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Hilltopics Staff

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National Football League Code of Conduct: Goodell should enforce the rules more consistently

by James Longhofer

There is something laudable about Roger Goodell’s campaign to clean up the NFL’s image by instituting a new code of conduct. Since taking office as the new NFL Commissioner, Goodell has suspended Chris Henry and Tank Johnson for eight games, Pacman Jones for an entire season, and Michael Vick indefinitely. All of these men behaved in a way that reflected badly on the league. Henry was suspended for having felony charges against him in two states. Johnson violated gun laws by carrying a personal arsenal that could equip a small army, in addition to driving while intoxicated. Jones has been arrested five times since turning pro, was linked to an incident at a Las Vegas nightclub that left a bouncer paralyzed, and added the phrase “making it rain” to ESPN’s vocabulary. Finally, Vick (or “Ookie” to his friends) infamously ran a dog-fighting ring and personally executed dogs that performed badly by shooting, electrocuting, or even body-slamming them. However, the actions of the NFL show that the league is more concerned about protecting its image than actually punishing wrongdoers or doing the right thing.

Take the case of Leonard Little. Little is a defensive end for the St. Louis Rams and has played for them ever since being drafted in 1998. During his first year playing for the Rams, Little killed a woman while driving drunk after his birthday party. That woman, Susan Gutweiler, was married and a mother to a 15 year old son. Little was convicted of manslaughter and served 90 days in jail. The NFL’s response was to ban him for six games. In the years since Gutweiler’s death, Little managed to rack up multiple alcohol arrests, including an incident in 2004 in which the judge banned him from drinking and another incident in 2005 where prosecutors in St. Louis tried to have him charged as a persistent violator. Little is clearly a person who has issues with alcohol and whose behavior killed a woman. Gallingly, he hasn’t even had the courage to talk to the son of the woman he killed. Isn’t this the kind of person that Commissioner Goodell is trying to take a stand against?

I would hope so, but Leonard Little got a three-year contract extension from the Rams last year. While Michael Vick will serve at least a year in federal prison for his cruel treatment of animals, Little will continue to play and live the lavish lifestyle of an NFL player even though he was responsible for killing a woman, has failed to deal with his own issues with alcohol, and hasn’t...
How good is your memory? How strong is your voice?

Last Spring, while many SMU students enthusiastically celebrated the end of the semester, or better yet, the end of their college career, other members of the SMU community were mourning a very different type of end—the end of a life. With Meaghan Bosch, SMU endured its third student death due to drug overdose in less than a year. As we all know, our campus is much too small and much too intimate for these deaths to go unnoticed. And even though I did not know Jacob Stiles, Jordan Crist, or Meaghan personally, I could feel the emotional weight of their untimely deaths hanging over this campus. Commencement and the normal pre-summer excitement seemed muted by the tragedies of these three students.

But that was May of this year—now only a few months later, things seem to have returned to normal here at SMU. The fall 2007 semester began with the traditional sequence of welcome-back parties: a few bars one night, a Greek “event” the next, maybe a club or two later in the week. This series of consecutive party-nights is designed in good intent to reunite friends separated by the summer break, but usually dissolves into binge-drinking escapades in which alcohol is a necessary ingredient for enjoyment. For fear of sounding prudish, let me clearly state that alcohol can be a wonderful thing if used responsibly. But here is where the water turns murky—how do we define “responsibility?” Since I do not pretend to have any moral authority or knowledge on the correct or incorrect method of drinking and/or partying, I instead pose this question: If Jacob, Jordan, and Meaghan had stopped to consider their social lifestyles before it was too late, would their fate have been the same? The answer seems to be, unequivocally, “no.”

