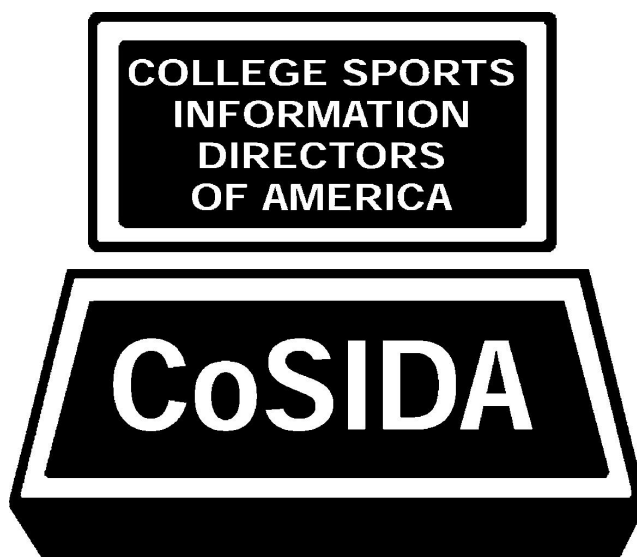


CoSIDA NEWS

Intercollegiate Athletics News and Issues from Around the Nation



SEPTEMBER 29, 2006

Athletics

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v53/i06/06a04602.htm>

From the issue dated September 29, 2006

SIDELINES

U. of Michigan Asks Athletes to Pledge Good Conduct on Social-Networking Sites

By STU WOO

The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor has asked all its varsity athletes to sign a statement pledging good conduct on social-networking Web sites like Facebook and MySpace.

The policy, which went into effect on August 1, states that athletes must maintain a "high standard of honor and dignity" reflective of the university's athletics program when posting on such sites, and that any behavior on the sites that violates university or team rules could result in "team suspension, termination from the varsity team, and reduction or nonrenewal of any athletic scholarships."

Several college-sports programs came under fire last spring after athletes posted online pictures of team hazing rituals. Since then many colleges have been weighing how to prevent their athletes from posting such embarrassing photographs and information in public forums.

Michigan's policy was created not in response to the online depictions of hazing incidents but as a tool to educate students about the dangers of putting personal information on public sites, said Bruce M. Madej, an associate athletics director.

"We had a sense of urgency to make sure our administrators and athletes know what's out there and how these social-networking sites are being used," he said.

In addition to signing the policy, the roughly 800 varsity athletes, along with all coaches and athletics officials, attended a mandatory lecture about online safety this month.

Judy Van Horn, an associate athletics director at Michigan, said every athlete had signed the pledge without complaint. She did not say if there would have been any consequences for students who refused to sign.

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THE ENQUIRER

Last Updated: 5:21 am | Friday, September 29, 2006

The Rock of Western Hills Mustangs' coach hits the mean streets at night

BY JOHN ERARDI | ENQUIRER STAFF WRITER

By day, he coaches the Western Hills High School football team.

By night, he fights crime on the streets of East and West Price Hill.

At 6-foot-3 and 245 pounds, Cincinnati Police Sgt. Calvin Johnson still looks as he did when he played linebacker at Austin Peay State University in Tennessee.

But where most coaches' influence ends, Coach Cal J's begins.

"Trust, care and commitment - that's what he's taught us," senior wide receiver David Shavers says. "If you have all three of those things in a person, you hitch yourself to them."

Coach Cal J will be pushing his Mustangs hard when they meet Dayton's Dunbar on Saturday. But he isn't just a coach, and coaching isn't what his players likely will remember most.

Coach Cal J takes the team on a weeklong summer camp where they run the trust-your-partner rope course. A couple of Saturday mornings each season, the Mustangs pick up garbage on Glenway Avenue, from West High to Elder.

On the night of the Elder game, in full uniform, they'll walk the 4 miles to and from "The Pit" stadium, helmets proudly in hand.

"It's not about the X's and O's," Coach Cal J tells them. "It's about the Jims and the Joes."

People are always coming up to Coach Cal J and telling him he looks like former wrestler-turned-actor Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson.

That attention has increased in the past two weeks since The Rock's new movie, "Gridiron Gang," hit the screen. It's based on a true story: a tough-love football coach molds a group of teen-aged felons into a successful football team. The name of their team? The Mustangs.

Rock, er, Coach Cal won't say how old he is. But 16 years ago, he was fresh out of college when his agent was set to line up a tryout with the Bengals. When Johnson got word he had passed the police exam - and the police department said it wasn't waiting for Bengal tryouts - he went to work.

LEADS A LIFE OF DANGER

Subject chasing children with a gun.

Wells Street.

As a patrolling, supervising, police sergeant, Johnson is a foreman in the middle of the action, monitoring the dispatch radio, sifting through the calls in his head, high-tailing it to the worst of them.

Johnson patrols the same neighborhoods where his players live. He's also on call as a team leader of a Cincinnati

SWAT outfit.

"Don't want to run into Coach Cal J out on the street," sophomore tailback Darren Alexander says. "Wouldn't be good. We stay off the streets."

Johnson is married to his college sweetheart, Alicia, a former volleyball player he calls the athlete in the family. They have three young daughters.

"Coach Cal J has told us we have to carry on without him, if he were to get killed some night," Shavers says. "We know what can happen. We see it on the news. But we don't want to think it can happen to him."

