers can distinguish themselves from the current undifferentiated cacophony of substantial and frivolous opinion on the Internet -- and best serve their readers -- by insisting that their analysis and commentary conform to the discernible facts. In a society that seems more deeply and reflexively divided along partisan lines, that would be more than a service.

As the late Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan was fond of saying: "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not to their own facts."

Simply surviving the current turmoil isn't enough. In 1860, on the eve of Civil War, Americans were -- on a per capita basis -- the world's greatest newspaper readers. The country was hip deep in partisan broadsheets and news weeklies only too happy to encourage their readers to slaughter and despoil one another, and so they did.

That's a thought for the people who run our serious news organizations to keep in mind, because it's increasingly clear that, if your only concern is profiting yourself, you easily can contrive a solution that makes you part of the problem.

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When sportswriters go on the air, we all lose

By Norm Chad
Special to The Commercial Appeal
August 13, 2007

A number of years ago -- maybe in the early 1990s -- I made fun of sportswriters' migration to television. We were a paunchy, balding, unsightly group helping fill cable's vast wasteland for a few extra bucks.

That was then. This is now out of control.

We've gone from minor nuisance to cultural menace.

What was once just "The Sports Reporters" is now a sports Armageddon. We've reached critical mass. Everywhere you look, there are sports journalists blabbing, gabbing, fretting, chatting, arguing, debating and, mostly, shouting.

On ESPN alone, you have "The Sports Reporters," "Pardon The Interruption," "Around The Horn" and "1st and 10," plus several other of its daily shows -- "SportsCenter," "Rome Is Burning" and "Outside The Lines First Report" -- include regular forums of talking heads.

(I woke up in a dead sweat the other night because Skip Bayless was in one of my dreams excoriating Mike Shanahan for a bad third-down play call. Plus, I saw an ear-nose-and-throat specialist last week in a desperate attempt to get Stephen A. Smith's voice out of my head.)

If ESPN got out of the sports business tomorrow, half of America's top sports columnists would have to send their children back to public schools.

Sportswriters have gone from the locker room to the green room, from "Get me rewrite!" to "Get me wardrobe!" We used to just write, eat and drink; now we just talk, eat and drink. Who has time to write?

(Heck, I've gone into some towns and seen sports *editors* with their own TV shows. Sports editors! Hey, I love those fellas -- without 'em, I don't get published -- but if you're turning on your Sony and seeing a sports editor, you might have grounds for consumer action against your local cable carrier.)

Every sports columnist, it seems, is also on talk radio daily -- talking, well, a lot.

After all, why type when you can talk? It's relatively tough to craft a sentence -- not for Couch Slouch; I just bang out my columns while watching Nick At Nite -- and it's relatively easy to speak nonsensically. Check that: *scream* nonsensically. That's right -- everybody's yelling. Because if you want to be heard over the roar of the crowd, you'd better be louder than the next guy.

In addition, with all of our sharpest scribblers becoming serial screamers, there is a huge talent drain out of newspapers. Which brings me to two of the best at both, my erstwhile friends Tony Kornheiser and Michael Wilbon of "PTI."

(Disclosure: I used to be an occasional presence on "Pardon The Interruption," but I was sent down to the minors and eventually banished from the program. These days, I co-host a cable access show, "Excuse The Disturbance," with Nipsy Russell.)

Kornheiser once was as good as it gets as a sports columnist at the Washington Post. But, due to his TV and radio duties, he went from writing three columns a week to two a week to one a week to dictating "columnettes" into a black hole. All he writes now are biweekly checks to his therapist. He also plays golf.

Then there's Wilbon. Apocryphal story: I used to know Mike pretty well when we worked at the Post. A month ago, I happened to be in one of the several country clubs in which he is a member. I went up to him to say hello -- I hadn't seen him in a couple

of years -- and he handed me his valet parking ticket to be validated. He also plays golf.

You understand what I'm saying here? Quality sportswriters are jumping to the other side, and when they get to the other side, they forget the ink-stained wretches they've left behind.

Now, I don't want to get all emotional about losing good buddies like Kornheiser and Wilbon, because, frankly, I hate appearing to be this weak. But there are tears falling onto my keyboard at this very moment.

(If I had more time, I'd figure out a better way to express myself and end this column properly, but I have to go commentate on an ESPN World Series of Poker telecast.)

Ask The Slouch

Q. Major leaguers go to the minors to rehab after injuries. Where do minor leaguers go? (Lee Bailey; Gahanna, Ohio)

A. I believe the Pittsburgh Pirates have them all signed through 2012.

Q. Brothers Jerry Hairston Jr. of the Rangers and Scott Hairston of the Padres both have hovered near .200 much of the season. Any suggestions? (Leonard Greene; Milwaukee)

A. I'd give William and Stephen Baldwin a call on this one.

Q. "Rocky 3," "The Godfather 3" and now Wife 3. When will it all end? (Barry Goodrich; Northfield, Ohio)

A. It had better end at Wife 3 -- Rocky went to "Rocky 5" (and beyond), and that was just ugly.

Q. Now that Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez has virtually declared war on the United States, shouldn't opposing teams be able to take Magglio Ordonez and Carlos Guillen as POWs? (Dan Murray; Spokane, Wash.)

A. Pay the man, Shirley.

You, too, can enter the \$1.25 Ask The Slouch Cash Giveaway. Just e-mail asktheslouch@aol.com and, if your question is used, you win \$1.25 in cash!

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Monday, Aug 13, 2007

Posted on Sun, Aug. 12, 2007

Fans in a frenzy ... already

By Jennifer Thomas

Joe Battista is spending a lot of time these days disappointing people.

The executive director of the Nittany Lion Club says he's besieged with calls, letters and e-mails from fans frantically seeking tickets and accommodations for the Penn State/Notre Dame football game on Sept. 8, the first matchup between the teams in Happy Valley since November 1991.

"It's two of the most storied programs in the country," Battista said. "It's the history. It's the tradition."

And there's a thirst for revenge. Battista said he's sure that people are eager to see a Penn State victory after a 41-17 loss last year.

But those hoping Battista can score them tickets are out of luck. The Nittany Lion Club -- a Penn State fundraising group whose members have first dibs on tickets -- has more than 6,000 seat requests, for both season and single game tickets, that can't be filled this year.

So avid Penn State fans are turning to other sources, such as eBay and Stubhub.com, paying skyrocketing prices. Ticketcity.com, a ticket broker, last week released a list showing the Penn State/Notre Dame game as the most sought after college football ticket in the country, selling through brokers at an average price of \$1,100 apiece.

It's not just tickets that are hot commodities. Hotel rooms in the county, and in surrounding counties, are full that weekend except for a sporadic room here and there. Some local residents are realizing that, given the clamor among ticket-holders for places to sleep, their homes can bring in a nice bit of change on football weekends.

And businesses are gearing up for a brisk weekend they expect will be boosted by a scheduled 6 p.m. start time for the game, said Teresa Sparacino, executive director for the State College Downtown Improvement District.

Some shops are stocking up on Penn State merchandise, while T-shirts reading "Notre Lame" and "Showdown in the Valley" are for sale at The Student Book Store downtown.

"There's a lot of interest in that game," said the store's general manager, John Lindo. "It should be a pretty good weekend for all the retailers downtown."

State College's restaurants and specialty stores see Notre Dame as a good start to a busy football season.

"These are great weekends," Sparacino said. "It's not just game day."