If there is a lesson (and I believe there are many) in the three deaths of the SMU students last year, it is the importance of self-understanding. As masters of our bodies, it is important to remind ourselves, from time to time, that we are not only fragile, but unique—no one knows your body better than you. While some debate SMU’s culture and how its social structures promote poor decisions, lost in the fray is that singular voice: what is best for me? What is my limit? After all, were not Jacob, Jordan, and Meaghan first and foremost individuals, unique persons each with their own personalities, likes, and dislikes? For too long, SMU (and most other American colleges and universities) has viewed the anti-drug/alcohol awareness campaign as a battle against a group dynamic. This strategy argues that it is a community’s acceptance or indifference toward illegal drug use and under-age drinking that threatens its members. Why else would RLSH require its RAs to report underage drinking that occurs not only in the dorms, but in any capacity on or off campus? If SMU is to truly learn from its mistakes and achieve real growth out of these tragedies, it needs to promote within its students self-understanding, self-recognition, and self-care. The student body that honors its physical body is a healthy body.

So take a moment (or two if you are a first-year) and consider you for yourself, because ultimately no amount of PR campaigns or educational programs is going to fully register the consequences of drinking or using illegal drugs. Remember the lives of our three classmates now departed. Evaluate your beliefs, discover your convictions, understand your limitations—and then commit to their preservation.

How good is your memory? How strong is your voice? The student that is aware of who he is and where he is going is the student that is not endangered by alcohol or illegal drugs. And hopefully that next party will be fun, but self-policing (and not necessarily alcohol-free).

Todd Baty is a senior history and music major
Upon visiting the website of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, I immediately felt overwhelmed. The page is headed by an image of the American flag and “DEA,” written in steely-looking font in an apparent attempt to be intimidating. What met my eyes next was a veritable minefield of links, each more confusing than the last, and many of them self-congratulatory reports of individuals being indicted on drug charges.

My personal favorite was a small graphic of some pills and capsules with the enthralling caption of “Hydrocodone: A Growing Drug of Concern”, blurred for dramatic effect, but instead simply evoking hyperemotional local news specials created for the amusement of worry-warts and couch potatoes.

After several minutes of intense searching, all I was able to find were rambling legislative documents, typical “drugs are bad” information that has been drilled into our brains since elementary school, and a diagram detailing the organization of the administration.

In other words, this website was a complete waste of space and time. (The government failed to be efficient and straightforward? Surely not!)

Most fascinating to me was the utter one-sidedness. I was unable to find any statement on or mention whatsoever of the drastic racial discrimination in the war on drugs, or the basically useless nature of anti-drug campaigns. Any information that the site did provide seemed unprofessional, subjective, and inexact – for example, in the page describing the effects of marijuana, the DEA mentions a study in which 4th graders were tested in verbal and mathematical skills, and then re-tested in the 12th grade. “Although all of the students had scored equally well in 4th grade, those who were heavy marijuana smokers [...] scored significantly lower in 12th grade than nonsmokers.”

Significantly lower? What the hell does that mean? How many points does it take to constitute significance? Did they take other factors into consideration? Did they ask the students who had kept going to school and who had started ditching class? Who had faithfully exercised their brains, studied, and done their homework, and who had blown it off? Nope. Thanks for neglecting to provide us with all of the necessary information once again, government.

I turned to Google for help, and within seconds, I was able to find drugwarfacts.org, a much more useful site, which stated the facts in plain black Times New Roman font and neatly cited all of its sources.

A study from the U.S. Department of Justice mentions the incarceration rate, in state or federal prison for mid-year 2005, per 100,000 people. For white men, the rate was 709; for Hispanic men, 1,856; and for black men, 4,682. Another study, also by the Department of Justice, estimates that whites constitute 72% of current illicit drug users, while Hispanics and blacks constitute 10% and 15%, respectively. A little fishy, to say the least.

The system is racist. Websites run by individual citizens are more organized and factual than those run by our government. Billions of our tax dollars are used to fund anti-drug campaigns that do more harm than good – a study from Texas State University states that anti-drug advertisements “produce immediate effects opposite [of those] intended by the creators of the campaign.”

How can anyone be expected to take the War on Drugs seriously? It’s time for the federal government to step up, end the corruption, and stop wasting our money.