It did almost happen to him five years ago, on July 3, 2001, a few months after the April riots in Cincinnati.

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REAL LIFE: DANA KNIGHT INDIANAPOLIS STAR

Experts say it's best to avoid e-mail if it can be misinterpreted

You trot into the office in a fine mood. Must be the scrambled eggs and bacon (and the extra dose of Matt Lauer) you had for breakfast. You are ready to brighten someone's day.

How about sending an e-mail to your co-worker who won employee of the month yesterday?

"Geez. You are so awesome. I'm proud," you write humbly, imagining the smile that will spread across his face as he reads your praise.

What you fail to realize is that you have multiple personalities, a workplace disorder also known as e-mail schizophrenia. Minutes later, inside the cubicle of your award-winning co-worker, a guy is seething as he interprets your note as a mean jab, a sarcastic you-didn't-deserve-the-award message.

E-mail schizophrenia -- the multiple personalities or tones one message can have depending on who reads it -- is rampant in the workplace. For every message you send, there is a 50 percent chance the intended tone of the e-mail will be misinterpreted, according to research published in *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

"I've given up e-mail as a casual form of communication altogether," says Dusty Riggins, a technology manager. Yes. Even a tech geek has found fault in this form of workplace talking.

Riggins says if he needs a file from someone or a time for a meeting, he will send an e-mail. If he needs to ask the boss why a project was done a certain way or a co-worker to help him out more, he reverts to old-fashioned talking in person.

E-mail is a tricky thing. Senders assume the emotion in their message is obvious because they "hear" the tone in their minds as they write it, the study says. The receivers, however, can't read minds and interpret the message based on their own moods and expectations.

I think it's safe to say e-mail is an emotional workplace hazard. It turns offices into high schools with workers gossiping about he-said/she-said kinds of things. It leaves hurt feelings and confused souls lingering in break rooms eating junk food.

Even worse, it sucks the true value of face-to-face communication right out of the office. Now wouldn't it have been better if you had trotted your happy, bacon-and-egg-filled booty into the co-worker's cubicle, offered a handshake, a smile and a "Congratulations on your award!"?

That can't be so easily misinterpreted. And it can save everyone much misery, says Judith Glaser, author of *"The DNA of Leadership: Leverage Your Instincts to Communicate, Differentiate, Innovate."*

One misread message can turn into hours of lost productivity.

"What happens is, it puts the focus on the inside, instead of the outside, catering to clients and customers," she says. Glaser doesn't suggest ditching e-mail altogether, but suggests a few tips for using it:

If you are going to send an e-mail that is questionable, have a trusted person read it and see what tone he or she interprets.

If you're just e-mailing to get something off your chest, write it in a draft form. Don't send.

If a serious situation is connected to an e-mail, sit with the message an hour before sending it. Take a break, then reread it. Even you may interpret it differently than you originally intended.

Call Dana Knight at (317) 444-6012 or e-mail her at dana.knight@indystar.com.



Posted on Fri, Sep. 29, 2006

UM COACHES

Support systems strongest at home

Whether consoling their husbands or sheltering their families from criticism, the wives of the UM football coaching staff have their hands full these days.

BY MICHELLE KAUFMAN
mkaufman@MiamiHerald.com

There aren't too many places in South Florida these days where University of Miami football coach Larry Coker and his staff can walk in for dinner and feel universally loved, but there is one -- the Edgerrin James Meeting Room, adjacent to the coaches' offices.

It is there that every Monday evening the coaches gather with their wives and children for a catered meal, one of the few times during the week the coaches can be with their families. It rarely lasts more than an hour, but that hour has become therapeutic and priceless for the beleaguered Coker and his assistants, whose Hurricanes are 1-2 heading into Saturday's game against Houston.

'Last Monday, after the Louisville loss, one of our assistants walked into family dinner and said, 'It's so nice to see friendly faces,'" said Dianna Coker, the head coach's wife. "They need to know we support them, love them and are with them through their trials and tribulations. Those young assistants need to hear their children's laughter. We wives need to let our husbands know that we will weather the storms with them."

Dianna Coker doesn't know exactly what they're saying about her husband on sports talk radio, because she refuses to tune in. Thirty-five years of marriage to a football coach have taught her to keep her radio dial set to music stations. But she hears others talk about what they're hearing, and she tries to block it out.

"I don't listen to talk radio, no way," she said. "It's not something a coach's wife or family member should do. Some of that stuff on radio has gotten so bad and negative. It's not healthy for anyone. I'm not sure why people like it. The only thing I do listen to with Larry is the post-game with Don Bailey, and even that gets pretty heated at times. I do read the newspaper, and I understand people are entitled to their opinions, but lately, some of those opinions have been a little hard to swallow."

INTERNET RANTS

The vitriol on Internet message boards is even more vicious -- bordering on vile. A UM fan forum on Wednesday had a message that read: "If Coker pulls a T.O. and is successful [a reference to early reports that Terrell Owens had attempted suicide], do we still have to pay the remainder of this contract to his wife or kids?"

Those are the kinds of comments coaches' wives try to shield from their children, but sometimes the kids are exposed to harsh criticism of their fathers -- particularly in the stands on game day. When boisterous fans call the coach names, question his intelligence -- and worse -- they probably don't realize that the coach's family might be sitting two rows away.

