

## SPORTS

## NCAA doing lousy job with student-athletes

By Jim Litke  
Associated Press

If your kids brought home the same lousy report cards that two-thirds of the 65 teams in the NCAA men's tournament did, they'd be grounded for months. Instead, they're all going to get new sneakers and fistfuls of cash.

Now you know why some of the people who watch college sports are always mad in March. It has nothing to do with basketball and everything to do - stop us if you've heard this before - with money. Those same people figure that if CBS is paying \$6 billion over 11 years to the NCAA, the schools sharing that loot should be graduating most of the kids that play for them.

Talk about a radical idea - if it ever catches on, many in the current crop of student-athletes would become as extinct as dodos. But pretend, for the moment, anyway, that the watchdogs were keeping score.

First the good news: Stanford would score 100, Lehigh 90, Dayton 82 and Kansas 73. Five other schools, including those perennial bookworms at Duke and Vanderbilt, would register in the 60s.

Now the bad: Four other so-called institutions of higher learning in the field would have a big, fat zero alongside their names. That's even harder to accomplish than it sounds.

The marking period in the NCAA's latest graduation rate report covered scholarship athletes who entered school between 1993-96 and allowed each six years to graduate. With that much time, you'd think at least one phys ed major in one of those places would have stumbled through the degree maze by sheer luck. Then again, maybe there aren't as many of Jim Harrick Jr.'s exams in circulation as we thought.

In any case, those four schools weren't identified in the latest report, because along with a dozen others, they took advantage of a loophole created by new federal privacy rules and avoided publicly reporting any graduation rates at all. No matter. There is enough disgrace to go around.

Another 40 schools that made the tournament field failed to graduate even half their kids, a number that trails the national average by a few percentage points. Ditto for at least four teams in the Sweet 16 (and maybe more, since only 11 of the 16 schools still playing published their graduation rates).

And then there's this: If a 50 percent graduation rate was required for postseason eligibility - something the do-gooders on the Knight Commission proposed in 2001 - exactly three first-round games would have gone off with the lineups on the floor: Gonzaga vs. Valparaiso, North Carolina vs. Air Force, and Mississippi State vs. Monmouth.

But it gets worse.

On the Boston Globe's Web site last week, columnist Derrick Z. Jackson broke down the numbers for African-Americans on scholarship.

He found the 37 schools that hid behind the privacy rules to avoid publishing their 2003 graduation rates for Blacks averaged just 19.7 percent in the 2002 report. No surprise there, since 13 of the 37 had Black graduation rates of zero in 2002.

"When we bring kids to our campuses and fail to educate them in the numbers we're seeing here," said Richard Lapchick, who heads the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida, "all we're doing is using them up."

The search for a scapegoat usually lands on the doorstep of the NCAA, conveniently forgetting the organization simply administers the policies set by member schools. University presidents have been calling those shots for almost 10 years, and as the latest numbers prove, the pace of reform is still at a crawl.

At first, with initiatives like Prop 48, they tried to raise graduation rates by putting the burden squarely on the kids' shoulders. Those moves nudged the rates upward, but not nearly enough. And with new chief Myles Brand feeling the heat from a lengthening list of embarrassments - everything from conference raids to recruiting scandals and "Coaches Gone Wild" videos have landed on his desk - a consensus is finally emerging to hold the schools accountable instead.

This latest mess has already convinced the NCAA to force members to report their 2003 graduation rates in full. That voluntary compliance will allow the organization to sidestep

## Steele's boxing club unveils new facility

By Les Pierres Streater  
Sentinel-Voice

The Richard Steele Boxing Club has a new location.

Hundreds of community members and youth participated in the grand opening on Saturday, March 13 at 1405 "A" Street at Owens Street, just east of I-15. The program was formerly located at Nevada Partners Inc., supporting the positive development of area youth and young adults since formed in 1992.

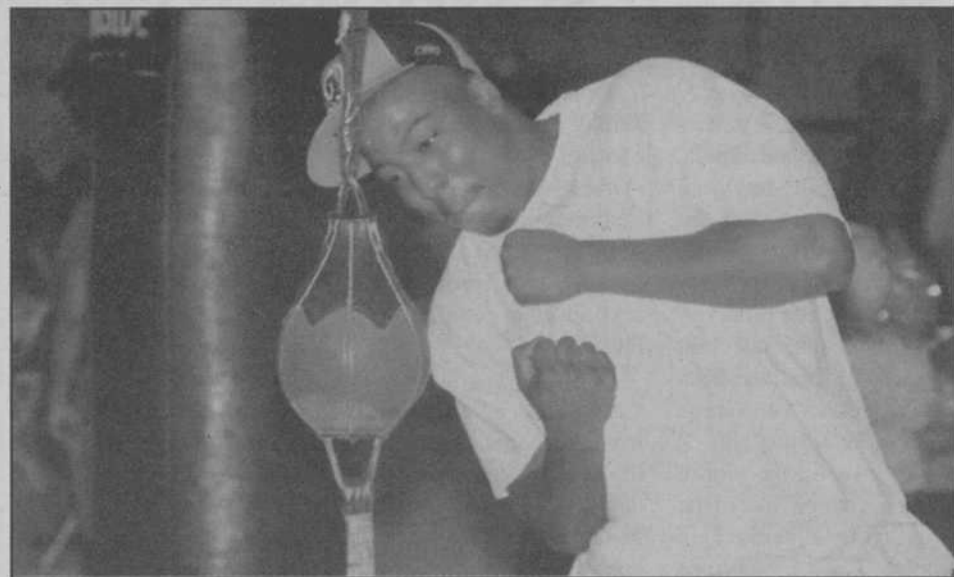
Richard Steele is a retired professional boxer and referee. He was thrilled with the opening of the new facility.

