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THE REBEL YELL

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It doesn't have to be 'Athletics vs. Academics'

Sunday at Cameron Indoor Arena on the campus of Duke University in Durham, N.C., the Duke basketball team beat their arch-rivals from Chapel Hill, the North Carolina Tar Heels, 89-77.

But the meeting was more than just a basketball game; it was part of an annual tradition involving two of the best basketball programs in the country from two of the nation's most respected academic institutions.

Here at UNLV, the constantly swirling winds of controversy that have engulfed the university's basketball program and its administration have blown a foul stench over the whole institution.

As the University of Nevada System Board of Regents meet to discuss the subject, we must ask ourselves: Why must this problem be reduced to a question of athletics vs. academics?

The Runnin' Rebels' 1991 Final Four nemesis, Duke, is proof that the two can co-exist. This may be a painful analogy, but we need to look somewhere, because the political maneuvering taking place currently is not likely to solve anything.

When Duke beat North Carolina on Sunday the crowd was a sea of white and blue; white and blue worn by students. There were students behind the baskets. There were students along the sides. There were students in the front row.

When UNLV beat Utah State March 3, in what was supposedly Tarkanian's final game, black T-shirts saying "Tark" on the front and "2" (the coach's jersey number from his college playing days) on the back were worn.

But here the people wearing the shirts (other than the team) were not students; they were the fans who sit in "Gucci" row.

UNLV needs a change.

We have a new athletic director. In the fall we will have a new basketball coach. Right now, we need clear leadership at the top.

Las Vegas is ruled by the almighty dollar, but UNLV should not be. This is a public institution. It is here for the students not the Gucci row schmoozers.

The above is the opinion of The Rebel Yell. All other articles on the opinion pages reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of The Rebel Yell.

My alma mater, pride or embarrassment?

by Gena Atkinson

Last Tuesday's Rebel basketball season finale marked the end of the season, as well as the end of a complimentary relationship that benefitted this university and community immensely. The issues surrounding this culmination still remain foggy after an excess of media coverage, "pro-academic" rallies, as well as student-oriented rallies and open forum fiascos at the Board of Regents' meeting. It seems everyone wants a piece of the action and wants to put in their two cents worth, even if it means wearing a "KEEPTARK, FIRE MAXSON" T-shirt. Is the issue Tark vs. Maxson? Or is it a fundamental question of academics versus athletics? It has also been expressed that the real issue is one of administrative ethics and integrity.

The final countdown of the Maxson/Tark issue ironically culminated in the Thomas & Mack Center when record numbers of Tark fans gathered to bid farewell to one of the community's heroes at his last Runnin' Rebel game.

Earlier that same week, a finger-pointing faculty member warned students, "Don't get trapped in the seductive politics of victimization coming from the T&M."

Is it just a perverted coincidence that the T&M of the Thomas & Mack Center could just as easily be the initials for Tarkanian & Maxson? In reference to the faculty member's warning, the latter choice would be much more fitting.

Tark and Maxson, although seemingly mortal enemies now,

were once the perfect team. As a high school senior, I was invited along with other Las Vegas high school seniors to attend a dinner and a Rebel basketball game hosted by UNLV, in an effort to recruit local scholars from area high schools. It was a winning combination. The excitement of a spirited basketball game orchestrated by Tarkanian and a well-put together program highlighting UNLV's academics, including student ambassadors and a wonderfully persuasive speech by Maxson himself, worked together to present an inviting image to prospective students. I am proof that their gameplan and teamwork was a winning combination.

Las Vegas is a unique city, to say the least, and keeping in the tradition of gaudy glamour, Tarkanian knew how to put on a show, complete with fireworks, theme songs, and red carpet. His most important contribution, however, was the community unity he brought to Las Vegas. I was just learning to walk when Tark came to UNLV to teach Vegans about pride. It was the first time Las Vegans felt a bond with one another and their city. Las Vegas is a city shrouded with scandal and scoundrels. UNLV was its one source of legitimacy and respectability. The 1990 NCAA Championship was a win not just for the basketball team, nor the university, but the community as a whole.

Since that championship, Maxson has cashed in on Tark's accomplishments, and rightly so, to further his academic agenda. The painful irony is that just when the nation has

raised its head to see UNLV's progress, we are embroiled in an embarrassing conflict.

As a native Las Vegan, I have experienced time and time again outsiders' misconceptions about this city. Just last summer, I attended summer school at the University of Colorado, home of the college football national co-champions, where UNLV was ridiculed and considered nothing more than a joke. I might expect that attitude from schools without athletic programs to be proud of, but not from what I considered a comparable school. Although criticism is hard to take, and in almost all instances I defend my school and city from attack, in this instance I can do nothing but shake my head in embarrassment.

It's a shame that the fruitful relationship between the administration and the athletic program has ended, crumbling the image UNLV, as well as the community. These are images they had been trying so hard to build. The people of this city and the students of this school deserve better.

Tark is not blame free. Obviously, his program has had its problems. However, his contributions to the community and the community's affection for him is a fact that cannot be discounted.

Maxson, also has his faults, yet he has been an excellent motivator and spokesperson for the university. As a partnership, the combo really worked; as opponents, the result is a fiasco. Whatever comes from the "T&M" now will determine how this city's and university's image plays in the future.

PATRICK