UM quarterbacks coach Todd Berry and his wife, Lisa, have one daughter who is a college sophomore at Tulsa, and another who is in prekindergarten. Their older daughter has heard plenty of things they would rather she not have heard, but they warned her early.

"We taught her at a young age that our family is in a fishbowl, and that being a coach's daughter has its privileges, but it has disadvantages, too," Lisa Berry said. "We told her never to turn on talk radio during the football season, that it's poison, and never to disrespect anyone, even if that person said something really mean about her daddy."

The Berry's younger daughter has no clue that Coker is on the hot seat, or that Saturday's game is critical.

"Our little one's oblivious, and proud as can be to go around town in her Canes cheerleading outfit," Lisa Berry said. "She's going to love her daddy and have fun at the games regardless of the scoreboard. I'm not trying to make light of wins and losses, because believe me, the coaches and players want to win even more than the fans. But we try to keep things in perspective."

CHECKING IN

Like Coach Coker, who is concerned about the well-being of his staff, his wife feels responsible for the assistants' wives. She stays in close contact with them, especially after losses.

"I called each of the wives after our losses to make sure they were OK," Dianna Coker said. ``Some of the wives are veterans, but some are new, so maybe they haven't been through this kind of thing before."

Coker is organizing a luncheon for the wives next month and has invited Chris Riley, wife of Heat coach Pat Riley, to be the guest speaker. ``I want our wives to see that they're not alone, that other women have been down this road."

The Cokers try not to talk about football when they're alone. They have date night once a week, and conversation centers on their twin grandchildren, the health of Coker's elderly mother and current events.

"I never ask him what play he's going to run or who's going to start at whatever position," Dianna Coker said. ``I keep things light, because it's so heavy for him everywhere else."

Larry Coker said sometimes the criticism is harder on his wife than on him.

'I can isolate myself here with my coaches and players, but she's out there in the community and people come up and say, `Did you hear what they said about your husband today?' " Larry Coker said. ``I don't care what people say about me, because this isn't about me. This is about the kids. They came here for greatness and they deserve better than we've done so far, and I'm going to do whatever I can to give them that chance. The best way to quiet the critics is to win."

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September 29, 2006

Mobile ESPN to End Service Aimed at Sports Customers

By [KEN BELSON](#)

Unable to attract enough customers, Mobile ESPN said yesterday that it would shut its mobile phone service aimed at sports fans at the end of the year. The company said it would focus instead on selling its real-time scores and video to existing cellular providers.

The shift in strategy is a sign of the difficulty in attracting new cellular customers at a time when more than 70 percent of consumers already have an existing plan. Despite carrying exclusive material, Mobile ESPN was unable to compete with Cingular Wireless and other national carriers that offer customers the option of paying as little as \$10 a month to join family plans.

National carriers, particularly [Sprint Nextel](#), have also been providing sports content to their customers — often free or for a few dollars a month. The cheapest monthly plan from Mobile ESPN, by contrast, is \$40 a month.

Getting consumers to abandon their current calling plan and switch to ESPN's "proved to be harder than we assumed," said Salil Mehta, executive vice president for ESPN Enterprises. "What you're hearing from us now is that by licensing the product you reduce a significant number of barriers" to finding customers.

Like Virgin Mobile, Amp'd Mobile and others, Mobile ESPN, which began service nine months ago, has been leasing space on the cellular networks of big carriers. ESPN sold the handsets and subscription plans and controlled the marketing and billing. The handsets and plans were sold at [Best Buy](#) and Sprint Nextel stores.

Mr. Mehta declined to say how many customers Mobile ESPN customers had, or how much or whether the venture lost money. The [Walt Disney Company](#), ESPN's parent company, invested \$150 million in Mobile ESPN and a Disney-branded phone service. Mr. Mehta said customers would get refunds on the handsets they purchased.

Mobile ESPN will now focus on licensing its content to the country's largest cellphone carriers to reach tens of millions of their subscribers. Mr. Mehta said his company was talking to the four largest cellphone carriers: Cingular, [Verizon](#) Wireless, Sprint Nextel and T-Mobile.

Mr. Mehta said the new licensed service could be available within the next six months. Analysts said

the service could be similar to premium-tier programming, like movie channels, that consumers buy from cable companies for an extra monthly fee. Mobile ESPN might also give away some things, like team statistics, but generate income by selling advertisements on their pages.

“The ESPN brand will remain strong, but they don’t need to be an operator to reach people,” said John Puterbaugh, chief executive of Nellymoser, a software company that helps content providers get their products to cellphone carriers. “Consumers love premium content, but no one wants to leave Cingular or Verizon Wireless.”

Once Mobile ESPN completes its transition, it will employ about one-third of the approximately 100 people who now work for the venture.

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Replaygate affects Texas' title hopes, too Facing one-loss OU might be a hurdle

By George Schroeder
The Oklahoman

After a few days away, it's time to plunge back into the continuing saga of your least favorite conspiracy — oops, make that controversy.

Yes, Replaygate revisited. Because it's not going away.

Each week, as long as they continue to win, it will tag along as a reminder. So who could blame them if they were hopping mad about what those inept Pac-10 officials did to their season?

Yep, that's right. Upon further review, it's looking less and less likely Mack Brown and the Longhorns will be defending their national title.

What, you thought we were talking about the Sooners?

OK, them too.

