

Papers differ on coverage of point-shaving scandal

by Ched Whitney

The *Las Vegas Review-Journal* reported Feb. 13 that federal authorities are investigating, among other things, allegations of point shaving during the UNLV basketball team's 1990-91 Final Four season.

The allegations are said to be part of a large investigation by the FBI and the Organized Crime Strike Force into the ties between convicted sports fixer Richard Perry and UNLV's basketball program.

The copyrighted story ran on the paper's front page.

Since then questions have arisen as to where the story ran and why.

Brian Greenspun, editor of the *Las Vegas Sun*, said in his Feb. 16 column:

"Today, we all have to deal with the mess, which has been foisted upon Las Vegas not only by some low-life at UNLV who leaked the un-leakable but by the *Review-Journal*, which couldn't wait to print the trash on the front page.

"Leaking baseless allegations of point shaving about a college athletic program should be as low as anyone can go in an attempt to earn slime-of-the-year honors," Greenspun continued. "But printing those rumors in a publication with the foreknowledge that every newspaper and television news program will re-broadcast them around the world is testing the limits of the low-water mark of irresponsible journalism."

Greenspun went on to compare the printing of such allegations to publishing unfounded reports about a major hotel cheating customers at the gambling tables.

In a column in the same issue, *Sun* investigative reporter Jeff German said there was no federal probe into point shaving at UNLV.

"FBI agents, who have jurisdiction in such matters, privately are telling people they aren't looking into the allegations," German wrote.

He continued: "Many suspect (legal counsel Brad) Booke, though he denies it, played a key role in bringing the ugly rumors to light as a means to divert attention away from the growing concerns about



The *Review-Journal* and *Sun* have differed on coverage of the recent allegations of point shaving during UNLV's 1990-91 Final Four season. The Rebels finished 34-1, losing to Duke in the national semifinals.

(UNLV President Robert) Maxson's administration."

Most of the allegations center on the Runnin' Rebels' 79-77 loss in the national semifinals in April. Stacey Augmon—now with the NBA Atlanta Hawks—has been the player mentioned most often by the media in conjunction with the charges. Augmon could not be reached for comment.

Current Rebel center Elmore Spencer, a junior on last year's team, declined comment on the accusations, but did call them "ridiculous" and "totally out of touch."

Spencer said that those involved (accused) could be "penalized and stigmatized for life."

In his Sunday column, *R-J* Editor Sherman Frederick defended his paper's reporting:

"...*Review-Journal* reporters uncovered some of the details of an investigation involving a federal grand jury, the Organized Crime Strike Force, the Internal Revenue Service, subpoenaed records, Perry,

players and ugly questions about illegal betting and point shaving.

"Why report all that?"

Frederick drew comparisons from a column he had written in July 1992. He said it was not the newspaper's duty to shield readers from uncomfortable facts.

In its editorial the same day, the *Review-Journal* acknowledged the controversy surrounding its coverage of the investigation.

At this point the two papers are divided on the subject.

The *Review-Journal* has stepped up its calls for Tarkanian's departure following his March 3 finale.

With this latest controversy the *Sun* has come out at odds with the *R-J*.

In light of Tarkanian's decision Sunday to rescind his resignation, this battle figures to heat up.

MAXSON

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administration is not to blame for the investigation into the basketball program.

"They know that neither I, nor anyone else in the administration, caused the strike force investigation of our basketball program," Maxson said. "The humiliation that even an investigation will cause the university, its faculty and staff, and its thousands of students can't be overstated, and for anyone to say, or imply, that we would encourage publicity by leaking such news to the press, or anyone, to interfere with Jerry Tarkanian's future job possibilities, reflects stupidity beyond imagination. I categorically deny such mindless charges, even though I shouldn't have to do so."

Maxson said the program should look at itself, instead of pointing fingers at the administration.

"I am sick of our administration being accused of being a part of a conspiracy to force Coach Tarkanian out," Maxson said. "There is a conspiracy, all right, although it is not led by the administration against the coach, but by some basketball boosters against the university and everyone who has attempted to preserve integrity, honor and institutional control at UNLV. Let's face the facts. No one in my administration wrote the devastating *Newsday* arti-

cle about Lloyd Daniels, suggesting serious NCAA violations at UNLV. No one in my administration brought almost 40 charges of NCAA violations upon us. No one in my administration put three of our basketball players in a hot tub with a convicted sports fixer. And no one in my administration made this sordid fact public."

The university has stood behind Tarkanian and his dealings with the NCAA—especially financially.

"I am sick of those who accuse the administration of not

supporting the basketball program, again, to pass blame to someone else," Maxson said. "To date, this administration has spent more than \$600,000—money sorely needed elsewhere—in defense of the basketball program against the NCAA allegations. This is a fact I am not proud of, but it was necessary at the time because I want UNLV to continue its great basketball tradition. I am convinced that many of those who so dishonestly attack the university and its academic programs, don't really care about our basketball future either, if the truth be known. They

only care about themselves, and they would happily destroy UNLV now that they have exploited it."

Maxson said he is tired of all of the talk distortions and half-truths.

"I am sick of being accused of denying Coach Tarkanian an opportunity to finish the season with dignity. Those who

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— UNLV President Robert Maxson

are determined to drag the university into the mud with them have worked their orchestrated deception tirelessly to create this impression in the minds of the community, and their lies and distortions have intensified with the season's drawing to a close. This is the big lie that some of the program's principle players and followers have perpetuated upon our students and upon the people of our community.

"The very chair of the Board of Regents has been subjected to ridicule and cheaply accused of racism because she spoke in opposition to exploitation of

student athletes, black and white. I have been accused of racism, an evil charge and blatant lie. Our faculty and their programs are the recent target of abuse by a group who misinterpreted itself as a legitimate alumni group in order to gain credibility. This group leaked misleading information to *Money* magazine and encouraged a phony story which embarrassed our university nationwide."

Maxson was outspoken about the new book titled *Shark Attack*, that hit bookstores on Monday.

"The finale, timed to provide the greatest possible humiliation to this administration, is a book by a person named Don Yaeger. The page proofs, which have been read by this administration, falsely create the impression of a lengthy conspiracy against the basketball program and its coach. They also seek to discredit anyone perceived as an enemy of the basketball program, to deny UNLV's real academic progress and to discredit the academic integrity of what is really a very good university with very good students. A statement accom-

panying the page proofs for the booksellers information reveals that Coach Tarkanian 'will tour for the book's publicity,' a fact that will call into question for most readers the book's objectivity."

Maxson ended the interview by saying that people have lost sight of what the real issue is and how all of this hurts academics at the university.

"Regardless of what others say, this is an academic issue, and none of this well-orchestrated activity will cause me or my administration to weaken our resolve to do what is right.

We have acted properly in the best interest of faculty, staff and students at this university. We owe it to our students to keep our emphasis on academics. If we don't, their degrees will be worth nothing.

"We also have an obligation to our faculty to make sure that every decision we make demonstrates that UNLV has become a serious academic institution. We will meet these obligations. We will continue to guard, as vigorously as we know how, the academic reputation of this university. UNLV and the community which has supported it so generously are far larger, and far more important, than those who advocate misplaced values and madness," Maxson added.