

Model Student

“A Lop-Sided Scale: Who Is The True Beneficiary In The NCAA?”

2237 words

English 1102 TR 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Dr. Doug Davis

1 The National Collegiate Athletic Association or NCAA is one of the most adored athletic organizations in American culture. The American populace has admired the events of the NCAA for years, yet the majority of our society would not consider a number of the actions of those involved with the association as ethical. It is a whirlwind of monetary transactions, player-to-institution interface, and colossal agreements between corporations regarding the association itself. College athletes are not solely a crowd of jocks clad in pretty colored uniforms playing an organized sport. The enormity of the revenue generated through college sports is mind-blowing. It was estimated that in the 2008-2009 fiscal year about \$10.6 billion in revenue was received by college athletics programs in America (www.NCAA.org). Though the official website of the NCAA claims, “commitment to fair play is a bedrock principle of the NCAA,” some reports of unethical behavior regarding the association constantly fall through the cracks and never reach the social eye. While institutions and those that hold administrative positions within the colleges and their athletic programs collect an array of benefits such as money and exposure to the public eye through their athletics, the student athletes that generate the majority of these benefits do not receive a fair amount of the rewards they produce. Coaches and universities are paid top-dollar for the performances of student-athletes that are often scrutinized for illicit money transactions, pressured as high school students by recruiters, and forced to make education a low priority when compared to athletics.

2 The benefits relished by coaches and university officials that are ultimately generated by the performances of their student athletes are unbelievably vast in comparison to the rewards given to the actual athletes. Head coaches of major collegiate sports such as football, basketball, or baseball not only make unbelievably high salaries for their coaching, but also gain wealth through various endorsements and bonuses. In his book, *College Sports Inc.*, Murray Sperber agrees when stating, “Coaches, however, are allowed not only to make endorsements but to earn as much money as possible from them. American colleges and universities permit no other employee or official to represent them for personal profit in this way” (191). The lavish lifestyle led by collegiate head coaches across America is fueled by the hard work of student athletes that may never gain the chance of competing in their sport at the professional level to earn similar paychecks to those of their coaches. Mark Richt, head football coach at the University of Georgia, enjoys a contract with annual payments of \$2.81 million. Richt’s salary is just over half of what Mack Brown, head football coach at the University of Texas, receives through his contract providing an annual salary of \$5 million.

3 However, coaches are not the only individuals participating in the high dollar affairs of the NCAA. The drive for corporate giants such as Nike, Under Armour, and Adidas to have their logos printed on NCAA jerseys across America are significant aspects of the revenue received by these programs. Two years ago, the NCAA banned its players from displaying personal messages on their uniforms such as the bible verses University of Florida quarterback, Tim Tebow, habitually posted on his eye black for inspiration. It is shockingly unethical for the association to ban personal messages while they classify exactly where players should display corporate insignia that benefits the NCAA. As part of Auburn University’s \$10.6 million deal with sporting goods giant, Under Armour, Cam Newton donned at least 15 of the company’s

logos throughout the season (Branch 94). Sporting good companies may also utilize opportunities presented by head coaches in the offseason as well just for another chance to spread the popularity of their products. Coaches hold various summer camps and improvement workshops that are not only a great recruiting tool for their program, but also a beautiful moneymaking venture. Coaches will knowingly provide items of apparel for their participants that are produced by the same company that provides the uniforms for his sports team in return for rewards for the exceptional advertising he provided for the company. Sperber claims, “Nike rewarded coaches in their stable with all-expenses-paid vacations to places like the Virgin Islands” (184).

Coaches and officials will not only go to great lengths to create profit opportunities, but they will bend the rules in the eligibility procedures of their star players as well. They are reliant upon the student-athletes to keep a good academic standing to be eligible to take the field or court in big games that generate strong revenues for their institution. Branch reports one instance where Jan Kemp, an English professor at The University of Georgia, was demoted and fired after her refusal to inflate several athletes’ grades. UGA administrators altered nine Bulldog football player’s grades to protect their eligibility to participate in the 1982 Sugar Bowl. After approaching a supervisor about the issue, the supervisor questioned Kemp, “Who do you think is more important to this University, you or Dominique Wilkins (stand-out UGA basketball player)?” (100). Student athletes of the NCAA are required to complete diligent academic work to maintain their eligibility through a good academic standing coupled with training and practices designed to master their sport while their coaches and superiors in the institution reap the benefits. Robert and Amy McCormick reinforce this statement in their entry to the

Washington Law Review, “Only one group of persons is denied the full financial fruit of the bountiful enterprise known as college sports, the players themselves” (76).