Thanks to Gordon Riese, David Cutaia and company, Oklahoma's chances at a national title are almost nil. Mired in the bottom half of the Top 25, formerly faint hopes might now be futile.

But Texas might have been hurt almost as much.

Already saddled with one loss, the 'Horns desperately need all the help they can get.

Winning out is essential. Having OU roll unbeaten into Dallas — and then remain once-beaten the rest of the way — was vital to the revised itinerary.

Mack Brown and various computer gurus would tell you it's not over. Not in September, and not for either team. And they would be correct.

But it's not an easy road.

So let's skip past the obvious deficiencies — OU can't tackle, and Texas doesn't have Vince — that might derail their best-case scenarios. For fun, let's play out the season without any more losses.

First, Texas. The Longhorns weren't penalized too harshly for the loss to top-ranked Ohio State. As the highest-ranked one-loss team (and as long as the Buckeyes keep winning), seventh-ranked Texas sits well within striking distance if higher-ranked teams falter.

But here's the unwanted crease in that road map to glory: Every time the Longhorns win a conference game, they could lose ground.

Let's be honest: Only Pac-10 officials have taken more hits than the Big 12.

The Big 12 is 0-9 against ranked teams (0-10 if you count Iowa State's loss to Texas last Saturday), and 3-8 against teams from other BCS conferences. All five of the other BCS conferences had better records.

Winning in the Big 12 or winning the Big 12 isn't going to do much for anyone. Not this year. The Big 12 is — how to put this delicately — bad.

Such talk frustrates Mack Brown, of course.

"Very unfair," he says, insisting "perceptions can change by the hour in college football."

BCS guru Jerry Palm says the Longhorns aren't out of the national title chase. But Palm offers a remedy for their problem, anyway.

"If you win by 30 every week, your competition isn't gonna matter," he says. "It's how you deal with bad competition."

But say Texas whips 'em all, and OU doesn't lose again after Oct. 7. How far would the Sooners drop in the polls after a loss to the 'Horns, and how far might they climb the rest of the way — beating that same inferior competition?

And if it came down to a beauty contest with Auburn (or another team playing in a league with teeth), what would Texas' signature win be worth?

Now, for OU. Let's pretend the offense continues to develop and the defense actually starts tackling and somehow the Sooners go unbeaten the rest of the way.

From his headquarters in Hugo, BCS numbers-cruncher Richard Billingsley sees opportunity for OU to land in the No. 2 position, maybe.

But it would be the longest shot ever.

How many one-loss teams have ascended from No. 17 in Week 4 (or No. 16 in Week 5)? Beating Texas would bump the Sooners up in the rankings, maybe even into the Top 10. But why would OU be more attractive than, say, Auburn?

See the problem? Even if they're really, really good, the Longhorns will probably be dragged down by the Big 12. Even if they don't lose again, the Sooners can't rise high enough.

And Replaygate is as much to blame as anything else.

Orlando Sentinel

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/sports/college/gators/orl-endow2206sep22,0,3418513.story?coll=orl-sports-headlines-gators>

UF, FSU building scholarship endowments

The athletic programs are working to ensure funds for tuition for all athletes who receive sports grants.

Emily Badger and Dave Curtis
Sentinel Staff Writer

September 22, 2006

A week from tonight, more than 1,000 Gators boosters will enjoy a black-tie event at the O'Connell Center. The \$50,000-per-table event celebrates the 100th anniversary of Florida football, but there's a deeper purpose behind the pricey ticket.

The estimated \$5 million raised will go toward endowing athletic scholarships at the school. It also will kick off a campaign UF officials hope will raise about \$37 million in the next five years to endow the tuition portion of every athletic scholarship at the school.

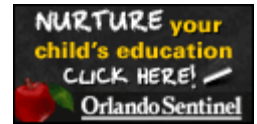
Later this fall, Florida State will hold a similar event -- an Alan Jackson concert at the Tallahassee Civic Center -- to launch its own endowment campaign. The timing isn't coincidental. The state's two flagship public universities have completed facility overhauls that had pushed the focus away from scholarship fund-raising for the past 20 years.

Both schools are preparing to tackle tuition costs, the biggest challenge of the next era. If they succeed in fully endowing their scholarships, it will be the most significant legacy left for their athletic departments for generations to come. In major-college athletics, only Stanford, with a scholarship endowment of about \$375 million, comes close to funding every part of every scholarship.

"We're trying to secure our future in athletics," UF President Bernie Machen said. "The best way for us to do that is to put money into our endowment for scholarships."

Today, scholarship costs are the greatest concern for both athletic departments. From game revenues and private donations, each school's athletic department cuts a check to the university for each athlete's tuition, room, board, books and fees. That reality is an unknown among most fans and donors -- and even the athletes themselves -- who see most of their money funneled toward more tangible projects, such as a new softball complex or a lacrosse field.

"We constantly have to let people know that scholarships aren't free," said Jerry Kutz, a vice president with Seminole Boosters. "The vast majority of our donors don't understand that. We pay the exact same cost for our



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student-athletes as they do for their children."

Both schools spend about \$7 million annually on athletic scholarships, which range between \$14,000 and \$16,000 each for in-state students and \$29,000 and \$36,000 each for out-of-state students.

In 1979, FSU spent \$1 million on athletic scholarships; Seminole Boosters estimate that number could rise to \$10 million by the end of the decade. With tuition continuing to rise and gender-equity issues leaving both schools likely to add women's sports -- UF already has announced women's lacrosse will start in 2010 -- those costs will climb.

