

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

The pressure to win

From Lawrence Journal-World

The consensus seems to be that NCAA sanctions against Kansas University athletic programs could have been worse.

In fact, many observers probably wonder why the organization that oversees collegiate athletics even worries about things like whether a KU basketball recruit paid for his ticket to a tournament game or whether a booster gave athletes who had completed their eligibility a few hundred dollars as a graduation gift.

The answer is, if the NCAA didn't assess penalties even for relatively minor infractions, there's no telling how far some universities would go in order to field winning teams.

This certainly isn't just KU's issue. Kansans need look no further than Barton County Community College in Great Bend to see how the desire to build strong athletic programs can have a corrupting impact on school officials. ...

Given the current high-dollar atmosphere in collegiate sports, the pressure is even greater at larger universities like KU. To its credit, KU self-reported its violations and is accepting its punishment gracefully, saying it has been fairly treated by the NCAA. To show it is serious about avoiding future violations, the KU athletic department now has five full-time employees working on compliance issues.

That is a sign KU is trying to be conscientious, but it's also an indication of how hard it is to try to run a clean college athletic program. Some boosters, athletes, parents and officials are all too willing to bend the rules. It takes five full-time employees just at KU to make sure they don't bend them to the breaking point.

Some NCAA actions may seem picky or stupid, but a lesser response would only encourage schools to bend the rules further. For every violation that triggers an NCAA punishment, there probably are a dozen that go undetected and unpunished.

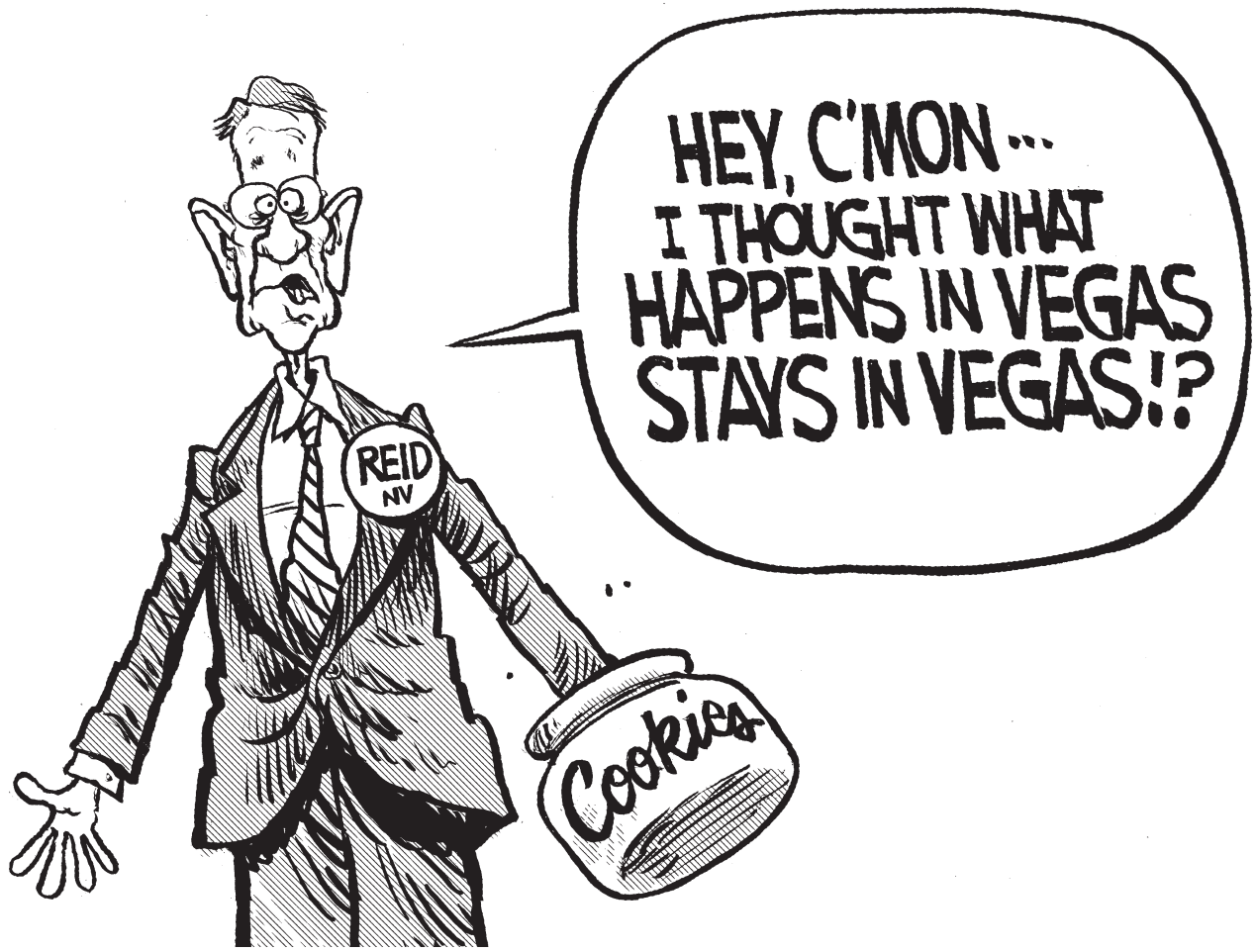
... Are NCAA compliance officials picky, even petty? Sometimes it seems that way, but without NCAA rules and people to enforce them, there might not be much left of the already waning tradition of "student athletes" representing their universities in amateur competition.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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BRACKINS RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH 10/06



