

Are scholarships aid or exploitation?

By MEL D. BROITMAN

No discussion of university athletics is complete without comment on athletic scholarships. It is an issue that has seen fierce philosophical clashes and, in its wake, has left many an embittered individual and institution. It is simply one of those touchstones which arouse deep passions about its impact on the athlete, the university, the sport, and our society itself.

First of all, we must examine the present situation regarding athletic scholarships in Canadian universities.

The CIAU recognizes three levels in which athletic awards fall. First Party Awards are approved and administered by the university to the athlete. Though the amount may vary depending on the institution, it cannot exceed a maximum of \$1,000. First year students are not eligible for a First Party Award; they must have completed at least one year of full-time study.

Some provincial government offer student-athletes financial assistance in accordance with their specific regulations. CIAU recognizes these scholarships as Second Party Awards but does set regulations at a minimum of two years residency for the recipient within the donor province, and a minimum of one year full-time student status.

Finally we come to Third Party Awards. These are federally funded assistance programs made available through Sport Canada and other national bodies. The recipients are commonly referred to as "carded" athletes and generally perform on national teams at an international level.

There is no consensus regarding athletics scholarships. Right here in Ontario we have a perfect example of that case in point. The OUAA and OWIAA have different views from the CIAU. Ontario does not believe in first party scholarships but will accept third party awards.

"We at York are against first party scholarships and are much in favor of third party... but we are prepared to compete with other schools," says Stuart Robbins, Chairman and Director of the Department of Physical Education and Athletics at York.

Robbins is well aware of the tenuous line that athletic scholarships tread upon. "We are torn between a system that sometimes stresses athletics at the cost of academics," Robbins says, "and some of the bad points of the American collegiate athletic system can come to the forefront."

A very small proportion of athletes at York are on scholarships. They are generally considered serious students.

The comparison of student-athletics between Canada and the United States is startling. "I heard at a recent discussion that in the US probably no more than 25 percent of the athletes graduate, but I would think that here the exact opposite would be true," Robbins says.

There are a number of points in favor of athletic scholarships that must be carefully considered. For years now many of Canada's premier athletes have gone south of the border to pursue their athletic and educational goals. In almost all the cases, there has been only one factor involved: money. How

However, we need only look to the US to see evidence of the dangers when athletic scholarships are abused. There are many cases where athletes have been seriously exploited by the institutions and their coaches. A player on scholarship can be seen as a hired hand and is under great pressure to perform. We have heard horror stories of young athletes mistreated and feeling powerless to react due to their obligation to the institution for its financial support. Just as professionals are forced to compete with injuries, so are many amateur athletes. If the scholarship is renewed annually, then the athlete is literally fighting to keep his or her own status.

As a result, what we have been witness to in many instances, is a shocking ignorance towards academic responsibility. Many of these athletes are still in their maturation and are easy targets for prestige and power hungry university officials. In America, college sports are big business; many of the young athletes are simply bought and sold.

There are cases where Canadian athletes have accepted US scholarships and have subsequently returned to Canada.

"Some of the scholarships do not have that much money," Robbins says, "unless you get a complete free ride, there are a lot of expenses involved... sometimes the scholarships seem better than they really are."

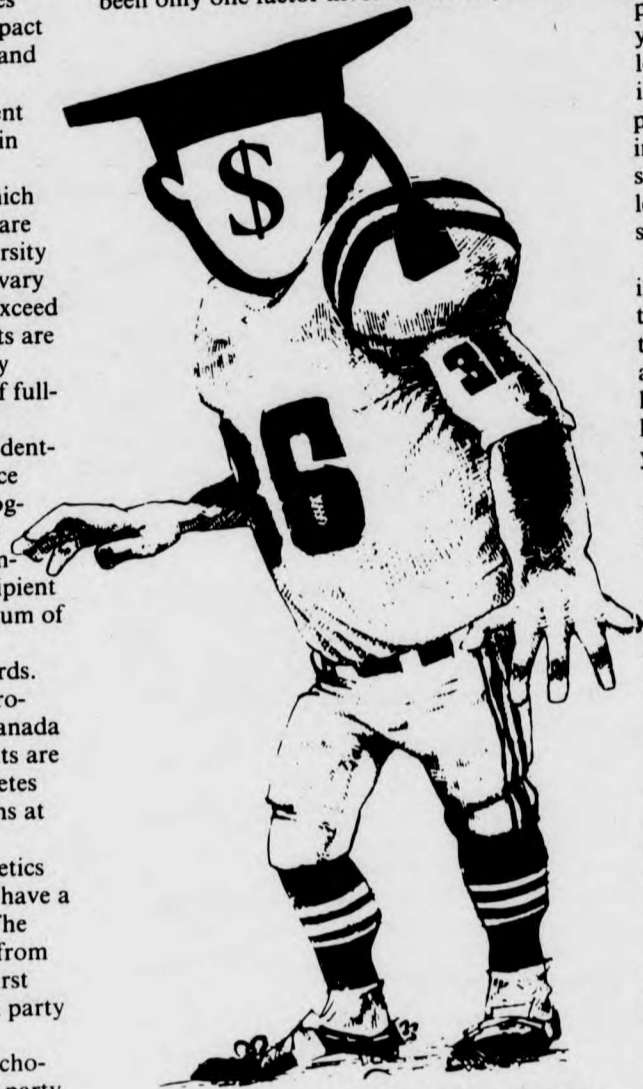
Robbins also says that more athletes are now willing to stay in Canada.