An endowment would sit in the bank indefinitely, with the schools using earned interest -- typically about 5 percent per year -- to cover scholarship costs. At the current tuition rate, that means FSU and UF would need about \$140 million to \$150 million to support the scholarships without touching the initial seed money. Additional interest then would be regenerated each year.

A full endowment would give both schools a level of financial security that would be insulated from the ebb and flow of alumni giving. UF is trying to take advantage of goodwill over a national basketball title and a resurgent football program. FSU would be prepared in the event Bobby Bowden's successor isn't as successful and donations drop off.

Eventually, money now being spent on scholarships could be used to fund facilities, salaries and to pay down existing debt -- all bonus features that constitute a competitive edge in college athletics.

"One of the things we're proud about at Florida State is that the university does not subsidize the athletic program," said Russ Morcom, chair of Seminole Boosters. "It stands on its own from ticket sales, donations and so forth, so that academics aren't affected. That is not true at all universities, and by having this endowment, that helps us support ourselves."

But it won't support either school's scholarship costs forever. If UF hits its \$65 million campaign goal, that would provide only enough interest for the tuition portion of the scholarships. Room, board, books and fees still would come from the athletic department.

"That's a mission that is never complete," said Phil Pharr, senior director of development for Gator Boosters. "You can put a stopping point on it. But keep in mind that there's always going to be a need to raise money."

Both schools already have some individually endowed scholarships named for donors or earmarked for a specific sport or position. But the challenge of a broader campaign is to convince alumni to give to a cause they can't see. The universities are asking them to contribute to a bank account, which is less glamorous than contributing to an arena renovation or a new stadium.

"You have to put the players in front of them," Kutz said. "They are our sales people. They are our bricks and mortar."

The problem of rising tuition shows no sign of going away. So that \$150 million mark could become \$200 million as university presidents continue pushing for tuition increases to improve the schools in a way that has nothing to do with athletics.

"I think our athletic department probably feels like, 'Gee, whiz, we're out there doing this to ourselves,'" FSU President T.K. Wetherell said. "But I don't think Bernie and I are going to back off, so it becomes even more critical in my mind for them to raise this money."

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Posted on Fri, Sep. 29, 2006

A high profile raising questions

American Christian has a new face as a prep school. Some wonder about its academics.

By Jeff McLane
Inquirer Staff Writer

Bordering Upper Chichester and Aston Townships along Route 452 in Delaware County, American Christian School is a low-profile private school preparing to be a major player in scholastic sports.

American Christian is also home to one of the top-ranked high school basketball players in the country.

There's both a benefit and a burden in having a player like Tyreke Evans, a 6-foot-5 junior guard with unquestioned talent.

With exposure comes increased enrollment, building additions and sneaker contracts. On the flip side are opponents' envy, media scrutiny, and a recent woe - questions about its curriculum.

In June, following his dismissal after one year as head basketball coach, Ray Carroll publicly criticized American Christian's academic standards for many of his former players, including Evans.

Carroll, a former Chester High and Fordham University guard, remains adamant in his convictions.

"I don't condone what they are doing and don't want to be a part of their philosophy," said Carroll, also a former teacher at American Christian.

His condemnation came during a critical time for the scholastic basketball community, especially since American Christian - with students in kindergarten through 12th grade - is now a prep school. In July, the NCAA ended a months-long investigation into prep schools with questionable teaching methods.

The NCAA removed 16 so-called "diploma mills" from its Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse list, and placed an additional 22 schools - including North Philadelphia's Lutheran Christian Academy - on a probationary list, subject to further review.

"We've never been investigated by the NCAA," said Vicki Conteh, American Christian's school administrator. "We've had 89 to 91 percent of our students go on to colleges. At other school systems, as long as you show up for school, do your homework, and are quiet, you're getting passed through the system. That's not what we're about."

Carroll's criticism is directed at American Christian's mastery program, a religious-themed curriculum that offers computer-based learning. The pace of the program is dictated by an individual's ability to "master" the courses, thus allowing students of various levels to work alongside each other.

American Christian's mainstream program is a traditional, textbook-based curriculum with a classroom of students learning at the same speed.

"The mastery program - which 90 percent of my players were in - does not qualify an athlete for the Clearinghouse," said Carroll, who taught in the mainstream program. "It does not prepare him to pass the SATs. It's the same reason why Lutheran [Christian] was going to be shut down."

The NCAA investigated Philadelphia's Lutheran Christian last spring and it is still under scrutiny, but there have been no sanctions against the school.

American Christian, which before this academic year had about 50 students of high-school age in a total enrollment of 230, is on the NCAA Clearinghouse and is registered with the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

"We want to see every single student successful with their education," said Jill Wingert, the school's principal. "And that's been a tool we've been able to use with the mastery center. It's a building block to get them where they need to be."

Carroll, who coached the Eagles to a 22-6 record last season, said that the mastery program - which American Christian has used since 2004 - fails to advance students with proficiency levels several years below their grade. His suspicions arose when he found

several of his players sleeping in class or surfing the Internet instead of studying. He also faulted American Christian for not having a full-time guidance counselor.

"They're not properly facilitating the kids' lives," Carroll said. "And when I say that, I say that as a Christian school they should have God first, academics second and basketball third. They have their priorities totally out of order."