B horror movies should be left alone

The movie madness leading up to Halloween has begun. It is not exactly one of my favorite things, for various reasons. It seems more an opportunity for cable networks to trot out every bad B-movie horror flick ever made. So much for an intelligent, suspenseful way of honoring the spirit of the season. And please forgive the pun.

Looking for a good scare that doesn't involve the current "13 days of Halloween" programming running on a couple of channels?

I have a few recommendations that run from books to movies, from new to classic.

The first is "Night Watch." Either the novel by Russian author Sergei Lukyanenko or the movie adaptation of the same name.

Critics considered this movie a horror flick but I don't think it really fit the definition.

Many different themes tied into one story, but it comes down to an agreement between good and evil that they will keep an eye on each other in order to maintain a fragile, centuries-old balance. That is until the answer to a prophecy comes along.

Another good one is "Gaslight." A suspense film, and a classic at that. "Gaslight" is about a woman slowly pushed to the edge of insanity. Dark, suspenseful and brilliant.

Of course, the best way to deal with the B-flick onslaught is to ignore it, which is my course of action.

But I can't think of Halloween without remembering some interesting All Hallow's Eves of the past.

Trick-or-treating was always the big thing for me as a kid, but of course, it is now still for children everywhere, because who can turn down free candy?

It was always a fun occasion, and an opportunity to pretend to be someone, or something else



Tisha Cox

● Off The Beaten Path

for a night.

However, as I got a little older and outgrew trick-or-treating, a whole new side of Halloween emerged.

Halloween mischief was always something whispered about. With an older sister nine years my senior, it wasn't exactly like I knew about all the details of her Oct. 31 exploits.

The most infamous I can recall involved a cast iron skillet and some fireworks.

I never really did partake of the naughtiness, even when I was considered "old enough" — like high school-aged.

Although my sophomore year, I had my driver's license and was out driving around on Halloween. I pulled up to the stop sign by the grade school in Lakin, which is on Main Street.

Some of my classmates saw me and ran over to my car. A few jumped across the hood of my blue 1982 Chevy Malibu. Others threw eggs and the rest swarmed the car and began to rock it. The mayhem lasted a few minutes because a little gas and movement was all it took for them to get the idea.

That was a typical Halloween in my hometown back then, if I could call it typical.

Another incident I had nothing to do with, fortunately, but I happened to witness it. Two years later, somebody had the brilliant idea to

pour gasoline on the crosswalk lines in front of the school and set it on fire.

That marked the end of the really bad stuff in my hometown. There are still windows that get soaped, and a few eggs thrown but kids have learned better.

Axed. ...

The NHL season is barely three weeks old and the first huge firing came down the pike Sunday. The Philadelphia Flyers fired their coach and their general manager, Bob Clarke, resigned.

This came after the Flyers lost Tuesday to the Buffalo Sabers, the last undefeated team in the league. Philly lost 9-1, and so far have their second worst start to a season in franchise history.

I can't say I'm sad to see Clarke go, but it's almost anticlimactic. He was on his second stint as the team's general manager, and never delivered a championship in that capacity.

As a player, Clarke was one of the best the Flyers had back in its glory days, which lead to two Stanley Cup championships in the 1970s.

He had expectations for the team, and certain players, but never really outlined how those expectations could, and should be met. In his own words, his reason for stepping down was burn-out.