Bud Meredith, director of ticket sales for the university, said all home games -- even those with less competitive opponents such as Buffalo and Florida International -- have sold out in advance of the season's start for the first time since Beaver Stadium was expanded in 2001. The needs of 2,000 season ticket holders couldn't be met this season.

"In theory we would say 'We're back'," Meredith said. "Demand is overwhelming."

Battista said the Nittany Lion Club has grown by 5,000 members in the past two seasons to 23,000. Those members' season ticket needs are met first when it comes to ticket distribution.

"I think people just don't understand," he said, adding that demand this year has likely tripled from last year. "Unfortunately, what that has done is created a field days for scalpers."

There were 187 listings of game tickets, some with parking passes, on eBay late Saturday night.

To get around anti-scalping laws, many online sellers are selling Penn State paraphernalia, with game tickets thrown in. That was the case with one listing, where a Penn State folder came with two tickets in the end zone, section NC, row 39. The final bid was \$709 on Tuesday.

Another seller, declaring the event the "Game of the Decade," sold four tickets -- and a Penn State mug and alumni button -- in section NA, row 29, for \$1,975.

Four lower level tickets in section SJ, complete with two nights at a local hotel sold for \$3,000 on Monday.

Seat location seemed to have no bearing on price. Stubhub.com saw ticket prices for seats in row 75 and seats in row 15 each going for \$800 apiece. The Web site showed a top price per ticket of \$4,500 for one seat in row 25. Hotel rooms at the Sleep Inn were going for as much as \$1,550 for Friday and Saturday night.

A networking feature of the Penn State Alumni Association's Web site, www.lionlink.psu.edu, found fellow alumni trying to arrange swaps. One seller was offering to exchange Notre Dame tickets for tickets to Pittsburgh Steelers or Boston Red Sox games. Another was offering Philadelphia Eagles tickets in exchange for Notre Dame seats, while another was offering Notre Dame tickets for hotel rooms.

Lodging is proving to be a stumbling block for some ticket holders.

The Centre County Convention and Visitors Bureau's Web site showed a handful of available rooms in Centre County for the game weekend, but not all listings had not been updated recently.

A recent search of the Holiday Inn Web site showed no availability at properties in State College, Milledale, Altoona, Clearfield and Lewisburg. In Altoona, accommodations were full at many hotels, including the Quality Inn and EconoLodge.

"We're no longer taking a waiting list because we could have filled the institute three times," said Michael Campbell, one of the owners of the St. Joseph Institute, a spa and retreat in Port Matilda that is charging \$225 a night. Its 44 beds are filled, and additional cots will be used during the weekend, he said.

"Some of the guests are fitting in spa services," he said. "It's going to be a very busy weekend."

The Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott was the last option for many seeking local lodging accommodations. The newly constructed 83-room hotel blocked out all football weekends from nationwide scheduling, and opened them for reservations on July 26, the day the hotel opened.

Rooms for the Notre Dame weekend sold out in less than four hours at \$499 a night.

Those in the lodging industry said prices are set by demand and the football season is the busiest tourist season for the area.

"It truly is market-driven," said Mark Morath, president of Hospitality Asset Management Co. Inc.

The time of the year, demand and last year's prices are all factored into the decision, he said.

Rates at the Shaner properties ranged from \$249 to \$499 a night with a two-night minimum.

Prices at HAMCO's six properties ranged from \$185 at the Nittany Budget Motel to \$379 at the Hilton Garden Inn.

Morath said the local lodging industry didn't escalate prices the way hotels did in South Bend, Ind., last year, when they were charging \$599 with a three-night minimum.

In State College, the rates did little to quell demand, with long waiting lists at most lodging choices, Morath said. "Therefore the prices were right," he said.

Peter Sorensen, area director for sales and marketing for Shaner Hotels, said rooms at the Pine Barn Inn, also a Shaner-owner property, in Danville were filling as well.

He compared the buzz to the 2002 Nebraska game, something he measured in "denials," where the hotel turns away potential guests. A typical game has about 7,000 denials, he said. Nebraska saw 14,000, a number Sorensen said likely will be repeated for Notre Dame.

Some entrepreneurial residents are using the lodging shortage to cash in on their apartments, townhouses and homes.

Ryan Moore, of State College, was marketing a two bedroom house for a friend for the Notre Dame weekend. It comes complete with two full-sized beds, futon, couch and parking.

The price? \$1,700.

It's available on other football weekends at a lower price. Moore said the price was set after seeing what other homes were priced.

He said the money would help offset mortgage costs. Moore said that he doesn't go to the games in person but said he imagines that he would enjoy it if he did.

"Still I doubt if it would be worth the money for renting out the place," he said.

Jennifer Thomas can be reached at 231-4638.


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Allure of the big time captures fancy of Division II schools

By ERIC OLSON AP Sports Writer
 The Associated Press - Sunday, August 12, 2007

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"Ticker envy" - the desire to appear with the likes of big-time football powers such as Ohio State, Texas and Nebraska on TV score updates - can be irresistible to Division II schools hoping to make names for themselves on the biggest stage in college athletics.

And while that may not be the motivation for all, schools such as New Haven, Presbyterian and South Dakota State are among seven in the process of moving to Division I, joining 15 others that have begun the transition since 2003-04.

Awaiting those schools are greater opportunities for revenue, whether it's from fat paychecks for playing football road games against BCS powers or from NCAA basketball tournament-fueled revenue distributions.

Sure, there are added costs - millions of dollars' worth, in fact - for day-to-day operations and upgrading facilities.

The pros outweigh the cons, longtime South Dakota State athletic director Fred Oien says, because, ultimately, college sports are about image and "who you run around with."

North Dakota State University announced in 2002 that it was moving to Division I. Athletic director Gene Taylor said the move was about academics.

"Certainly being able to see your score roll across with some of the others was a way to get the recognition out there," Taylor

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said. "But our initial reason was getting on board with the same athletic advancements as we were academically."

The University of North Dakota announced its move to Division I last year.

"As we looked at it, it has more to do with, 'Are you competing with the schools that are more like you, in terms of size and willingness to invest in the program?'" athletic director Tom Buning said. "You want your competition to be strong so people are interested in coming to the games. If they come to the games, then you end up with the financial support that allows you to do that."

None of the Division I newcomers fathom themselves as superpowers. In fact, only 11 play football.

But they're on their way to becoming Division I, nonetheless, and all harbor hopes of emerging the way little-known Winthrop did when it beat Notre Dame in the NCAA men's basketball tournament in March.

"There is a perception in the minds of young folks - whether true or not - that Division I is the gold standard for athletics," said athletics director William "Bee" Carlton of the transitioning Presbyterian College in Clinton, S.C. "We offer the gold standard academically. This will allow us to offer the gold standard athletically."

The cost of doing business in Division I dissuades some schools. The University of Nebraska at Omaha explored the possibility, but figured its \$6.7 million budget would have to increase to \$10 million or \$11 million.

"That (extra) \$3 million or \$4 million dollars gives you the right to be Division I and to be on the ticker," UNO athletic director David Miller said, "but it also gives you the right to have your name on the ticker getting beat by 40 points in basketball night in and night out. If you make the commitment to being Division I, you better make the commitment to being good in Division I."

Alarmed by all the moves, Division II leaders have been working for two years to maintain and build on its membership of 296 schools, said Pfeiffer University's Chuck Ambrose, chairman of the Division II President's Council.

Ambrose said Division II has redefined its identity as the optimal college experience, balancing academics and high-level athletics.