American Christian officials refused to discuss Carroll's departure, except to say they wished him the best. They also couldn't directly address individual students, citing privacy laws.

"If we're a diploma mill, then why do we have the mastery program?" Wingert said. "I don't know anything about basketball, but if that were my mind-set - that I'm saying, 'Wow, I just want to get these kids through and I don't care' - I would just put them in the mainstream."

•

Nasir Robinson, a highly recruited 6-5 junior guard, attended American Christian before transferring to Chester High in July. Robinson said that his reasons for leaving American Christian were strictly basketball-related.

"I wanted to do my own thing," said Robinson, who added that he didn't see Carroll's dismissal coming. "I was surprised, because we accomplished a lot of stuff last year," Robinson said of the team's 22-6 record. "How could you fire him after that?"

American Christian, which lost another transfer in Charles White to Simon Gratz High, has several students who were brought in by new coach Tony Bergeron this school year. The recruiting director of the Five-Star Basketball Camp, Bergeron coached at Wings Academy in New York last year.

"A kid with gaps in his transcripts - American Christian is not the place for him," Bergeron said. "It's too hard academically. It's too challenging. It's more for somebody... that may want to change over into a smaller environment with more academic support and for athletic programs, which they are doing a great job now of building up."

Conteh said that American Christian has strict guidelines for accepting transfers and that prospective transfers must take an entrance exam.

"If a student isn't to the point where I think we can get them to where they need to be in order to graduate, we won't accept them," Conteh said. "I'll be honest: We've had some high-profile players that we've had to do that to."

The hiring of Bergeron - a big name in basketball circles - will help American Christian draw top prospects. Conteh said that American Christian began exploring the idea of becoming a prep school after a recent transfer realized he wasn't academically prepared for college.

"So, instead of graduating - even though he technically had enough credits - he said, 'I'm going to repeat my senior year,' " Conteh said. "And that's when we started talking about, 'Why not do the prep program?' Especially when we're able to meet individual needs."

The NCAA investigation into prep schools - many of which cater to high-profile athletes - cast a cloud of suspicion over those institutions. Even century-old Virginia schools Oak Hill Academy and Fort Union Military Academy were reviewed.

Both originally were named on the NCAA's probationary list. But their records were cleared after investigators found no wrongdoing at either school. Still, when Lutheran Christian, among other prep schools, was portrayed in newspaper accounts as fraudulent, a negative perception was created.

"My perception of a prep school has nothing to do with Lutheran [Christian]," said Jim Peper, American Christian's athletic director. "When you say 'prep school,' I'm thinking of the one I know in Massachusetts that has a great reputation."

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A motorist looking specifically for American Christian School easily could miss it.

At a light on Market Street (Route 452), there is a sign for "The First Baptist Church Ministries." In a few lines under those words you can find the name: "American Christian Academy and Prep School."

One building houses the school - with classrooms and offices - and an auditorium that serves as a church and the school's cafeteria. Outside the auditorium are small-scale models of building additions for a new auditorium and a gymnasium.

American Christian has grown steadily since it launched a kindergarten class in 1983, adding a grade in each subsequent year. In

1995, the school had its first high school graduating class.

Mike Peper is American Christian's pastor. Jim Peper and Vicki Conteh are his children.

Jim Peper coached the basketball team from 1991 to '98. Before Evans - who started at American Christian as a seventh grader - the most acclaimed player the Eagles produced was St. Joseph's alum and current Boston Celtic Dwayne Jones.

Evans, though, has raised American Christian's profile, even if the almost-unanimous former No. 1-ranked recruit has slipped recently in the ratings game. Two of the top recruiting Web sites, scout.com and Rivals.com, have Evans listed as the No. 2 and No. 4 overall prospect for the Class of 2008.

Still, Evans is a target not only for major college basketball programs but for sneaker companies looking to secure his rights should he eventually become a top pick in the NBA draft.

Last year, Reebok won a bidding war to outfit American Christian. Peper said in July that Reebok has enabled the team - which plays an independent schedule - to travel the country for marquee tournaments.

"If it wasn't for Reebok, we wouldn't be able to play in many of these tournaments because they do take care of us in terms of paying our way," said Peper, who would not disclose the monetary value of the contract. "The school is not in a financial situation to do that."

Evans may wear a Reebok jersey when he plays for American Christian, but during the off-season he's all Nike. The sneaker giant sponsors Evans' AAU team, Team Final. Peper insists there is no conflict.

"Tyreke has to wear Reebok when he plays for us," he said. "And what happens outside of school when he plays for his AAU team or whatever, that's his business."

Sam Rines Jr. had Evans play for his Sam Rines AAU team last year, until Team Final was created. Rines, also the director of Rise Basketball Academy, has been around the Philadelphia hoops scene for years, with Kobe Bryant and Rip Hamilton among his former players.

He said the sneaker wars are just part of the process of having big-time recruits such as Evans.

"American Christian is thinking like a major college program," Rines said. "It's like any business. If they have a chance to steal Reebok money and a piece of Nike, how can you blame them?"

Carroll, however, believes that American Christian has gotten caught in the crossfire.

"Money does not make a person whole, nor does it make a school whole," he said. "I said this to the school last year: 'Do things the right way for the right reasons. If you're a plumber, do it to make good pipes, don't do it for more money.' "

Conteh and American Christian insist that the pipes are good.