5 College students participating in varsity athletics may have the most engaged schedules of anyone involved with the institution they attend, and all they receive is a scholarship. Of course a full scholarship to the college of one’s choice is a marvelous opportunity, but one must analyze the responsibilities that come along with an athletic scholarship. Student athletes are expected to keep an acceptable academic standing through habitual studying, and spend just as much time or more on improving their skills with the sport they are attending the college to participate in. Most college athletes are not granted the opportunity to hold a part time job to cover living expenses as the majority of regular students enjoy. The athletes are too busy with their sport’s responsibilities. “Employee-Athletes” such as football players may put in 53 hours a week during the regular season on top of academics. Athletes late to practices may be punished with additional workouts, and repeat offenders may even be stripped of their scholarship. They may also be forced by their coaches to refrain from taking certain classes or pursuing certain majors due to their academic rigor, which may interfere with athletic affairs (McCormick and McCormick 98-107).

6 As living expenses are typically not included in an athlete’s scholarship he must find money to cover his cost of living, and some players may resort to selling their athletic gear to collectors which is usually classified as an illicit money transaction by the NCAA and deserving of serious punishment. A.J. Green of the University of Georgia Bulldogs football team was suspended for four games in 2010 following the sale of one of his game-worn jerseys. Green sold the jersey for under \$1000 in order to collect a minor sum of food and entertainment money for a spring break trip. Green peddled his jersey from the Independence Bowl game in which the

University of Georgia took on Texas A & M University, where both schools were given a mammoth \$1,100,000 payout from the Independence Bowl organization. Green was suspended for receiving a \$1000 payment, which is miniscule in comparison to the funds the university was given. Michael Wilbon comments on Green's punishment in his entry to *The Washington Post*, "The suspension of Green doesn't just point to the greed that permeates college athletics; it's shameful that the rules are set up to punish a kid this severely because he sees he's the only person not making any money off his labor and wants to sneak a few hundred bucks for himself" (D05).

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As one analyzes the countless benefits most student athletes generate for their university, he may inquire on the process these cartel-like institutions complete in order to gain the commitments of these esteemed players. The recruiting process of student athletes throughout our country can become nearly as unprincipled as the actual system they enter when they have ended the recruiting pursuit by signing a letter of intent to their chosen college. High school students or even junior high school students may be heckled by coaches and scouts or rushed in to crucial postsecondary decisions following scholarship offers when they should be focused on developing a strong work ethic through academics combined with their athletic performance. The distractions coaches create with their pursuit of top athletes can be detrimental to the academic performance of those students. Hank Nuwer exclaims in his book, *Recruiting in Sports*, "What [coaches and recruiters] may view as being conscientious and persistent often amounts to out-right invasion of the privacy of high school athletes and their families" (53). Institutions vigorously recruit top athletes across the country to gain the player's commitment before the competition reaches them. The high school student is quick to accept offers because his opportunities will become significantly scarcer as more early commitments are made. "Early

recruitment... elevates athletics over education” (Yen 587-588). The most discouraging aspect of the entire recruiting scheme is that, following his rushed postsecondary decision a student could possibly have his scholarship pulled following a single season of poor athletic performance. An association dedicated to fair play such as the NCAA should never allow such unjust activity. Alfred C. Yen proposes a solution to this issue in his entry to the *Boston College Law Review*. Yen claims that if a student is offered a binding scholarship while he is still a student in high school, for each year before the high school student graduates he should gain an additional guaranteed year on his scholarship. Therefore, seniors would be given a traditional one-year scholarship whether he performed well or not, juniors would be guaranteed a two-year agreement, sophomores would be assured a three-year scholarship, and freshman commits would be given four years of funded studies (612).

8 The most vulnerable victims of early recruiting are typically the occupants of low-income families housed in areas where children and teenagers may not be exposed to similar amounts of opportunities middle-class youngsters would be exposed to. Coaches and scouts are not the only culprits of the exploitation of less fortunate athletes. America’s corporate giants earlier mentioned do not refrain from heckling prospective athletes at a young age as well. Andrew Zimbalist highlights the problem in his book, *Unpaid Professionals, Commercialism and Conflict in Big-Time Sports*:

Nike and Adidas are fighting it out on the playgrounds and school yards... street agents stalk the playgrounds and begin offering promising junior high school kids free sneakers. Kids from poor neighborhoods are enticed at an early age to believe that basketball is their ticket to success. Never mind the odds of one chance in several thousand that a high school basketball player makes it to the NBA. (139)

These athletes are rushed to make crucial life decisions without realizing the true intentions of those individuals that are pushing them to make the decision.