Still, some schools yearn for the greater exposure that comes from being among the 327 members of Division I.

"We were destined to go," SDSU's Oien said. "It's because we feel there weren't enough of our peer institutions, academically and athletically, left in Division II."

For South Dakota State, the impetus for migrating was Northern Colorado's move to Division I and the disintegration of the North

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Central Conference, once among the most powerful Division II leagues.

Northern Colorado's departure was followed by North Dakota State and South Dakota State and now the nearby University of South Dakota and University of North Dakota have initiated moves to Division I.

A local issue that nudged South Dakota State, Oien said, was the declining number of high school graduates in rural areas - SDSU's traditional recruiting base. Many of those kids, whether athletes or not, were electing to attend bigger-name schools such as Nebraska, Iowa State and Minnesota.

Jumping to Division I, Oien said, was part of a strategy to change the way South Dakotans view the university. Enrollment grew from about 9,000 five years ago to a record 11,300 in 2006, and Oien said the move to Division I has been a factor.

"Division I is one piece - not the only piece - in a whole bunch of activities that go on that we can use to grow the campus in the face of declining high school graduates," Oien said.

SDSU's athletic budget has increased from \$4.2 million for 2002-03 to \$8.2 million for 2007-08. Athletic scholarships have gone from 92 to 202 over the same period.

Increases in corporate sponsorships, ticket sales and fundraising have paid the way. That's in addition to state funding and student fees. Student fees have not been increased, Oien said, but the fee revenue has risen because enrollment has risen.

SDSU will draw significant additional revenue from playing at least one football game a year against a Bowl Championship Series opponent. Games against Iowa State in 2008 and Minnesota in 2009 will net \$300,000 apiece, Oien said. Previously, he said, SDSU would make about \$10,000 for playing a road game against a Division II opponent.

With 12-game football schedules now allowed, there are more slots to fill for the so-called Football Bowl Subdivision schools, previously known as I-A schools. Members of the Football Championship Subdivision, formerly known as I-AA programs, are there to fill the void.

"There are more games to go around than there are FCS schools," Oien said. "We're all in good shape. It's a good deal."

Oien projects \$200,000 a year from guarantees gleaned from playing four road games a season against major men's basketball powers.

An estimated \$500,000 more will come to SDSU from contractually guaranteed revenue distributions from the NCAA and Summit League, which the Jackrabbits will join this year. The football team begins play in the Gateway Conference in 2008.



A facilities master plan calls for the construction of an 80,000-square-foot athletic complex that would cost between \$12 million and \$15 million; a major addition to Frost Arena for women's basketball, volleyball and swimming locker areas; and a 15,000-seat football stadium to replace the dilapidated 45-year-old Coughlin-Alumni Stadium.

New baseball and softball stadiums are under construction, and a 145-acre equestrian facility has been built.

No timetable has been set for the biggest construction projects because funding hasn't been secured. Oien said no additional state tax dollars would be used to pay for the move to Division I.

Ambrose, who heads the Division II President's Council, said he wishes South Dakota State well. But he said the Jackrabbits and other migrating schools are paying a high price for a high-risk endeavor.

He pointed to a 2005 NCAA-commissioned study that said it's unlikely Division II schools will gain financially from migrating to Division I.

Economists Jonathan and Peter Orszag, authors of the study, looked at 20 schools that moved from Division II to Division I between 1994 and 2002. Revenues increased at those schools by an average of \$2.5 million, but spending grew an average of \$3.7 million, largely because of increased scholarships, salaries and travel.

"The proverbial pot of gold was really not there," Ambrose said.

Oien said the study generalizes by lumping small private schools, such as Presbyterian, with large land-grant universities such as SDSU.

Presbyterian's Carlton said his 1,200-student school, like SDSU, is going Division I to raise its profile. He said nearby schools have recruiting advantages over Presbyterian because of their D-I status.

Not all moves to Division I work out. Birmingham Southern, a 1,400-student Methodist school in Alabama, applied for Division I admission in 1999. Last year, the school initiated the move back to nonscholarship Division III because the program couldn't meet financial projections.

Ambrose said he wouldn't be surprised if a number of migrating schools gravitate back to Division II because the fit is better.

In fact, he said, Oien and South Dakota State are free to return any time.

Told of the open invitation, Oien let out a long, loud laugh.

"That ship has sailed," he said.

Advertisement



Aug. 10

NCAA Freezes Division I Membership

The National Collegiate Athletic Association announced late Thursday that its Division I Board of Directors had approved a four-year moratorium on new colleges joining the group's burgeoning top competitive level while association members study possible changes in Division I membership criteria. But nearly two dozen colleges that have already initiated the process of joining Division I — which now has 331 colleges and universities in it — will be exempted from the moratorium, association officials said.

The NCAA announced a series of other decisions made this week at meetings of the boards of college presidents that govern its three competitive divisions. Among the other changes:

- The Division I Board of Directors declined to reconsider its decision in April to ban college coaches from sending text messages to athletes they are trying to recruit. The policy, [which limits electronic communication with prospective players to e-mail and faxes](#), sides with [athletes who have complained that text messaging is overly intrusive](#). The board's decision not to reconsider its earlier vote proposal means that the matter will go to a full vote of the NCAA's Division I members at the association's annual convention in January.
- The Division I board also issued [a statement reiterating its commitment](#) to the set of policies that impose penalties on Division I teams where athletes consistently underperform academically. The board's statement came as the association's policies prepare to expand this year, with significantly more institutions likely to be affected and opposition almost certain to mount.
- The Division III Presidents Council agreed to sponsor legislation at the January convention that would severely restrict [the use of male practice players by women's teams](#). The Division III council also plans to sponsor its own legislation barring text messaging, and it agreed to let its own moratorium on new members lapse as of January.

Division I is the holy grail for many colleges and universities that play sports, with its promise (often unmet) of high visibility and big dollars. The size of the NCAA's top competitive level has expanded significantly in recent years, and while the association has acted to toughen the criteria for membership in Division I-A — the highest competitive level for football — it has not done anything similar for Division I over all. It plans to do so now, said S. David Berst, a longtime NCAA staff member who is closely involved in Division I issues. He said the association would review the process for joining Division I and consider additional or tougher criteria.

"It's time to stop and at least assess that process and the impact of that growth on the membership and championship opportunities" for current members of the division," Berst said.

The Division I board's statement on academic reform is remarkable not for what it says, but that the board felt obliged to issue it. This is the year when [some aspects of the academic changes that have limited their impact](#) — such as exemptions for sports with relatively few players, like basketball — will end, and the result is likely to be

that many more colleges lose scholarships or worse if their Academic Progress Rates dip too low.

If that happens, the screams from coaches and boosters are likely to grow louder, and James Barker, president of Clemson University and head of the Division I board, suggested that the board was trying to steel itself, and presidents of other Division I colleges, for the potential furor.

“We recognize that we’re reaching a critical stage” of the academic reform effort, and it’s “timely that as the concerns were being expressed about the impact on schools, we strongly and unanimously communicate” that the board stands behind the policies, Barker said.

The board’s statement reads: “The Division I Board of Directors strongly and unanimously reaffirms its commitment to improving the academic success of all student-athletes in every sport. That was the charge of the Board four years ago when the current iteration of academic reform was begun and it accurately reflects the Board’s resolve today. Through its unanimous expression of support, the Board makes clear that it will stay the course in its initiative to improve graduation success.”