Maybe now the team can begin to re-build, and the fans can move on. Because many of Clarke's former players have already moved on to greener pastures.

I wish the Flyers luck. They're going to need it.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tc Cox@nwkansas.com.

A battle of church and state

Yes, I keep prattling on about politics and religion. Some have told me they don't have time for such trivial and unimportant issues. Well, don't take the time now and you won't have the privilege to discuss and practice your freedom of choice later.

These — quotations — are taken from a syndicated news story in New York Times. Too liberal for you? Go to your own news source and you will find the same assessments.

— Behind the maze of men with guns in Iraq is a very simple truth: their barrels offer protection, something Iraqis say the government has never given them. — On Friday, the web wound tightly around the southern city of Amara, where the two largest and best-armed militias, both made up of religious Shiites, were fighting for control of the city. — But when the prime minister speaks of disarming militias Iraqi brows begin to furrow.

"He's just talking," snapped Fadhil Sabri, a 37-year-old generator repairman in a grease-stained shop in Sadr City, a Baghdad stronghold of the Mahdi Army, a Shiite militia. "Not now. Not even in 10 years. You need arms to defend yourself," he said.

Does that first quotation sound a little like the

Ken Poland

● Ken's World

concealed carry supporters? You need your own protection because the police can't or will not do the job.

Except for brief periods of time, religion has dominated government, or vice versa, in most of the Mid East. The truth is, we have those who are attempting to put religion in control of our government. Is that really what you want? Religion in control of government very quickly turns to government in control of religion.

History tells us when religion is controlled by government, there is very little, if any, tolerance for those who don't accept the absolute theological interpretation of the favored religion, whether it be Christian or otherwise. The Shiites and Sunnis are both Muslim. They are, seemingly, in a battle to the death for control. Catholics and Protestants, both claiming their authority from the same God, have fought bitterly for

control at different times in history. Roman and Orthodox Catholics can not agree theologically. Protestants are divided into a large number of denominations that don't agree on many theological issues. Do you trust government to settle those differences and issues?

Our forefathers fought and died for independence from a repressive government that claimed religion as their source of power. The spokesmen for that government sprinkled references to God and claimed his blessings on almost everything they did. Do you honestly think those men, who fought for our freedom, carefully authored our constitution to allow our government to do the same thing?

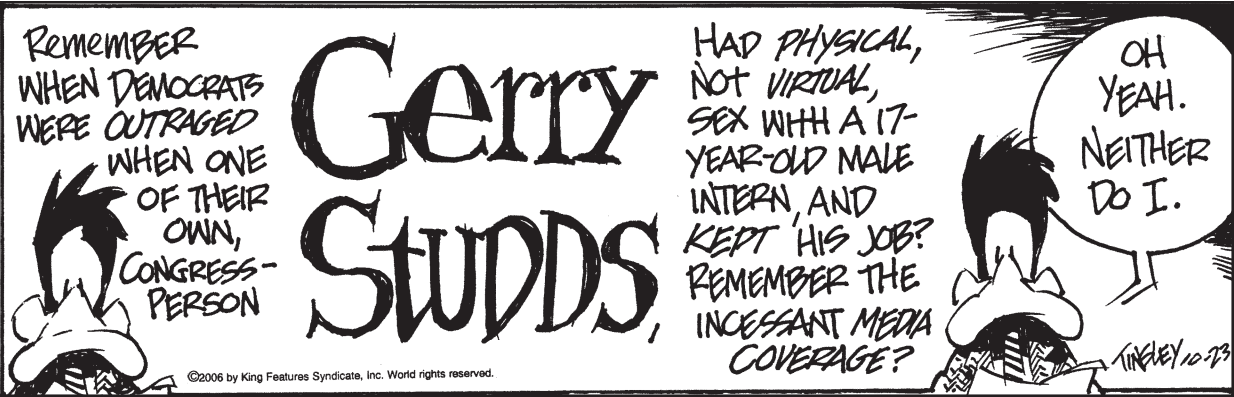
To the contrary, they carefully crafted a document that excluded organized religion as authority on any matters. They put together a system of government that had three separate branches with equal powers, but prevented any branch from dominating the others. More important, they put the individual citizens in charge of it all. They did not exclude anyone from office or the privilege of voting on the basis of their theology, education or wealth.

Ken Poland occasionally contributes to the Colby Free Press.

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