"A year ago, did many people know about American Christian School? No," Conteh said. "That's reality. People are probably going to scrutinize a little more."

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Bud Withers

College Football | Leagues lacking luster

By Bud Withers

Times college football reporter

This was going to be a screed on how the joke's on the Atlantic Coast Conference, which ruffled feathers in recent years with an expansion to 12 teams, but now has a football league drawing titters across the nation.

Indeed, 11 of 12 teams in the ACC don't have a victory over a BCS team from another conference. Where's Mike Krzyzewski when you need him?

But other leagues shouldn't be too quick to pile on at the ACC's expense.

The Pac-10? USC is still a behemoth of serious proportions, and California is growing momentum fast. But the Golden Bears' pratfall at Tennessee damaged the conference's image, as did Oregon's tainted victory over Oklahoma.

Right now, the Pac-10 appears to have a vast middle class, throwing out Stanford (0-4), which looks capable of being the first Pac-10 team to go winless since Oregon State in 1980.

Big 12? It's 0-9 against Top 25 teams and 2-8 against BCS-conference programs.

Big East? West Virginia is a national-title contender and Louisville was before two key injuries. Sorry, but when half the conference is composed of Cincinnati, Connecticut, South Florida and Syracuse, it's difficult to take it seriously.

Big Ten? It has top-ranked Ohio State, a second national-championship contender in Michigan, and a 4-0 Iowa team that will discover more about itself when it hosts the Buckeyes on Saturday. Wisconsin (3-1) and Penn State (2-2) are the apparent next-best teams, along with Michigan State (3-1). But Purdue (4-0 against a lame schedule), Minnesota (2-2), Indiana, Northwestern and impotent Illinois constitute a soft underbelly.

The Southeastern Conference is the runaway overall leader, with five teams in the top 15, four of which —



ERIC GAY / AP

Top-ranked Ohio State, shown here after beating then-No. 2 Texas earlier this month, plays in the top-heavy Big Ten along with No. 6 Michigan.



STEPHEN DUNN / GETTY IMAGES

USC, led by quarterback John David Booty (with ball), is the top team in the Pac-10, a conference best known this season for its failures.



GERRY BROOME / AP

Steve Slaton's West Virginia Mountaineers are the class of the weak Big East.

Auburn, Florida, Louisiana State and Georgia — could figure in the national-title chase. Think about what faces Florida in its next four games — Alabama, LSU, Auburn and Georgia.

Is it possible the entire country is generally down? It's still early, but it appears that way.

"There are weekends you could form about any impression you want to form," says Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer.

Ohio State doesn't yet seem the equal of either USC or Texas of 2005 vintage. Last year, either Heisman winner Reggie Bush or Vince Young would have been a better choice than most in the last 25 years.

Conference depth nationally is suspect; even in the heavyweight SEC there are a handful of marginal outfits.

In the Pac-10, it isn't difficult to trace the downturn. A conference that has historically been dominated by quarterbacks has one of the weaker collections in years.

At the start of the season, it would have been a reasonable guess that Stanford's Trent Edwards and Arizona State's Rudy Carpenter would be the all-conference quarterbacks, in either order. Edwards has seen Stanford cave in around him, and Carpenter has thrown double the interceptions (eight) of any other quarterback in the Pac-10.

In any case, we have the perfect complement to the national mediocrity: A bowl schedule bloated to an unprecedented 32 games. Get your tickets now to the inaugural Birmingham Bowl.

Lighting up the sky

Pro scouts are making Missoula more than the usual destination. They're especially interested in ex-Washington State quarterback Josh Swogger and former Washington wideout Craig Chambers.

"We've had a bunch of guys through," Montana coach Bobby Hauck, the ex-Huskies assistant, said earlier this week from his office. "The Chargers are here today."

After an extended fight to get eligible, Chambers has played two games, and caught five balls for 82 yards in a blowout win over Sacramento State.

"His skill level is not what will keep him off the field," Hauck said. "What will get him playing time will be his attention to detail both on and off the field."

"He and I have an agreement that if I catch him missing anything from a lift to a class to a tutoring appointment, it's going to cost him field time."

Swogger, who missed a game with a left-hand injury, is 30 of 46 with four touchdowns and two interceptions.

"He moves around better than I anticipated," Hauck said. "And he's got a big arm."

The Missoulian newspaper quoted Hauck as saying the last time quarterbacks coach Steve Axman saw anything like a couple of recent Swogger practice throws "was in 1987-88." That would be when Axman was a UCLA assistant and the Bruins had Troy Aikman.

Iowa City kitty

Ohio State's game at Iowa is proving a gold mine for scalping, legal in the state. Some reports have the \$60

tickets going for as high as \$1,000, and even bad seats are bringing \$200.

ESPN's CollegeGameday show will be there for the first time in 10 years, and Kinnick Stadium will see its first night game since 1992.

"This is going to potentially be a six-ring circus," said Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz. "We don't get a lot of six-ring circuses."

Cougars Southwest

Fans with a long memory, or without a life, might remember a highly awaited, early-season matchup 15 years ago between Miami and Houston, all the rage then in its run-and-shoot offense. Dennis Erickson's Miami team whopped the Cougars 40-10 on national television and not a lot has been heard from Houston since.

