

## **DAILY HERALD**

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### **College sports mess cries out for reform**

Kudos to Chuck Goudie for his March 8 column, "Rap sheets are the new stat sheets or today's college athletes," that focused on the miscreants on college rosters and related crimes, misdemeanors and other shenanigans found on campuses. The column's timing could not have been better, coming on the heels of the recruiting scandal at the University of Colorado and a litany of high-profile wrongdoing at our universities this past year.

Numerous reported academic irregularities should surprise no one familiar with investigations of college athletics programs. Walter Byers, executive director of the NCAA from 1951 to 1987, dedicated a chapter to the subject in his book, *Unsportsmanlike Conduct*. Byers tells how, coaches, athletic directors, presidents and conference commissioners who attempt to enforce the rules are treated as if they are out-of-touch. Tough enforcement matters are left to a woefully understaffed NCAA infractions committee that operates with threats of expensive lawsuits by litigious-minded universities.

Universities that play the game exploit their so-called student-athletes - using them to win titles and generate revenue, while boosters and fans have little concern about whether the athletes are genuine students. Those who are in on the game know the substantial benefits of not investigating and enforcing the rules. Alcohol, sex, gifts, money and academic shenanigans are simply the generally accepted table stakes required to play in the big-time with a chance to win and reap huge financial rewards.

Without a doubt, the NCAA's PR department is now working 24/7 on damage control. The NCAA likely will try to get in front of growing negative public opinion via a best-defense-is-a-good-offense tactic - exploiting the academic background of its president, Myles Brand, shamelessly positioning the past president of Indiana University as the leader of reform in intercollegiate athletics. That is the way the game is played when millions of tax-free dollars are at stake and when they pay Brand more than \$750, 000 a year to protect the NCAA's vital economic interests. Hopefully, investigative reporters will work to expose this NCAA tactic as the pinnacle of hypocrisy.

Hopefully, illumination of the situation by Goudie and others will stimulate faculties to help with reforming intercollegiate athletics by reclaiming academic primacy in higher education. These faculties may be our only hope for serious reform.

Frank G. Splitt  
Mount Prospect

McCormick Faculty Fellow  
McCormick School  
of Engineering  
and Applied Science  
Northwestern University  
Evanston

***The opinions, assumptions, and conclusions presented in this letter are entirely those of the author and not Northwestern University.***