Beth Anserson is a junior accounting major

We can’t handle the truth: a disappointed look at the DEA

by Beth Anderson
Why not everybody needs a Vuitton bag to be happy: a reflection on one student’s summer travels

by Monica Chavez

As a three-year student of Japanese, long fascinated with Japanese culture, and a Hello Kitty junkie since the age of four, it was a surprise to most when I came home this summer from a two-and-a-half month stint in Asia and said I was more enamored of Vietnam. My reasoning was not superficial. What I’d discovered was a massive difference between, on one hand, a latter-day communist state on the rapid road to economic development, and on the other, a well-established first-world country, heavily Westernized in many respects.

Vietnam is not the backwards, war-torn nation many people still think it is. According to the CIA World Factbook, 19.5 percent of Vietnamese live below the poverty line, compared to 12 percent in the United States, significantly less than that in other developing countries (Mexico, for instance, with a rate of 40 percent). Keeping in mind that different countries have different standards by which they set the poverty line, this statistic may still come as a surprise to those expecting a country significantly less prosperous.

Japan, however, as the second most powerful economy in the world, is clearly head-and-shoulders above Vietnam. If material possessions are any indication, the Japanese are doing pretty well. The majority own cars, and are well-equipped with multifunctional cell-phones, handheld videogame consoles, and designer handbags. To the extent that the country has imitated the modern American lifestyle, you can find suburban neighborhoods reminiscent of those in the Dallas area, complete with Super Target-like shopping centers and wide streets fairly devoid of pedestrians. Processed, pre-packaged foods are as common as in the States.

Vietnamese, meanwhile, are still getting around on motorbikes and bicycles, and don’t usually boast the latest in fashion and technology. Cities and towns are crowded and bustling, and only the American or Korean expatriate seems to enjoy the privilege of living in a spacious, suburban-type neighborhood. And finally, those foreign visitors accustomed to FDA-regulated, uber-sanitary sustenance may find themselves with an unrelenting case of diarrhea after eating some the Vietnam’s (albeit delicious) street food.

Given these striking contrasts, it’s obvious why people might start at the idea that I prefer the Vietnamese lifestyle to the Japanese. Not only that, you might wonder on what grounds I am comparing these two utterly different countries in the first place.

In fact, what I have found in my two visits to Vietnam is that people seem happy. Without all the accoutrements of modern-day life in the developed world, Vietnamese by and large seem to lead simple but fulfilling lives. Having stayed with and visited the families of my Vietnamese friends, I appreciated their emphasis on family life and their incredible hospitality, despite the fact that they may often live in small houses together with as many as 20 relatives. Space may be limited, but food, bought from the local street market (sometimes literally just outside the front door) is plentiful, and people live comfortably. While gadgets like cell-phones and laptops have become fairly common, I never got the impression that they were the center of attention.

Japan is a different animal entirely. Though Japanese society is still fairly family-centered, with higher standards of living has come the ability, good or bad, for families to split up into separate nuclear households. With development have emerged the typical problems plaguing developed societies, namely a rebellious youth culture, the pressures of a fast-paced lifestyle, and a spiritual vacuity that invites obsession with material things as a way to fill the void.

I draw this comparison between Vietnam and Japan not only because I happen to have traveled to both, but because I see in Japan a potential for what Vietnam might become. Japan, like Vietnam, has a Confucian cultural background and a Buddhist religious tradition, and was, not so long ago, home to a lifestyle not too unlike that still existent in Vietnam today. Take China as an example of a country somewhere between the two extremes. Ten years ago bicycles were that country’s most common mode of transportation, and now suddenly it seems every Chinese has gone out and bought a car. A materialism not unlike that which swept Japan in the
As the First Years here on the hilltop settle into the routine of classes, socializing, and 3 a.m. Taco Bell runs while studying and the returning upperclassmen try to shake off the summer lull, the hardworking student organizations here at SMU are out in force trying to recruit new members for a new academic year. While some students wander over to the tables, poster boards, candy giveaways, and friendly folks of the SAMSA (Student Activities and Multicultural Student Affairs) office, most students walk on by, assuming that the whole “involvement” thing is not for them. I would like to encourage all those students who do walk by to reconsider that decision and walk on up to the SAMSA or the Leadership and Community Involvement Office (both on the 3rd floor of Hughes-Trigg) and get involved in an academic, political, social, cultural, or community service organization that appeals to them.

