

Rider 'hung out to dry'

At a press conference last Thursday, Rebel basketball star J.R. Rider claimed he was used as a scapegoat by university officials trying to save face in the heat of another controversy. And he was right.

Rider was suspended by Athletic Director Jim Weaver prior to the Rebels' National Invitation Tournament matchup with Southern California. According to the administration, it was determined that some of the work Rider did for a correspondence English course was not completed by him. Rider took the course in summer school, but the homework was not turned in until October and November.

In suspending the school's star basketball player, the UNLV administration, eager to show the NCAA and the Las Vegas community that it has a handle on its own doings, was merely making a gesture for appearances' sake.

It is the responsibility of the athletic department to monitor the eligibility of its student athletes. This should have been ongoing—last summer when Rider was enrolled in the course, for instance.

The day after this controversy started Rider was cleared by Weaver even though his community college English instructor claimed she was pressured at the start of the basketball season into giving Rider a grade. That made him eligible to play in the crucial Big West Tournament.

But when the furor didn't subside and a tutor came forward saying Rider may not have completed the course work, the administration must have figured something had to be done. And since the UNLV team failed to make the NCAA tournament Rider was expendable.

He also had to take the fall because there was no longer an "outlaw" coach on the scene to point the finger at.

As with other controversies at UNLV, right and wrong have become secondary. Now that the athletic department and the administration are on the same page the number of possible villains has been reduced.

The UNLV administration is trying to appear blameless in this whole disaster as people at the top scramble to keep their jobs. They want us to believe that Rider must have devised this all on his own. We are supposed to credit him with finding a correspondence course at Nellis Air Force Base, arranging to submit the work months after the summer term ended and then finding his own tutor to help with the homework and arranging for that person to be paid by the university.

Coach Rollie Massimino, Athletic Director Weaver and President Bob Maxson would have us believe that they had no knowledge of any of this until two weeks ago.

This fiasco is more embarrassing than anything involving student-athletes during Jerry Tarkanian's tenure.

Wasn't the purpose of realigning the athletic department—Tarkanian out, Massimino in—to avoid this type of thing?

J.R. Rider may have failed as a student, but the real failure here is by the athletic department and the administration which did not make his education meaningful and then blamed him for the problem.

The above is the opinion of The Rebel Yell. All other inclusions on the opinion page reflect the opinions of the author or artist indicated and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of The Rebel Yell staff.



MSU's fat prices keep students out of shape

BY DEBRA BASS
OPINION PAGE EDITOR

It's National Nutrition Month and the posters lining the walls of the Moyer Student Union eating area say it's time to "shape up," but at what costs?

The truth of the matter is that it's cheaper and more economical to eat the greasy, fried pseudo-food that all the nutrition guides tell us we shouldn't eat. A skimpy, eight-ounce salad in the MSU costs \$1.20, but a large order of chili cheese fries is on special for 99 cents. Eight ounces of yogurt

is \$1.35, but a scoop of ice cream is only 80 cents.

If you ask Theresa Chiang, director of the student union, she will adamantly state that strides are being made to provide students with a healthier selection of menu items. But that's not enough. Being a poor college student is more than just a stereotype or worn-out cliché. It's an actuality for many of us, especially for the more than 50 percent who rely on financial aid.

In honor of National Nutrition Month, let's see a special on the salad bar instead of the fried

chicken. And what about the beverages? Orange juice costs 25 percent more and we get 50 percent less than if we bought a sugar-packed, carbonated drink.

I don't mean to suggest the school should be responsible for regulating the eating habits of students, but in my view if you're not part of the solution you're contributing to the problem. If they are serious about nutrition month, they should promote menu items and broaden our choices. It's time we stopped making health food synonymous with low-calorie entrees.

Tom the Dancing Bug