"I'm very happy and very thrilled to be able to open this place," Steele said. "It was a lot of hope, hard work and praying to find a location because we were out of our other location for about two weeks. By the grace of God, we were able to hook up with the Brown brothers and CMX. CMX are the ones who bought this location and allowed us the opportunity to continue our program to entertain young people and teach young people how to be good citizens and great fighters."

The new facility will have expanded use.

"There is so much room at this new facility that we can offer classes and workouts where a person can come in and lose weight, get their body toned up, join the amateur ranks of boxing or continue their training and go into professional boxing," Steele said. "We are also going to feature private rooms where professional fighters can come to town rent out the private rooms to train and get ready for their upcoming fight."

In 2002, Nevada Partners Inc. joined forces with the Culinary Union and Hotel Industry's training partnership, the Culinary



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Lamar Coston works the bag inside the Richard Steele Boxing Club. Formerly located at Nevada Partners, the club just moved into new digs at 1405 "A" St., near Owens Ave.

Training Academy and expanded its mission to bring job training and employment opportunities to area residents. The three programs, NPI, CTA and Steele began looking for new funding and additional space to build their capacity to serve the community.

Recently, the programs reached a deal with CMX Sports and Entertainment and the city of Las Vegas to move the Richard Steele Boxing program to the new facility. It will not only house the boxing program, but will also offer karate, general exercise and life skills training programs targeted at low- and moderate-income youth ages 8-18.

These programs are designed to offer youth positive opportunities to develop life-long skills like physical fitness, discipline, responsibility, self-respect and community service.

Along with an expansion project, Nevada Partners Inc. and the Culinary Training Academy will convert the boxing gym into a training banquet and multipurpose community hall. The expansion will include a restaurant and state-of-the-art training kitchen.

CMX support provided success on grand opening.

"We thought that we would come together and do something positive for the community," James Taylor, CMX director of community affairs. "When we looked at this property, we thought that it would be a good thing, especially here on the West Side for the youth because they don't have anywhere to go and anything to do. This keeps them out of trouble. This fits with the work of CMX because we are in the boxing business."

The mission of the CMX Youth Foundation is to help individuals reach their full potential in all phases of life and to completely develop each person socially, financially, spiritually, professionally and mentally, creating success stories one person at a time and helping to reduce or remove barriers.

The old makes way for the new. With new digs, Richard Steele Boxing can look back over the successful programming.

"My program has been in existence for about 10 years and I have been working with these young kids for a long time," Steele said. "Many of them are second generation kids and some of these kids have moved on to become employed with Metro, the fire department, hotels, medical

fields, attorneys, etc. All of our kids have come out and done wonders for themselves.

"We have a chance to continue this work and I especially want to thank CMX and the Brown brothers, Councilman Lawrence Weekly and Steve Hordsford for giving us the opportunity to continue our work in this community."

Steele was one of the top professional boxing referees.

"I've done 167 world title fights, more world title fights than anyone else in history and that's a great accomplishment," he said. "I've been asked by different dignitaries to be present for different things. I went to South Africa and met Mr. (Nelson) Mandela personally and had dinner with him. That was one of the greatest things in my life."

"I rate today's event in the same manner as meeting Mr. Mandela," Steele said. "He's a great man and this is going to be a great place. This is giving me a chance to show the kids and tell the kids that if they are willing to do something positive with their life, we are willing to back them and help them to achieve that success."

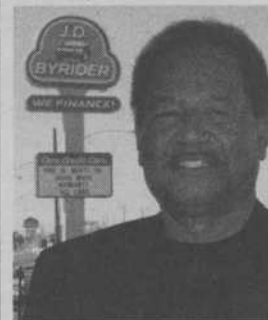
federal restrictions and make the information public late this summer.

"Without continued full publication of the graduation rates - especially those at the low end - we will lose the ability to expose those athletics programs which are failing to educate their student-athletes," Brand said.

Even more promising than public pressure, though, is the so-called "incentive-disincentive" proposal that will be put to a vote by the NCAA board in late April. As currently envisioned, the graduation rate for scholarship athletes would have to be within a few percentage points of the general student body or schools would face penalties ranging from a warning, to loss of scholarships, and possibly even a ban on postseason play.

Assuming the measure is approved, another four years likely would pass before the penalties were phased in. It's a long way away, but it's a start. And as any parent would tell you, it's never too early to make a kid stick his nose in a book.

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