

5-14-2007 Baseball and APR

1 (File: 20070514mwm)

2 JOSH CENTOR: Welcome to "Mondays With Myles". A
3 topic very near and dear to my heart, baseball and the
4 academic performance of those student athletes.

5 Dr. Brand, the board of directors approved emergency
6 legislation with regard to Division I baseball, a few weeks
7 ago. Why'd they do this?

8 DR. MYLES BRAND: About a year ago the board of
9 directors was intent upon cutting, perhaps, radically cutting
10 the number of games that were being played in Division I, in
11 order to help the student athletes in Division I baseball do
12 better academically, and as exhibited, for example, and
13 measured by APR. Rather than cutting the number of games, the
14 board of directors said, We'll back up a step, and we'll form
15 a special task force made up mostly of the baseball community,
16 the leadership of the baseball community, and see if we can
17 address more directly the academic issues, rather than just
18 cutting games. And so they wound up with a very serious
19 package of several proposals, including the nontransfer rule,
20 and including issues such as making sure you're eligible in
21 the fall before you can play in the spring, and so on.

22 And those measures, I think, will make a difference.
23 I really want to congratulate the leadership of the baseball
24 community for making these decisions and moving the board in
25 this direction. Is it controversial? You bet, it's

1 controversial. Some would not like to have seen any changes
2 whatsoever. But change it must.

3 JOSH CENTOR: The baseball community has talked a lot
4 about the academic performance of these student athletes. And
5 when APR was released a couple of weeks ago, we've seen an
6 improvement in the academic performance of those kids. Is
7 there room for more growth?

8 DR. MYLES BRAND: There's definitely room for more
9 growth. There's no question about that. And there has been
10 some improvement -- modest, but in the right direction.

11 And in the case -- now, I'm generalizing, but in the
12 case of baseball, we have student athletes who are coming in,
13 academically reasonably well prepared. And over their tenure
14 as a baseball player, their academic performance tends to go
15 down. Compare that, for example, with basketball, one of the
16 other sports that is having overall problems with APR. Those
17 student athletes come in less well prepared academically, and
18 over the period of time that they are basketball players,
19 their academic performance tends to go up.

20 So our question was, What is it about baseball that's
21 driving down academic performance? And what changes need to
22 be made so that that doesn't occur?

23 JOSH CENTOR: Do you think that it's possible that
24 there are too many games, specifically at the Division I
25 level?

1 DR. MYLES BRAND: You know, I think that's
2 controversial. The evidence we have shows that there's not a
3 strong correlation between the number of games within certain
4 limits and APRs. There is some relationship, but you would
5 have to cut the number of games dramatically to have any
6 effect. Actually, I think what the task force did, as the
7 baseball community figured it out, this will be more effective
8 than just cutting games.

9 JOSH CENTOR: Well, they did things like ensuring that
10 student athletes who are on scholarship now will get
11 33 percent, at least a third of a scholarship, as opposed to
12 minute percentages. And now they'll have to sit out a year
13 after transferring, as opposed to being able to bounce all
14 over.

15 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, once you put in that
16 nontransfer rule, what happens is you're expecting a strong
17 commitment of the student athletes. They can't be moving
18 around during the summers, Cape Cod League, and other places
19 that they've taken as sort of a summer-free agency. So you're
20 asking them to make a commitment to the university.

21 Well, if you're asking them to make a commitment, the
22 university in turn must make a commitment to them. And so
23 what we've tried to do is make sure there's at least a minimum
24 scholarship, one-third minimum scholarship, if you're a
25 student athlete -- and a maximum squad size.

1 So a coach now can't bring in many more players than
2 it can possibly play and sort of have a fall semester as a
3 tryout and then turn them lose. That kind of a movement is
4 unfair to the student athletes and decreases tremendously
5 their academic performance as they move from school to school.

6 JOSH CENTOR: I worry a lot about the baseball and the
7 academics, you know, playing 56 games or so that they play at
8 the Division I level before conference tournament is played,
9 before NCAA tournament play. There's a lot of games.

10 Now, I would have played a million games, if they
11 would have let me, in college, but the thing with Division I
12 is that there's a lot more travel than there was for myself at
13 Division III. I would go to a game an hour down the road,
14 come back in plenty of time to study. These kids are hopping
15 on the plane, playing games, middle of the week, 3 o'clock,
16 different campuses. You know, when are they able to go to
17 class? That's an issue that bothers me.

18 DR. MYLES BRAND: That's a real problem. They were
19 using the fall semester to get well and weren't able to go to
20 summer school during the summers, as some of the other
21 athletes do in football and basketball, for example, because
22 they were busy in summer leagues, trying to find new homes and
23 new teams to play on. I think you're right.

24 Student athletes would prefer to play as many games as
25 possible, and the coaches didn't want to see games cut back.

1 And that's the reason we started the task force to begin with.
2 It appeared that the coaches and the student athletes weren't
3 happy to see cutback, and moreover, the evidence didn't point
4 to the fact that if you cut back 4 games, which was on the
5 table, or even 8 or 12 games, I'm not sure that would have
6 made a big difference. It wouldn't have changed the kind of
7 culture of movement between schools that took place.

8 So we had to address that issue head on and in a more
9 specific way. And the specific proposals that came forward
10 were those designed by this task force, which was
11 overwhelmingly made up by members of the baseball community.

12 JOSH CENTOR: All right. Well, positive movement is
13 always good movement. So we will hope that that continues.
14 Thank you for joining me.

15 DR. MYLES BRAND: My pleasure.
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