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Statement concerning athletics at the University of Dallas

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Statement concerning athletics at the University of Dallas made by President Donald A. Cowan in response to a request by Mr. David Dozier, sports editor of The Texas Catholic. January 25, 1963

Basketball is an excellent game, one which is a joy to play and a pleasure to watch. As one of the principal forms of team play, it develops qualities of leadership in some boys, and, admittedly, intramural sports do not replace varsity sports in developing dedication to a cause and self reliance under pressure. But, whether we like it or not, the situation in sports for American colleges has changed.

At one time, going in for football was a matter of providing a \$6.50 football and a 10¢ can of lime. Basketball involved five boys in their own tennis shoes. These games proved to be not only exhilarating ones to play but entertaining ones to watch -- so much so that spectators other than students were willing to pay for the privilege of watching. This income provided an incentive for schools to improve their performance in these sports by engaging coaches and supplying equipment. It is obvious in stadiums and field houses throughout the country how far this incentive has led. I do not decry it; American education was given a color and spirit by the contrapuntal activities of athletics in the 1930's, and I am not unappreciative of the cultured aspects of the community circus which college football provided in the 40's. The use of funds contributed by the community to the school was not altogether misspent on athletics.

But the advent of professional teams has relieved colleges of their community function in football and doubtless will relieve

them of that function also in basketball before long; colleges are therefore free to return to their more innocent days when games were played from an excess of spirit in a modicum of time. No longer need the incessant demands of daily practice exhaust young men beyond their capacity for effective study, causing them to accept reduced academic loads and extended college careers beyond their periods of eligibility. It is a general reaction, which I have witnessed frequently, including quite recent observations, that young men capable of acceptable work in academically respectable courses express relief at the freedom from bondage which accompanies the cessation of varsity sports.

The guiding policy for athletics at the University of Dallas is that sports be available for students and not students brought in for sports. If baseball were to be taken so seriously that it interfered with academic life rather than added zest to it, then baseball, too, would be dropped as an interscholastic sport. It must be played for fun in a strictly amateur spirit to be tolerable on a college campus. There may come a time when basketball can again be played in that spirit. That time does not appear to be now.

But basketball is not dead on the University of Dallas campus. When the new gymnasium is built, the game will be played by many young men in a spontaneous and natural manner.

Freed from the overorganization which has plagued college sports in the last two decades, football, baseball, tennis, cross country steeple chase -- the whole spectrum of sports -- can be pursued by young men of spirit and initiative on our thousand-acre campus of broken Texas land as proper diversions to a rigorous academic experience.