9 Though the NCAA continues to grow in popularity, the blemishes of this massive association must be recognized in order to put an end to the exploitation of young adults across America. The playing field must be evened so that college athletes can receive their fair share of the benefits they work so hard to create. High dollar contracts similar to those received by professional athletes will not solve the problem and only destroy the amateur charm displayed by college sports, but a just compensation from the NCAA to its athletes that generate huge amounts of wealth for their schools should be considered. The occasional improper actions of coaches, scouts, and major companies throughout America highlight the true value of these athletes. Institutions are willing to bend the set rules and regulations in order to gain the commitment of these students to participate in their athletic programs, and they should be willing to offer a fair portion of the benefits that would at least cover a student's living expenses. As Americans continue to enjoy intercollegiate athletics they must realize the underlying story of their favorite college team.

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“Alcott Against the Grain”
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English 1102 M, W 9:30- 10:45
Dr. Davis

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Louisa May Alcott was born on November 29, 1832. She was the second of four girls born to Bronson and Abigail Alcott. Louisa May Alcott grew up in Concord, Massachusetts where the family received frequent visits from neighbors like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau (Rompalske 112). Alcott’s father was an author, transcendentalist, and a dreamer who could never earn enough money to support his wife and four daughters (Tuttleton 15). Alcott and her family lived in poverty and often had to rely on help from friends and family to survive. Louisa May Alcott decided as a teenager that it was her duty to support her family. So she took small menial jobs and between the bad fortune of experiencing sexual harassment at one job and having received a small payment for the publication of her first poem, she turned to writing for money (Rompalske 112). Alcott enjoyed writing stories of dark secrets and forbidden passion, wild gothic thrillers paid the best; however, she also felt the need to write things her father and her author friends would approve of. For this reason, she often wrote under a pseudonym or anonymity (Tuttleton 17). When a publisher approached Louisa May Alcott and requested her to write a “girl’s story” she did so based on her own family and backed by the encouragement of her father (Rompalske 112). The resulting story- *Little Women* was hugely popular and a sequel was requested. The writing and success of *Little Women* freed Alcott and her family from their financial woes. Louisa May Alcott died in 1888 just weeks after her father and is buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery near Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emerson and Thoreau.

Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* is a story about the March family. The story chronicles the events in the lives of the four March sisters from adolescence into adulthood. *Little Women* depicts the trials and tribulations as well as the joys and triumphs of their lives. They are faced with the burdens and uncertainty of life during the Civil War with their father away fighting. Their mother- called Marmee in the story- is home with them, attempting to love and guide them into adulthood with conservative, moralistic ideologies of behaviors and attitudes that would be appropriate for women in their time. One story told by Marmee about the values she wanted ingrained in her daughters is as follows:

“Once upon a time, there were four girls, a good many comforts and pleasures, kind friends and parents who loved them dearly, and yet they were not contented [...] These girls were anxious to be good and made many excellent resolutions; but they did not keep them very well, and were constantly saying, ‘If we only had this,’ or ‘If we could only do that,’ quite forgetting how much they already had, and how many pleasant things they actually could do. So they asked an old woman what spell they could use to make them happy, and she said, ‘When you feel discontented, think over your blessings, and be grateful.’” (Alcott 46-47).

The sisters took these moralistic fables to heart and three of the four March sisters acted very prim-and-proper, ladylike and “acceptable” most of the time. The fourth sister, Jo- who is in fact written to be the personification of Alcott- is more off the beaten path. In fact, events in Louisa May Alcott’s life helped to shape the writing of her novel *Little Women*. Alcott desired to break away from social gender stereotypes and did so subtly in

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her novel with names and personalities of her characters that didn't fit the norm.

3 The social gender stereotypes Alcott transcended were directly related to the roles of women in the nineteenth century which were limited by public opinions about the status of women in society. According to Gustafson, women in the nineteenth century were viewed as being minimally important and remaining in the background was viewed as their primary place of position in society (9). Though these opinions were predominant, the nineteenth century also gave rise to suffrage as women were beginning to awaken to the gender discrimination rampant in society. One such injustice noted in the Encyclopedia Britannica is the fact that women in most states were given the right to vote in the years just after the Civil War, but not granted the right to vote in federal elections in all states until 1920 (par. 8-9). Women were considered the weaker sex and their major social role was maternal and domestic. Women of the nineteenth century were taught from an early age that cooking, cleaning and caring for children were the behaviors expected of them (The 19th par. 7). There were few things outside of domesticity that women could respectfully do- writing being one of them.

