

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Principles of Amateurism Undermined Long Ago

To the Editor:

In "[NCAA Takes Heat Over Commercialization of Athletes](#)" (*The Chronicle*, November 27), Libby Sander reports that many members of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, including some university presidents, said the new CBS fantasy-football league represented a "slippery path" toward exploitative commercialization of college sports. What these commission members don't seem to realize is that college sports has already slipped down the path of exploitative commercialization.

The NCAA's bedrock amateurism principles of many years ago — which required colleges and their business partners to treat athletes like other students, and not as commodities — were long ago undermined by unrestrained commercialism and related academic corruption.

William E. Kirwan and R. Gerald Turner, the commission's co-chairs, have said that "NCAA rules are clear: College athletes are amateurs and should not be part of these new business enterprises." However, NCAA rules do not amateurs make, no matter how clearly NCAA rules say that college athletes are amateurs — at least not in the NCAA's big-time programs, as well as in many of their lesser programs. To claim otherwise is disingenuous at best.

Since it was founded in 1989, the commission has strongly advocated policies that protect college athletes from commercial exploitation — except by the colleges themselves. The CBS Sports fantasy college football enterprise is simply following the lead of the colleges' much more extensive commercial exploitation of their athletes.

Although the NCAA takes sporadic heat from some commission members, the NCAA and the commission still remain joined at the hip in a continuing march of folly.

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