“Academic reform in Division I is beginning its fourth year of implementation, and the Division I Board of Directors recognizes that the initiative is entering a significant period of time when specific sport concerns may be expressed. As a result, the Board anticipates that pressure will increase to diminish the effects of or abandon academic reform. It is appropriate to fine-tune reform implementation and to mitigate unintended consequences. The Division I Board of Directors will remain open to the advice and counsel of the intercollegiate athletics community so that appropriate implementation is realized, but we are unbending in our determination to support the mission of higher education — educate students.”

— [Doug Lederman](#)

The original story and user comments can be viewed online at <http://insidehighered.com/news/2007/08/10/ncaa>.

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Advertisement



Aug. 13

New Media Meets Campus Media

Questions about the skills college journalists need to master to prepare for successful careers in a new media landscape aren't new — but the answers keep changing.

For instance, in 1995, an article in *Quill*, [a publication](#) of the Society of Professional Journalists, deemed the ability to “deal with new media such as electronic newspapers or World Wide Web pages” as “nice, but not necessary.” So David Wendelken, an associate professor of journalism at James Madison University, told a chuckling crowd Friday during the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's [annual convention](#) in Washington.”

Suffice to say, precious few journalism educators would agree with that assessment today. And yet journalism education is lagging behind industry in embracing the new media technologies that students will need to be competitive in the work place, according to a paper presented Friday.

“We don't face the same problems economically that the industry is facing,” said Eastern Illinois University's Bryan Murley, who found in a survey of college newspaper advisers that 58.7 percent in 2006, and 53 percent in 2007, thought campus media had not kept pace with the advances in commercial media. “But the industry is requiring reporters to have different skill sets.”

Advertising revenue and readership for college newspapers remain strong — Daniel Reimold of Ohio University cited one study that found that about three-quarters of college students pick up the print versions of their campus newspapers at least twice a week. But the success of the print model at the college level masks its struggles in commercial media, and while college media outlets have made gains in incorporating new media platforms, the progress has been slower than it should be, Murley said.

About 91 percent of college newspapers had online presences in 2007, but the percentages are much lower for other forms of college media — 36.3 percent for radio stations, 20.9 percent for television stations, 18.1 percent for magazines and 6 percent for yearbooks. There were, however, “appreciable gains” in the proportion of college media outlets using multimedia technologies in 2007 compared to 2006: For instance, in 2006, 20.9 percent used podcasts, versus 38.4 percent in 2007. The use of Weblogs increased from 19.8 to 35.8 percent, RSS feeds from 23.5 to 35.1 percent, streaming video from 16.6 to 30.5 percent, embedded video (including YouTube) from 9.6 to 42.4 percent and comments features from 39.6 to 57 percent.

Meanwhile, even the smallest commercial newspapers, with 10,000 readers or fewer, are looking for reporting candidates with experience writing for the Web and uploading stories to the Internet, according to a survey of newspaper managing editors conducted by Wendelken and Toni B. Mehling of James Madison University. Of nine respondents in the “large daily newspaper” category (those with a circulation of 44,000 and above), eight required reporters to have skills in capturing audio while four required audio editing skills. Five required

reporters to have skills in capturing video, while one required video editing expertise. Major newspapers, said Wendelken, “are looking at reporters to do these things from the start.”

When discussing barriers to new media education, panelists and audience members cited costs (although Murley stressed that many of the technologies can be used fairly cheaply), in addition to resistance from some faculty who lack multimedia skills themselves or otherwise don’t see the need to instruct undergraduates in the emerging platforms. But they also cited resistance from journalism students themselves.

“A lot of college students select their medium in high school. When they come onto campus, they’re already a TV person or a radio person or a newspaper person,” said Wendelken.

“I’m a print journalist,” he continued, imitating the attitude of many aspiring journalists. “Why do I need to learn video?”

— [Elizabeth Redden](#)

*The original story and user comments can be viewed online at
<http://insidehighered.com/news/2007/08/13/journalism>.*

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THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Athletics

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v53/i50/50a03101.htm>

From the issue dated August 17, 2007

A Preseason Crash Course

As more freshmen arrive on campuses early to prepare for classes and sports, some experts question the benefits

By BRAD WOLVERTON

Atlanta

In his final summer before starting college, Roddy Jones followed a path that an increasing number of athletes are taking: He enrolled in classes early, and has spent the past two months preparing for the transition into big-time sports.

Several days a week this summer, Mr. Jones, a freshman running back at the Georgia Institute of Technology, woke up before dawn, walked to the university's 55,000-seat football stadium, and joined his teammates for preseason conditioning drills. On some mornings he worked out for an hour and a half — pushing sleds, racing around cones, and sprinting up a steep hill on a nearby practice field — all before the sun peered over the stadium.

He is here mostly because he wants to defy the odds and earn a place in the lineup on September 1, when the Yellow Jackets open their season at the University of Notre Dame. He also came early to get a jump on his academic work. Taking two classes during a six-week summer session is preparing him for the fall, he says, when his days will become far more hectic.

"Once the season starts," he says, "things will get crazy around here."

While many academic experts believe that athletes benefit from arriving on campuses before their traditional freshman year starts, others view the trend less favorably.

"Summer courses are typically very compressed and intense," says B. David Ridpath, director of the Drake Group, which works for academic integrity in college sports. "It's very tough for a kid right out of high school to do this well. ... I just think we are

taking away from kids and potentially setting them up for failure."

Meeting Standards

The National Collegiate Athletic Association does not track how many athletes start college early, but academic officials say the practice is becoming more common, particularly among football and basketball players, who often need the most help adjusting. Many academic advisers favor the idea, as

they say it helps players become acclimated to college classes and begin earning credit hours toward the NCAA's strict progress-toward-degree standards.

"Athletes have to persist at a greater rate now," says Phyllis LaBaw, associate athletic director for academic services at Georgia Tech. "By starting in the summer, they get a head start academically and learn to establish good study habits to meet the expectations at this level."

Nearly one-third of Georgia Tech's 75 freshman athletes — including all of its first-year football and men's and women's basketball players — voluntarily enrolled in the six-week session this summer, the second year the institute has offered the crash course. About 10 percent of Tech's 2,600 overall incoming freshmen also started classes early.

The students live in a dormitory across the street from Bobby Dodd Stadium and typically enroll in two classes. Under NCAA rules, the athletes must be enrolled in six credit hours to receive free tuition, room, and board.

Mr. Jones, a gregarious guy with an easy laugh, is taking English 1101 and Sociology 1101, which each meet for one to two hours a day five days a week. He spends another three or four hours a day in study hall or meeting with academic advisers.

The structured schedule is intentional, Ms. LaBaw says. "We have a plan in place for them every day, almost every hour," she says. "It helps them break down each assignment and not feel overwhelmed."

For Mr. Jones, academic work has always come fairly easily. He says he maintained a 3.1 grade-point average in high school without studying much — but he knows college will be different.

"Now that you're here you *have* to study," he says his advisers have warned him. But as long as he keeps up with his assignments, they say, he will be fine.

So far he has found college to be easier than he expected, which has occasionally led him to revert to his old study habits. One night late last month, he was up at 4 a.m. posting an English assignment on the Internet. And he blew off studying for a sociology exam that counted for 25 percent of his final grade, scoring an 80.

He learned his lesson: "I started studying a lot earlier for the next test," he says. His grades have since improved to A's.

Learning Formations

Football takes up less of his time than the classwork, but has been more demanding. Even on the rare day when the 5:45 a.m. conditioning drills are canceled, as they were one Friday last month, Mr. Jones receives an early-morning text message from a coach.