"I think it's better now," he says. "Some of the athletes have started to realize that the scholarships are not as beneficial as they seem to be. The conditions in Canada have improved. The coaches and training are excellent now." With better academic education available here, Robbins suggests that potential student-athletes check out all available options. "Take a real careful look at some of the Canadian schools; there are some excellent programs around."

Are there present solutions to the dilemma? Currently in British Columbia, any resident of the province who makes a varsity team in BC is eligible for \$1,000 in assistance. Here at York, Stuart Robbins sees four major areas that need attention in order to attract the best student-athletes: good coaching, excellent facilities, competitive scheduling, and money.

Canadian university sports will experience a significant surge in popularity during the coming years. Cable sports networks have already begun heavy coverage of the inter-university sports picture. Thus the pressure will begin to mount on schools seeking to enhance their public image, and demand for quality athletes among those schools will increase. The key to the future of Canadian university sports may lie on the path in which athletic scholarships are headed.

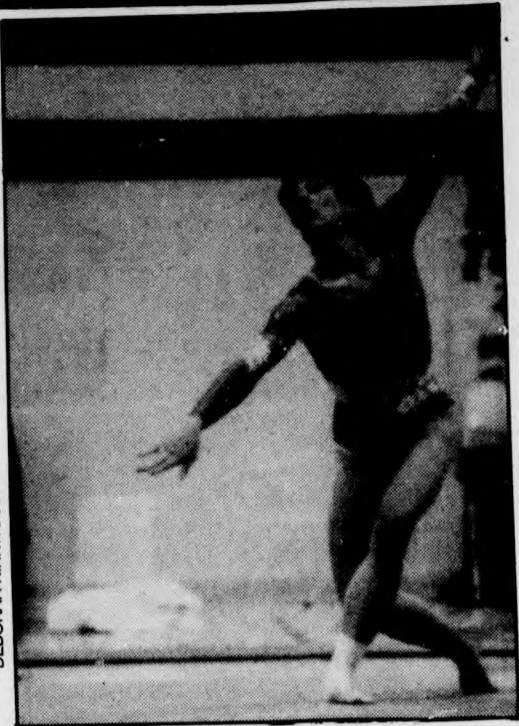
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can you expect a young Canadian athlete to turn down a lucrative US scholarship at a major Canadian school in order to stay at home and finance his whole education.

If we don't offer any scholarships up front, then there is always the constant threat of "under the table" deals. At present, in Canada, various athletic programs at Brandon, St. Mary's and Concordia universities are under CIAU probation for those violations. Unlike the US, in this country, just three schools have a tremendous proportional impact on the national collegiate sports scene.

Another legitimate argument in favor of athletic scholarships takes into account the numerous academic awards and incentives offered. Are the athletes not also gifted individuals with talents, and eligible for the same benefits available for academic excellence? It seems to me that an obvious double standard



Gymnastic win for Yeowomen

By PETER BECKER

Not always the gracious host, York's gymnastic Yeowomen stole the championship last Saturday at the first OWIAA ranked meet this season, held at York. York won with a score of 131.83, while Western was second with 129.98, then McMaster with 128.63.

In the individual all-round competition, Western's Chris Murray took top honors with a total of 33.14. The second and third best performers of the meet were from York. Veteran Yeowoman gymnast Barb Nutzenberger, a 1983 CIAU All-Canadian, finished second with a total of 32.79, while Gretchen Kerr of York finished third with an aggregate of 32.17.

In the individual events, York's worst placing was a third. In the vault, Yeowoman Gail Thornton captured the gold with a score of 8.67 and Gretchen Kerr finished a close second with 8.43.

In the uneven bars Barb Nutzenberger walked away with the event with a score of 8.5. Second best was Kerr with an 8.35. The floor exercise saw Nutzenberger take second spot with an 8.63. Following in third spot was Gail Thornton with 8.53.

On the balance beam, Yeowoman Anita Ganguly placed third with 8.63. Ganguly, a first year student, is showing a great deal of promise, according to Yeowoman coach Natasa Bajin. Another newcomer who has attracted Bajin's praise is Mary Pat Murphy, a third year York student who's spending her first year with the team. Just goes to show you it's never too late to join.

The Yeowomen, the 1984 OWIAA champs, are poised to repeat that result year, and are now working on new routines and polishing off new tricks and moves. Coach Bajin expects all her charges to qualify for the Ontario championships.

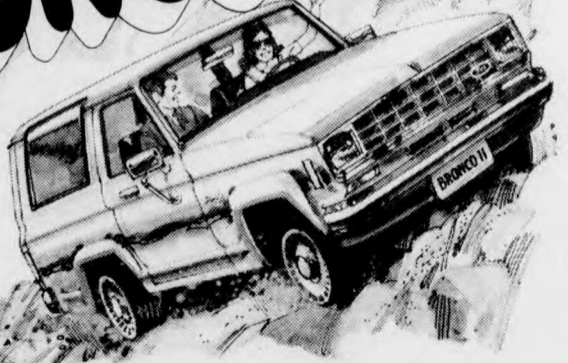
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