

## The NCAA and Its New President: An Afterword

Frank G. Splitt, The Drake Group, May 28, 2010

Subsequent to writing the *College Athletic Clips* Guest Commentary, “The NCAA and Its New President: Great Expectations,”<sup>1</sup> I was invited as a guest on Bob Gilbert’s May 15, 2010, WBCR Truth Radio Program. The invitation prompted a careful study of Mark Emmert’s Curriculum Vitae.<sup>2</sup>

When combined with prior inputs, this study indicated that Emmert is eminently qualified for the NCAA presidency. Put another way, he has the "right stuff" from the NCAA's perspective not only to protect, but also lead its big-money driven professional college sports entertainment businesses.

By all accounts, Emmert is a pragmatist who is unquestionably capable of making his predecessor, the late Myles Brand, and the NCAA's school-president apologists appear as comparative lightweights.<sup>3</sup> He also appears to be of the same maintain-the-status-quo mindset as John Lombardi, President of the Louisiana State University System, who once said of present day big-time college athletics programs:

It reflects the decisions of academic administrators and governing boards at almost all colleges and universities for over a century. It prospers because for the most part we ...want it. We could easily change it, if most of us wanted to change it. All protestations to the contrary, we, the colleges and universities of America and our friends and supporters, do not want to change it. What we really want is to imitate the best—often the most expensive—programs in America by winning games and championships.<sup>4</sup>

Here are some of the likely expectations the richly-resourced, hypocrisy-ridden NCAA cartel has as a consequence of selecting the highly skilled Emmert as its new president ... expectations beyond providing an academic front for its professional sports entertainment businesses to the effect that:

1. All big-time school presidents will rally around their new self-proclaimed ‘servant-leader’.<sup>5</sup>
2. NCAA apologists will not only rave about Emmert’s selection, but will also provide him with resonance chambers to amplify high-sounding rhetoric of mass distraction to mask the brutal truths about its sports entertainment businesses.
3. There will be no adoption of serious reform measures such as transparency, accountability, and independent oversight, or any measure that could possibly have a negative impact on the cartel member’s bottom lines.
4. Emmert will take firm command of the cartel’s vast array of financial and legal resources as well as take maximum advantage of its political connections, symbiotic relationship with the media, and continue touting its (cozy) working relationships with the Knight Commission, the Association of Governing Boards, and the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics as evidence that it is serious about college sports reform.

5. An Emmert-led cartel will prove to be a formidable adversary for serious reform-minded organizations such as the National College Players Association, the National Coalition Against Violent Athletes, and The Drake Group—stifling their reform initiatives in the courts as well as in the U. S. Congress and at the U. S. Department of Education.<sup>6</sup>

In summary, Emmert possesses the background and gravitas requisite to be a strong leader of the NCAA cartel's defense against all challenges and charges by the U. S. Department of Education, the U. S. Congress, and reform-minded organizations, no matter how great the challenges and no matter how serious and how warranted the charges may be—all the while he will provide the cartel with a patina of respectability based on his academic background. In that sense, the NCAA has made a superb choice in selecting him as its next president.

Come November, Emmert will serve as a richly compensated ringmaster for one of the greatest shows on earth—what Murray Sperber called the beer and circus of college sports that is crippling undergraduate education in America.<sup>7</sup>

## NOTES

1. Splitt, Frank G. "The NCAA and Its New President: Great Expectations," [http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt\\_NCAA\\_New\\_President.pdf](http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_NCAA_New_President.pdf)

2. Emmert, Mark A., Curriculum Vitae, <http://www.washington.edu/president/curriculumvitae.pdf>

3. Notable NCAA apologists: University of Arizona former President Peter Litkins, Knight Foundation Trustee and University of Michigan President Mary Sue Coleman, University of Georgia President Mike Adams, Louisiana State University System President John Lombardi, Hartford University President Walter Harrison, and University of Miami President Donna Shalala, as well as the Knight Commission co-chairs: University System of Maryland Chancellor William English Kirwan and Southern Methodist University President R. Gerald Turner.

4. Lombardi, John V., "Taxing the Sports Factory," Inside Higher Ed, October 1, 2007, [www.insidehighered.com/views/blogs/reality\\_check/taxing\\_the\\_sports\\_factory](http://www.insidehighered.com/views/blogs/reality_check/taxing_the_sports_factory)

5. Biderman, David, "Football Playoff Fan Takes the NCAA Job," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 29, 2010. Emmert is quoted as saying: "As the president, you have to be a servant and a leader."

6. Serious reform-minded government and non-government organizations must confront the culture of corruption and hypocrisy that is endemic to NCAA policies, regulations and decisions as well as the irresponsible positions taken by many of the cartel's leaders. For examples, see Jason Whitlock's May 26, 2010, *Kansas City Star* article, "NCAA breeds a culture of corruption," at <http://www.kansascity.com/2010/05/26/1973956/ncaa-breeds-a-culture-of-corruption.html> and Tom Palaima's report to the U Texas-Austin Faculty Council at [http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/20092010/reports/COIA\\_PALAIMA\\_051010\\_FINAL.html](http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/20092010/reports/COIA_PALAIMA_051010_FINAL.html)

7. Sperber, Murray, *Beer and Circus: How Big-Time College Sports Is Crippling Undergraduate Education*, Henry Holt and Company, 2000.