"Wake up," said the message from Curtis Modkins, who works with the running backs. "Clubs ... gun 7 split H flood."

The coach was quizzing him on a play formation. Mr. Jones thumbed the keys on his Sidekick, describing the formation he thought the play called for.

"Wrong answer," the coach typed back.

One of the biggest reasons to arrive on the campus early, Mr. Jones says, is to learn the team's complicated play formations and playbook, which he has found challenging.

"You spend a lot of time trying to figure out what everything means, and you don't have a clue what any of it means," Mr. Jones says. "It's like, Where's someone I can ask?"

Thankfully, he says, several upperclassmen who are on the campus for football training have taken time to help him and his teammates — time they probably could not spare in the spring or fall, he says.

Summer isn't early enough for some players. In recent years, the challenges of the college game — and a desire to make the starting lineup as freshmen — have led increasing numbers of football recruits to finish high school early and enroll in college in the spring. According to *USA Today*, 69 freshman players from the biggest conferences started during the spring this year, almost 100 percent more than three years ago.

Many academic officials, including John A. Blackburn, dean of undergraduate admission at the University of Virginia, disapprove of athletes starting that early.

"We don't really want students to start in the middle of the year," he told members of the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics at a meeting this year. "We have courses that are very sequential." Besides, he said, starting in the spring is "not fair for the student."

Two Georgia Tech football recruits enrolled in classes this spring, but Mr. Jones never considered starting that early.

"If you come in the middle of the year, you get thrown in the fire and asked to figure things out on your own," he says. "It takes a special person to do that."

Lessons Learned

By starting this summer, Mr. Jones says, he has had a chance to bond with his teammates in a much looser environment than he will face this fall. "In summer you can go out, stay up late — you don't have a curfew," he says. "It's been fun."

On this day, after morning class ends, he and three fellow freshman players walk through the deserted campus and sit down to lunch at Junior's, a popular student cafeteria where they are the only customers.

After two months of living in close quarters, they are comfortable enough to make fun of each other. At one point, Tyler Melton, a wide receiver from Houston, holds two styrofoam cups to the sides of his neck. "Who am I?" he asks. "Who's got a neck like a cobra?" Everyone turns to Roddy, and cracks up.

The players say they are happy to be on the campus, and talk about some of the lessons they have learned: Don't be late for practice. Don't fall asleep in class. And, perhaps most importantly, don't do anything stupid, because *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* is watching. (The paper has two bloggers filing live posts from Tech's practices this month.)

As for Mr. Jones's hopes of playing against the Fighting Irish, that is still undecided. He has made a favorable impression on the coaches so far, but there are plenty of talented upperclassmen ahead of him.

He seems OK with that. "One thing I've definitely learned this summer," he says, "is that everyone is as

physically gifted as I am."

<http://chronicle.com>

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Posted on Mon, Aug. 13, 2007

Right on schedule?

By WENDELL BARNHOUSE

Star-Telegram Staff Writer

Season Two of playing 12 regular-season games in college football proves that more nonconference games is like a bottle of ketchup -- 57 varieties of scheduling.

What many athletic directors in the six major conferences have discovered is finding that one Perfect Opponent is challenging.

"I never expected it to be so hard to find a 12th game, the fourth nonconference game," Missouri athletic director Mike Alden said.

The Really Big Schools have no trouble buying a home game -- paying a \$300,000 to \$500,000 guarantee to a low-level Division I-A team or a Division I-AA team. There are only about two dozen Really Big Schools so the others are left to scramble.

Here are some insights to the scheduling process:

How many: The number of nonconference games depends on the number of conference games.

The Mid-American Conference, for instance, has 13 teams and needs to schedule 58 non-league games. The Pacific-10 Conference plays nine conference games so its schools only needs to schedule three non-league games.

None of the 11 conferences can dictate how their members schedule their non-league contests, although "suggestions" can be made to enhance television appeal or the conference's national perception (if necessary).

How it works: For schools where the home attendance is regularly more than 85,000, a home game can produce between \$3 million and \$5 million in revenue.

With conference games split evenly between home and road, the Really Big Schools want to play at least three of their four nonconference games at home. That's why Michigan is opening at home against I-AA Appalachian State, why Ohio State is opening at home against I-AA Youngstown State.

The Medium-Sized Schools in BCS conferences often must settle for a two-two home-road split in nonconference games.

There is a delicate balance in scheduling for the Medium-Sized Schools. With an eight-game conference schedule looming, over-scheduling (playing teams of equal or better talent) in the nonconference can make the difference between a bowl game and a sub-.500 record.

Haves, have nots: The six Bowl Championship Series conferences -- Big 12, Atlantic Coast, Big East, Big Ten, Southeastern and Pac-10 -- will play a total of 259 nonconference games this season. Of those, 88 will be against teams from other BCS conferences, 131 against I-A teams from non-BCS leagues and 40 will be against I-AA teams.

The five non-BCS conferences -- Mountain West, Conference USA, Western Athletic, Mid-American and Sun Belt -- will play 217 nonconference games in 2007. Of those, 123 will be against teams from BCS conferences (and the majority of those games will be home games for the BCS teams). For instance, next season Utah will play at Michigan and receive a reported \$800,000.

The controversies: Several I-AA schools are shopping their availability. They strike a deal with a I-A opponent and then try to better the game guarantee by talking with another I-A school.

When the Division I-A athletic directors meet in Dallas in late September, Texas A&M athletic director Bill Byrne predicts that the I-AA shopping sprees will be a hot topic of conversation.

The Sun Belt Conference is playing 24 of its 38 non-league games against BCS teams. While the game-contract paydays help with the bottom line, commissioner Wright Waters is concerned that the won-lost line is being sacrificed by Sun Belt schools.

Hawaii, a member of the WAC, has long benefited from an NCAA rule that allows (because of travel considerations) it to schedule an extra game and for any of its state-side opponents to schedule an extra game.

Hawaii could only find one Division I-A team (Washington) willing to journey to Honolulu to face the Warriors and quarterback Colt Brennan, a Heisman Trophy candidate. Hawaii had to schedule two I-AA teams and still wound up with just 12 games.

Wyoming lost at Syracuse 40-34 in double overtime last season. Syracuse was scheduled to complete the home-and-home contract with a journey to Laramie in 2009. Last week, however, Syracuse sent Wyoming a check for \$200,000 -- the amount it took to buy its way out of the contract.

While the money is nice, Wyoming now is faced with finding a I-A opponent willing to make a road trip -- which probably will cost any team about \$100,000 -- to Laramie in 2009.

"It just shows a lot about the people you're dealing with," Wyoming coach Joe Glenn told the *Jackson Hole Star-Tribune*. "They had no intention, I don't think, of ever coming out here and playing.

"I've got a new favorite team this season. Anybody who beats Syracuse."

