

New York Times Letter – May 16, 2004

To the Sports Editor:

One could argue with many of the points made by Myles Brand in "In Athletics, Level Field Must Begin in Classroom" (May 9), but when he states that the Drake Group "wants to end university support of intercollegiate athletics," he is wrong. It is equally wrong for him to assert that the group wants "to turn college sports into minor leagues for professional teams."

The positions of the Drake Group are, or should be, well known to the president of the N.C.A.A. Three of our six proposals for reform - telling the truth about an institution's academic conduct, scheduling contests not to conflict with classes, and requiring every athlete have a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 each semester to participate - are real steps toward academic integrity. Brand has been silent on all of our proposals.

The Drake Group encourages every faculty member to think about the relationship between athletics and higher education. We place the onus on faculty members to do their jobs by asking tough questions about the advisement of athletes, to consider ways to best allow all athletes to access the kind of education available to all students, and to take responsibility as a group for the erosion of the academic mission of higher education.

The N.C.A.A.'s changes, like requiring 20 percent progress a year toward a degree, are positive, but they do not guarantee that college athletes must first be students. Too many will continue to search for the path of least resistance to maintain their eligibility.

MICHAEL A. MALEC
Boston

The writer is associate professor of sociology at Boston College and a member of the Drake Group executive board.