They play again this week, and the Conference USA Cougars are 4-0 and getting poll votes for only the second time since 1991. They're touting quarterback Kevin Kolb, who threw for four touchdowns last week against Oklahoma State, for national honors.

And what's more ...

- Maybe the road will be kinder to Montana State, which might be the most perplexing team in the country, no matter the division. After its eye-catching upset at Colorado, the Bobcats returned home for three straight, in which they (a) lost to Division II Chadron State; (b) suffered their first home shutout since 1985 against Cal-Davis, 45-0; and (c) fell to an 0-3 Eastern Washington team.
- With the provision for overtime in its 10th-anniversary year, the only Division I-A school not to have played one is North Texas.
- Texas will play its first Division I-AA opponent in 14 years when it meets Sam Houston State on Saturday.
- RB **Devin Moore** has added spice to a strange intersectional matchup between Wyoming and Syracuse at the Carrier Dome by guaranteeing a Cowboys victory in a Jackson Hole newspaper.
- Illinois (1-3), which looks hopeless in **Ron Zook's** second year, has replaced senior QB **Tim Brasic** with freshman **Juice Williams**.
- Minnesota coach **Glen Mason**, referring to the fact the Gophers are a homecoming opponent in three of their next four road games: "You see my parking space out there. I drive a float, I don't drive a car."

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Handicapping the BCS leagues

A look at each of the top conferences:

League Comment

SEC Still, only 4-5 vs. BCS teams

Big Ten Michigan-OSU game Nov. 18 could feature unbeaten

Pac-10 Widely seen as USC and some guys named Joe

Big 12 Nebraska, Missouri help North improvement

Big East If Rutgers is for real, will help image

ACC BCS wins against Syracuse, UConn, Ole Miss

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Posted on Fri, Sep. 29, 2006

Deaf teen scores with helping hands

All signs point to teamwork

By AKILAH IMANI NELSON
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Stuart Jones hears with his eyes.

The 15-year-old wide receiver hears Bill Kimrey's praise through the curls at the corners of the Dutch Fork coach's mouth. A furrowed brow and pursed lips translate into displeasure.

And when Silver Fox quarterback Zach Cornett twists his fingers to sign "2-4," Jones understands his play being called.

Jones is unlike most of the defenders he will face.

He is deaf.

And thanks to friends, teammates and coaches, he is enjoying one of the greatest high school experiences — varsity football.

"It feels good that they all were willing to learn to sign to help me, especially since I'm in a school where almost nobody signs," Jones said.

Jones' interpreter, Cynthia Cross, attends practices and games, and Kimrey and the Dutch Fork quarterbacks have learned some sign language.

"It started with just learning the numbers, because it made it easier during games," said junior-varsity quarterback Schott Garbett, who was the first to begin signing.

As Jones worked through spring practice and summer workouts, the varsity quarterbacks began to take an interest in signing, as well.

"He's a great athlete, so I'm glad to be able to help him perform out there," quarterback Jeremy Long said.

Cross, who has been interpreting for Jones since last year, and for other deaf athletes at Dutch Fork since 1996, was impressed with Jones' acceptance of the challenge.

Players often receive signals from coaches on the sideline during games. Jones gets his from Cross.

"It's fast-paced, and you've got to know your job," she said. "You've got 24 seconds, and if you get something wrong, it's going to show on that play, and it's going to look like he doesn't know what he's doing."

Jones wears a wristband that lists the team's plays. If he can't remember whether his route is a curl or a slant, Cross can remind him. Though Jones can read lips, the only way he can tell if a play is changed at the line of scrimmage is through cues from teammates.

But Jones, who wears hearing aids in school, doesn't make excuses for his mistakes on the field.

"Memorizing all the plays is especially tough, and when you screw up, it's really obvious, but if I do, it's because I'm a person and people sometimes screw up. It's not because I can't hear."

His parents, who discovered their son had a hearing problem when he was 18 months, never gave him the option to use deafness as an excuse.

Tim and Joyce Jones encouraged their son to try anything he wanted. They sent him to St. Louis' Central Institute for the Deaf to learn to speak and read lips. At his parents' urging, Jones tried several sports.

"I wanted to inspire him to do his best in anything, and, at the same time, it was inspiring to see him out there competing with his hearing peers," said Tim Jones, who coached his son's first peewee football team, which helped him become acclimated to a soundless sport.

He tried out for the B-team as an eighth-grader and felt he "fit right in."

"I learned that it all depends on determination, and I was determined that I wanted to do this," said Jones, who plays basketball at Dutch Fork.

Though he was not able to become a quarterback, as he initially wanted, Jones has blossomed into a talented wide receiver.

"He is athletic and one of the better receivers on our team," Kimrey said.

After Jones made some stellar catches in a junior varsity game two weeks ago, Kimrey had no qualms about putting the 6-foot-4 player on the varsity squad for the first time last week.

"He works just as hard as all the other players, and we treat him the same way. He knows when we put him out there that he has a job to do," Kimrey said.

His ears don't work, but Jones said he has other ways of knowing what is going on around him. The hairs on the back of his neck stand up when the ball is coming in his direction. The vibration of footsteps tells him defensive players are closing in.

And though he does not know the sounds of pads clashing, the roar of the crowd or the echoing boom of his name being announced as he runs on the field, Jones feels football just the same.

"It feels great to just go out there and be able to play. I don't feel different," Jones said. "I feel like a football player."

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