FILLING THE VOID

The breakdown of nonconference opponents in 2007 for the 11 Division I-A conferences:

BCS conferencesNon-conf. gamesversus BCSversus non-BCSversus I-AA

Big 12	48	12	28	8
Southeastern	48	15	23	10
Atlantic Coast	48	22	19	7
Big Ten	44	13	24	7
Big East	40	16	18	6
Pacific-10	31	10	19	2
Totals	259	88	131	40

Non-BCS conferences

Mountain West	36	17	14	5
Conference USA	48	25	15	8
Western Athletic	37	17	10	10
Mid-American	58	40	9	9
Sun Belt	38	24	9	5
Totals	217	123	57	37

2006 COMPARISON

How the 11 Division I-A conferences fared in nonconference play last season:

Conference Non-conf.versus BCSversus non-BCSversus I-AA

Big 12	33-15	3-8	20-6	10-1
Big Ten	33-12	7-7	20-3	6-2
Atlantic Coast	29-19	4-12	17-6	8-1
Southeastern	41-7	9-6	24-1	8-0
Big East	32-8	11-7	15-1	6-0
Pacific-10	22-9	7-6	10-3	5-0
Mountain West	16-20	3-10	9-8	4-2
Western Athletic	18-20	4-14	7-6	7-0
Conference USA	20-28	4-22	9-6	7-0
Mid-American	14-34	4-29	7-4	3-1
Sun Belt	10-30	0-24	5-6	5-0

Best nonconference record: Big East, 32-8.

Best record vs. BCS opponents: Big East, 11-7

Best record against non-BCS opponents: SEC, 24-1

Best record against I-AA opponents: SEC, 8-0

www.chicagotribune.com/business/chi-mon_football_0813aug13,0,771646.story

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Fans find home base

Some developers are betting that school spirit will move alumni, other supporters to look for housing close to campus, sporting events

By Mary Umberger

Tribune staff reporter

August 13, 2007

Dan Murphy is a Notre Dame fan. Boy, is he ever.

"I can honestly say I haven't missed listening to, watching or being at a Notre Dame football game since 1957. Never," said Murphy, 60.

And now he lives, on game days anyway, within walking distance of Notre Dame Stadium in South Bend, Ind.

Though Murphy resides most of the year in a Denver suburb, he and his wife, Michelle, recently built a house that is a 10-minute stroll from Notre Dame football action. They are part of an emerging niche in real estate that caters to fan fervor, not just in South Bend, but around the country.



Don't just live for the game, live at the game, at a house or condo close to the team you love. That is the pitch, and it seems to be working in developments at the campuses of the sports-crazed Southeastern Conference. Now, they are starting to find their way north, principally to South Bend, where campus-oriented building is feverish, though some doubt its sustainability.

Gameday Centers Southeastern, fresh from sold-out condominium projects at Auburn University, the University of Alabama, the University of Georgia and Florida State University, last year announced its intention to build a signature 190-unit, fan-oriented development in South Bend. But the deal didn't move forward, and its option recently expired on the land, said company President Brad Pager.

Last year Gameday Centers also scrapped plans to build a complex targeted to basketball fans at the University of Kentucky, saying height restrictions in Lexington made the project unfeasible. Pager said the firm still plans to build a Gameday condo project in Knoxville, Tenn., near the University of Tennessee.

The South Bend project would have been the company's first foray into the North.

"We're still committed to the city," said Pager. "The worst-case scenario is that we'll be looking for

another site."

He will have competition. Even as the nation's housing market slumps, about 1,300 new units are planned or under way close to Notre Dame, according to the South Bend Tribune.

Certainly, some of those homes, townhouses and condos will be purchased by local residents, university employees or families to house their student offspring. But a significant number is aimed at rabid alumni and other devotees of the 11,400-student school.

"Eighty percent of our owners will end up being rah-rah Notre Dame fanatics," predicted Chicagoan Mike Brenan, whose firm, Brenan Hospitality Management Group, bought a Ramada Inn there in 2005, renovated it and renamed it Waterford Estates Lodge. The 200-unit condo/hotel has rooms priced from about \$100,000 to about \$140,000. The company has sold 120 units, he said.

Brenan, a Notre Dame alumnus, said that even as the general real estate market sags, he sees demand in the college-fan niche. He got the idea for sports-themed condos when his hotel-management business stumbled in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks.

"It dawned on me: crazy, rich, fanatical football fans who don't live in close geographical proximity to a stadium. That's a perfect storm, a great marketing idea," he said.

In a few weeks his firm will launch a 144-unit development in Lansing, Mich., near Michigan State University, and he said it's looking at similar deals in Austin, Texas (University of Texas); State College, Pa. (Penn State); Ann Arbor, Mich. (University of Michigan); Lincoln, Neb. (University of Nebraska); and Gainesville, Fla. (University of Florida).

Schaumburg real estate industry consultant Tracy Cross sees possibilities in the niche.

"The fans, they don't go away," said Cross. "The [general] investor goes away, the primary home buyer can go away, but a fanatic football fan, you can't take that out of his blood."

Nonetheless, the South Bend marketplace can support only so much, Cross said.

"Once you make your play on a [football-oriented] condo, there's no backing off" for a developer, he said. "The market in South Bend is such that you couldn't bail out if the concept didn't work, or if the intensity of competition broke everybody apart."

The median home price in the South Bend area was \$92,000 in May, when sales were down about 10 percent from the year before, according to the local Realtor association.

"The overall market is sluggish, but the market within walking distance to Notre Dame has remained strong," said real estate agent Tim Murray, who is marketing the Cottages of Pendle Woods.

The 49-unit development, where the Murphys bought their house, is about two-thirds sold, with prices ranging from \$275,000 to \$600,000. About half the buyers have been fans looking for game-day proximity, he said.

The area around Notre Dame "has the dynamics of a second-home market as well as a primary-home market," Murray said. "If you go 2 or 3 miles, it's not as strong."

Jeff Gibney, South Bend's community and economic development director, said a study by Notre Dame estimated that 675,000 people from outside the area visited the campus in fiscal 2001, one-third of them on football Saturdays.

"The town fills up, it really does," Gibney said of the swelling of its 108,000 population. "A lot of people come here who can't get tickets. They tailgate, they party, they stay in the hotels. The theaters show the big games on-screen.

"At our airport here, there will be 150 private planes parked for every home game. There's a lot of money."

Brenan said that aside from a perpetual supply of eager alums, the key elements to fan-targeted housing are a town's size and its supply of hotel rooms.

"Columbus, Ohio, in our estimation, is too big, it has too many hotel rooms," he said of the home of Ohio State University. "Madison, Wis., is about as big as a city can be" within his concept, Brennan said.

The South Bend/Mishawaka area has 4,000 hotel rooms, according to local tourism data. But demand is fierce on football weekends: South Bend hotels quote rooms for the Sept. 1 football opener against Georgia Tech at double or nearly triple their ordinary rates, hitting \$500 a night at some.

"On football weekends, hotels are pricey. It's a pain to get one," said Des Moines attorney Ron Pogge, who said he attends two or three games a season.

But he bought two adjoining units at Waterford Estates Lodge because he found himself visiting the town more frequently to help his children move to and from the campus.

Friends and other family members whose children attend the school also use the rooms, occupying them about 25 days a year. Otherwise, the hotel rents out his rooms seven or eight days a month, Pogge said.

"A game weekend is equivalent to a mortgage for a whole month," said Lombard real estate investor Raj Alairys, who converted an apartment building into the Stadium Club, which has 52 condos selling for \$135,000 to about \$157,000. He says "a few" sales have gone to football fans. He owns a number of the units himself and rents them to students.

Alairys said the question of whether the South Bend market can absorb the development is a popular topic, but he is confident his units will split between parents who want student housing and fans looking for game-day accommodations.

"A perfect demographic for us would be a guy in his 50s who loves his college and has done well financially," said Gameday Centers' Pager.