4 In fact, scholarly sources have commented that Louisa May Alcott was influenced in her writing by the social opinions of her time. She had to revise many of her stories due to opinions that they were too long, morbid and sensational (Tuttleton 18). Critics note that Alcott had to give special consideration, in her writing, to the attitudes of her father and the many prolific authors with whom she often had opportunities to interact. Tuttleton states: Alcott "claimed that she could not write about her real interests because of what Mr. Emerson or her father might think of her" (17). Alcott battled a literary conflict between writing what would be acceptable in a public forum and the need to

satisfy her own authorial ambition and style. Alcott did manage to have some of her racier works published, but to do so she had to use a pseudonym or simply write anonymously (Bernstein 29). Scholars further discuss how Alcott goes against conventional expectations for women's roles in society both in her life and in her writing. Alcott was an early activist supporting such ideas as suffrage, abolition, temperance, child labor reform, and increase education and professional opportunities for women (Tuttleton 17). Louisa May Alcott was even the founder of the Women's Temperance Society in Concord, Massachusetts (Dawson 120). Bernstein points out that "Alcott was vitally interested in the feminist questions of her day, including how a woman might create a literary career in her own right, given the many restrictions that patriarchy placed on women's lives" (25). Scholars point out subtle ways Alcott places her personal views on gender crossover and freedom to express her true self in her writing. Also in her writing are many parallels to her own life. Scholars indicate many similarities in Alcott's characters to her real-life relations. Dawson points out how the fictional March family was in fact a "highly idealized recreation of Alcott's own family" (112). Scholars discuss how Alcott's personal experiences greatly influenced her writing, everything from Alcott's personal beliefs to the impact of other's opinions of her work.

Louisa May Alcott's life experiences were the main background sources for her writing *Little Women*. The lives of the March family so paralleled that of Alcott's own family, that it is simple to understand how she was able to write such an easily read, believable story. Alcott wrote the story of the four sisters with situations equivalent to those in her own life. According to Tuttleton, each of the four March sisters represented one of the real-life Alcott sisters- "Anna (the domestic Meg March), Elizabeth (the frail

Beth), May (the artistic but annoying Amy), and Louisa (the coltish writer Jo, who could “never learn to be respectable”)" (15). The experiences Alcott’s family had with financial difficulties were also visible in the March family: “Don’t you wish we had the money papa lost when we were little, Jo? Dear me! how happy and good we’d be if we had no worries!” (Alcott 4-5). Alcott used her experiences with writing to govern Jo’s character into writing as well. She used her experiences to give life to the difficulties Jo faced as she began writing as a source of income (as did Alcott herself). According to Bernstein, Jo, like Alcott refused to allow her own name to be associated with her sensation stories due to the fear of disappointing her loved ones, and was therefore forced to have those published anonymously (29). Jo, like Alcott, is also encouraged by her parents to write a story that is considered wholesome and simple- “write something for us [your family], and never mind the rest of the world. Try it dear; I’m sure it would do you good, and please us very much” (Alcott 445). And in so doing, Jo found success just as Louisa May Alcott found success in *Little Women*- the story about her own family.

6 The character of Jo March gives a voice to the subversive attitudes Alcott harbors toward gender stereotypes in society. Alcott wrote Jo’s character to be one completely off the beaten path for women in the nineteenth century. Jo not only had a masculine name, but her personality was one that displayed itself with more wild and reckless abandon than what would have generally been acceptable for women. Much to the chagrin of the other March girls who were constantly reminding Jo to act appropriately as a young lady, Jo simply hated the idea of being confined to the social standards of womanhood.

“I hate to think I’ve got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns,

and look as prim as a China-aster! It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boys' games and work and manners! I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy; and it's worse than ever now, for I'm dying to go fight with papa, and I can only stay at home and knit like a poky old woman!" (Alcott 5).

Bernstein points out that "not only does Jo long to be a boy, but her literary passions often allow her to play that role" (27) in the private plays she creates and the sisters perform. Jo's character is an ingenious way for Alcott to convey her attitudes of social injustice and the confinement of a woman's true identity due to the stereotypes of the proper behavior women were forced to conform to.

Louisa May Alcott wrote *Little Women* as a reflection of her own life, but also as her way of drawing attention to the inadequate gender divisions in society. Alcott's embodiment of the fictional Jo March was indicative of the social injustices she experienced in her own life. Her silent yet powerfully portrayed battle against gender stereotypes were evident in her novel *Little Women*- through Jo March. Jo's inner conflicts over her desire to be a free spirit instead of conforming to the social gender divisions gives voice to Alcott's views that are anything but compliant. Alcott penned Jo's character in such a way so as to give freedom to her own personality that was contradictory to what society deemed acceptable in her lifetime. Instead of living a life controlled by social expectations and boundaries, Alcott used her writing to cross over the gender line and Jo March was the very catalyst she used to do it. Both her masculine name and her unruly personality gave Alcott the fortitude she needed in order to cross the gender boundaries.

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