"He probably has season tickets. He likes to come back, maybe also to basketball or baseball, and brings his family. It's an event, an experience. His kids meet him there, and they have the time of their lives, like at a lake home or weekend retreat."

That basically describes Murphy, though he isn't an alum and neither are any members of his family. He said he grew up listening to Notre Dame football on the radio, literally at his father's knee, while his dad taught him that the Fighting Irish exemplified teamwork and a positive attitude that he ought to emulate. He attends university events throughout the year and views his house in South Bend as a gathering place

for his extended family. His brother is building a home two doors down, he said.

Murray, the real estate agent, said die-hard fans tend to view the properties as recreational second homes, with the school as the recreation, so they tend to return during the year for university events.

"Having a place that close to Notre Dame is the same thought process for them that I would have in having a place by the beach," he said.

- - -

South Bend, Ind.

City population: 108,000

College town: Home to University of Notre Dame and its 11,400 students

Hottest housing area: 1,300 new units planned or under way near campus

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Top stories

Here are some of the newest TV stars in the Midwest: the Michigan Wolverines.

TONY DING: AP



Aug. 12, 2007, 6:32PM

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Big 12 will watch Big Ten's TV venture

Conference-only network called a better fit for some than others

By RACHEL COHEN
Associated Press

Not wanting to call the Big Ten a "guinea pig," the Big 12's Tim Allen chose his words carefully when describing how he'll closely observe the other conference's attempt to form its own television network.

"We're willing to let them be the people that test the marketplace," said Allen, an associate commissioner.

So are other conferences.

The Big Ten Network debuts Aug. 30, a year after the Mountain West launched its own channel, The Mtn. But other conferences aren't likely to follow their lead — at least not right away.

The simple reason is that for a conference to do so, it must wait for current TV contracts to end. While the Southeastern Conference is beginning to look into the possibility, officials from the other major football leagues said they don't believe starting their own network is the right move at the moment.

Each conference features a unique combination of culture, fan base and marketplace. How many fans live in the region? What other sports are the games competing with?

Those factors make a TV network a better fit for some than others, according to several conference administrators.

"Very few can do it," Big East commissioner Mike Tranghese said.

The Big Ten's commissioner, Jim Delany, believes his conference boasts the right mix of components.

"A lot of other places don't have the history, don't have the involvement in the region," he said.

His colleagues at other conferences agree — which is why they may be less likely to make the same decision.

"It would seem that the Big Ten has a better chance of making this work than any other conference when you consider their alumni numbers, demographics and geographic footprint," Atlantic Coast Conference commissioner John Swofford said through a spokeswoman.

"The Big Ten is the biggest story in those states," Tranghese said. "I've got to compete with the Yankees."

The Mountain West faced different circumstances. Conference officials were frustrated with their arrangement with ESPN and the network's proposal for an extension, commissioner Craig

RESOURCES



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Oklahoma State's Bobby Reid

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Thompson said. Some football games were being played on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Others were starting before 10 a.m. or after 8 p.m.

Three years ago, officials began to explore launching their own network. The channel has allowed the conference to reclaim control over games' dates and times.

If there's a conference that enjoys the kind of passionate following that would be conducive to a network's success, it's the SEC.

"The reaction of the marketplace to hearing that we're thinking about it has been extremely positive in every way," commissioner Mike Slive said.

Among the considerations the conference must take into account are its favorable current contract with CBS and the role of new media in any distribution plan, Slive said.

As broadband video becomes more accessible and popular, conferences may use it as a method of showing some games, said Steve Solomon, a former executive at the NHL and ABC Sports. Solomon is now the president of SJS Sports, a media and marketing company.

The new networks won't make a huge impact on how fans watch the conferences' most popular events: marquee football and men's basketball games. Creating their own channels allows conferences to provide greater exposure for Olympic sports and for non-athletic programming from their universities as well as highlight and preview shows.

The model used by the Big Ten and Mountain West does not involve every conference game being aired on their channels. Both maintain agreements with outside networks, on which most of the best football and men's basketball games are still televised.

Up to 41 Big Ten football games will be broadcast on ABC or ESPN this season. Versus or CSTV will air 23 Mountain West games.

It's those games not covered by traditional TV contracts that conferences must decide how to handle when they weigh whether to start their own network.

Conferences have given each school the option of forging agreements to broadcast those games locally. The Big 12's Allen and Pacific-10 associate commissioner Duane Lindberg said their conferences decided that approach remained the best fit for their members.

The greatest challenge for the two new networks has been distribution — ensuring that fans get the channel. Each has yet to reach an agreement with a major provider, the MWC with satellite systems and the Big Ten with cable giant Comcast.

Comcast and other cable providers have balked at the fee the Big Ten Network is requesting and its desire to be included on the basic tier. The key could be how strongly fans pressure their cable companies to add the channel, said Derek Baine, a senior analyst for SNL Kagan, a financial research firm.

Growing pains are normal for a new network. A quarter century ago, Allen recalled, the Big Eight started airing basketball games on a fledgling sports channel.

"We had people in western Kansas and parts of Missouri going nuts because they couldn't get games," he said.

That network was ESPN.

An SNL Kagan analysis predicts that the Big Ten Network will be making a profit by 2008 and earning an annual profit of \$105.7 million by 2012.

Other conferences will have much more precedent to study as they consider launching their own networks.

Said Solomon, "How the Big Ten plays out in time will have a major impact on what others do."

Here's a look at the other five BCS conferences and their TV deals:

Atlantic Coast Conference

All of the ACC's TV deals end after the 2009-10 school year. That "will give us an opportunity to watch the Big Ten channel and see what works, what challenges they have and how it fares," commissioner John Swofford said through a spokeswoman.

Big 12

The conference has already felt the impact of the Big Ten Network — commissioner Kevin Weiberg left in June to become the channel's vice president of university planning and development.

Before he left, the Big 12 in April announced new football and basketball contracts with ABC/ESPN that go through 2016.

"It made the best sense for us at that time," associate commissioner Tim Allen said. "Does it mean we won't do something differently down the road? Absolutely not."

The Big 12's deal with FSN ends after the 2011 season, and the language in the ABC/ESPN agreement would allow the conference to launch its own network then if it desired, Allen said.

Big East

The conference announced new football and basketball contracts with ESPN last year that go through 2013.

The Big East recently underwent a reorganization after three schools left for the ACC.

"We weren't in a position at this point of our development to put ourselves at risk," commissioner Mike Tranchese said.

Pacific-10

The conference's football deal goes through 2011. Its basketball contract goes through 2012.

Associate commissioner Duane Lindberg said the Pac-10 considered launching its own network but decided to maintain the status quo.

"At that point, we felt that both based on our own position and then obviously the positions of marketplace at the time that that was the strategy we would employ," he said.

Southeastern Conference

The conference's contracts end after the 2008-09 school year. The SEC is in the preliminary stages of evaluating the possibility of forming a network, commissioner Mike Slive said. Conference officials will begin to look at the issue more closely the next few months.

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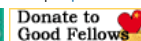


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Aug 13, 2007

Problems with NBA official a wake-up call to SEC

By Christopher Walsh
Sports Writer

When the question was raised at the recent SEC Media Days in Hoover, University of South Carolina coach Steve Spurrier couldn't help but smile and have a little fun despite the seriousness of the issue.

After all, he was reprimanded last November for statements made about SEC officiating, and had a fierce reputation at Florida for frequently calling the league office to question and dispute calls. So it was fitting when Spurrier was asked if he was concerned whether something like the ongoing officiating scandal in the NBA could occur in the SEC.

"I've probably been accused of saying something like that a couple of times," he said jokingly. "But, yeah, we'll all have to be careful now of not saying, 'It appeared that guy had money on the game.' You can't say that anymore. I don't know if I've ever said that before. There were a few games, not many. There's been a few lousily called games that deserved an investigation."

He then lost the laugh.

"But that's why Commissioner [Mike] Slive and [SEC coordinator of football officials] Rogers Redding, that's their responsibility," Spurrier continued. "I think because of what happened in the NBA, this will really heighten all the security and checking on guys' background all the time, what they're doing. Referees really need to be scrutinized probably more so than us coaches are scrutinized."

Spurrier was referring to allegations that former NBA referee Tim Donaghy bet on league games during the past two seasons, including some of those he officiated.

Not only did the FBI investigation severely damage the league's credibility, but sent severe shock waves through the sports world.

Slive agreed with Spurrier's assessment. In addition to describing it as a wake-up call, he confirmed the SEC will likely start conducting background checks on all of its football officials. The Big Ten already does so, and the ACC recently announced it will do likewise.

Most SEC men's basketball officials have already undergone background checks because the NCAA mandates them for those working its postseason tournament. It only recently started doing so for football bowl games.

"I think that's an area we'll explore and I think there's a high probability we'll initiate some background checks there," Slive said.

The issue is expected to be at the forefront of the upcoming meeting of SEC athletic directors in Orlando, although quality control of officiating is already a never-ending concern.

For example, two years ago the SEC reassigned side judge Bobby Moreau for safety reasons because he

received death threats following a controversial call in the 2004 Florida at Tennessee game.

Specifically, Moreau flagged Florida receiver Dallas Baker for a personal foul late in Tennessee's 30-28 victory, and officials also mistakenly stopped the clock after the penalty with 55 seconds remaining, which gave Tennessee a better chance to set up James Wilhoit's 50-yard field goal with 6 seconds left on the clock.

Moreau, a 12-year veteran at that point, later acknowledged he should have called a double foul. He was suspended for two weeks.

Incidentally, Moreau's a former LSU player and the SEC has a rule specifying officials are not allowed to work games involving their alma maters or former coaches. That also came into play recently due to incorrect reports that Wally Hough, who is about to enter his 10th season as an SEC umpire, is the president of the Putnam County Gator Club, an affiliate of the Florida alumni association.

Hough is a former Florida offensive lineman.

"If I didn't trust these guys, I wouldn't have them," Redding said. "It's just that simple."

But even Redding admits no conference can come close to the NBA's preventive measures and ability to monitor its officials.

In addition to attending seminars during training camp, NBA officials are visited by security personnel and specifically told that not only are they prohibited from gambling or providing anyone pertinent information, they can't even give anyone outside of their immediate family their travel or work schedules.

NBA officials are not allowed to enter casinos (even though the league held last year's All-Star Game in Las Vegas), and can only wager on horses during the offseason,

The background check, conducted each year by the Arkin Group (under the guidance of Jack Devine, former chief of worldwide operations for the CIA), includes credit cards, bank accounts, any and all litigation, property records and debt.

Since the 2003-04 season the league has used an observer system in which every game is charted and reviewed. This year it started running checks on the people doing the checking, and Major League Baseball is following suit.

"I can tell you that this is the most serious situation and worst situation that I have ever experienced either as a fan of the NBA, a lawyer for the NBA or a commissioner of the NBA," Stern said during a recent press conference. "And we take our obligation to our fans in this matter very, very seriously, and I can stand here today and pledge that we will do every look back possible to analyze our processes and seek the best advice possible to see if there are changes that should be made and procedures that should be implemented to continue to assure fans that we are doing the best we possibly can."

The NBA security department, which oversees players in the NBA, WNBA and developmental leagues in addition to officials, is headed by former FBI head Bernie Tolbert. It employs former members of the U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Army, New York Police Department and New York State Police Investigation. There's also a security network that includes a representative to every NBA team.

Out-of-house, the NBA has a consultant in Las Vegas, who monitors dubious wagers and extreme line

changes, and it keeps in touch with the FBI, the DEA and the Homeland Security Department in relation to gambling, along with the Nevada Gaming Board.

Yet despite all the precautions, the NBA is still facing a federal inquiry (although so is baseball with steroids and football due to Michael Vick), regarding a former employee who made \$260,000 last season.

“The NBA has a significant background check program, and, notwithstanding that, it comes down to the question of honor, trust and integrity, and keeping one’s ear to the ground,” Slive said.

He later added: “We all feel the commissioner’s pain. The integrity of athletic contests is critical. I feel badly for him.”

Other sports have taken other steps, yet had their share of scandals too.

For example, the NHL’s Hockey Operations Department monitors each game from the league headquarters, and evaluates each call both in real time and later afterward.

Three years ago, reports indicated that director of officiating Andy Van Hellemond borrowed money from officials he supervised. When questions arose about whether those who loaned him money received better playoff assignments, Van Hellemond, a Hall of Fame referee, paid back the loans and resigned.

Although the most popular form of sports gambling is betting on the NFL, the league has had more success avoiding scandals than most other professional sports.

Specific to its officials, not only does the NFL conduct background checks on every official when he enters the league, and periodically thereafter, but the collective bargaining agreement prohibits them from speaking engagements in cities “where in-house casinos are located.”

However, like the NFL, college football officials are not full-time employees, which can help serve as a deterrent.

“These officials, for them, this is an abdication,” Redding said. “They’re all in other careers. Not only would they risk losing their football ... these guys, many of them are professionals. We have dentists and doctors and insurance executives. They would run great risk of damaging their careers in their real lives.”

The NCAA, of course, has been hardly immune to gambling issues, although the most popular incidents have involved unpaid student-athletes.

Basketball, for example, only has to look at Kentucky, which after winning the national championship in 1951 suspended the 1952-53 season due to a point-shaving scandal. It came on the heels of another scheme involving a number of teams mostly in the New York area.

In 1997, Arizona State players Stevin Smith and Isaac Burton Jr. pled guilty to charges of conspiracy to commit sports bribery in a point-shaving scheme. Tulane gave up basketball for four years after a scandal in 1985 which included John “Hot Rod” Williams. Boston College’s Rick Kuhn and four others were found guilty of conspiring to shave points during the 1978-79 season.

Has anyone heard from Florida point guard Teddy Dupay lately? Although he was a key early recruit for

Billy Donovan, and helped lead the Gators to the national championship game, being in the center of a gambling investigation contributed to an early departure from the sport.

In football, 13 Boston College football players were suspended in 1996 for betting on college, football and baseball games. Two bet against their own team in a loss against Syracuse. Soon after, 11 Northwestern players were changed following a federal government investigation.

Adding to the potential for a major crisis was a 2003 survey of 21,000 anonymous student-athletes by the NCAA, in which two percent of men's basketball and football players said they had been asked to affect the outcome of a game, and one percent of football players had taken money to play poorly in a game.

If the NCAA did a similar survey of its officials, the results weren't released.

"I'm very comfortable with the vigilance that we have with regards to officials, getting recommendations from the community and kind of thing," Redding said. "I think the message I would like to deliver here is that I have absolute trust in the integrity of our officials, but having said that this is a wake up call for all of us, so that we're vigilant about making sure that the people we get are of high character, and also that they are sensitized to being approached by gamblers or whatever.

"For us it's a matter of sort of paying closer attention to what we've been doing all along."

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