While there are more selfish or individualistic reasons to get involved in an organization (and they are fine in and of themselves) such as the stellar appeal your resume will have, the sense of self-fulfillment and pride you have knowing you are actually doing something, etc. there are more important arguments for getting “active” on the hilltop. Our beloved Southern Methodist University has an image problem and it’s a problem we as students need to change. This image problem is viewed by the community at large outside of SMU to be a university culture that espouses that all SMU stands for is partying, Greek life, and materialism. Not to bash a good party, Greek life, or the occasional pilgrimage to our favorite temple of consumption, Northpark, but there is much more to life, namely collegiate life.

The problem with SMU’s lack of academic life can be best summed up by the use of the tired cliché of the SMU ‘bubble’. Our student body often seems to hold a mind-set of removal and ennui in relation to our society, world, and its events and problems. For whatever reason, it seems that we all feel removed from the world around us and do not actively seek to reengage that world while on campus. There is nothing inherently wrong with taking a break, going to some parties, and having a good time, but we as a student body must realize that we are not removed from the events and ideas of the world. If anything, our time here should also involve discussion about our world and our role as citizens, future leaders, and global residents of a period in which our species has reached unprecedented scientific, social, and democratic change and growth.

That is why I would implore you to consider involvement on campus. Getting engaged in an organization is a great way to work for your view of change in the world. You may think that the political, cultural, and social issues of our day don’t affect you now, but that would be a shortsighted belief. When you graduate you will be paying taxes, having children, working in the economy, perhaps serving in the military and all of these day-to-day activities are affected by the politics, economics, and events of the world at large outside the beautiful bubble here. Wouldn’t it be better to acclimate and involve yourself in these things now rather than wait until it is too late? Involvement not only helps you change the world but allows you to help grow SMU into an engaged and active campus community that will only benefit our beloved university in rankings, monetary donations, and national and international prestige.

There is another component to the argument for involvement that would be wise to consider. Involvement can help further your academic and social development – one of the key reasons that we come to college (and of course pay so much for it)! As we can see from many Ivy League universities, an engaged student body is an intellectually driven student body. It is no fluke that the most intellectually driven conversations happen on the areas of campus where student leaders congregate – in the SAMSA with all the various SMU student organizations, the Honors Program, and other campus organizations and locations where academically and socially engaged students are to be found. If you are interested in having a stimulating conversation with students of difference, see “More than just a resume booster” on page 7.
Internship turned moral quandary: who wants to stick it to the man when he pays so well?

by Josh Wood

As an electrical engineering student ending his sophomore year at SMU, I spent a considerable amount of time last spring searching for summer internships in my particular field. I was running out of luck when, the morning after my last final, a representative from Lockheed Martin contacted me about a job in Fort Worth. Considering that Lockheed is one of the more recognized names in engineering (and that I was still out of a job with summer ominously approaching), I accepted the offer immediately. It wasn’t until I was deep in the middle of my stay at Lockheed that I began to think about the discrepancy between my values and my desire for personal gains.

I have always felt a strong desire for personal success; it’s the reason I get out of bed for that 8:00 class. It’s why I stay up all night studying for an exam or finishing a paper. That distant possibility of becoming a successful individual has become the impetus of my scholastic achievement. While working at Lockheed, I comfortably felt that my internship was the next rung on the ladder toward that ultimate goal. I made strong connections with my co-workers, absorbed invaluable information about the defense industry and the intricacies involved, and explored many options of future employment and advancement potential. I had a great time, made some money to pay for my school expenses, and started to see the benefits of working for a government-contracted company. It was beginning to seem as though a portion of the path ahead had been brilliantly illuminated; but something in the back of my brain kept clouding the path, and nagging me every time I received my paycheck.

It turns out, that distant fog was my conscience. That paycheck which was stimulating a desire to excel in my field was also stirring up my core values of anti-violence. I consider myself a libertarian of sorts—I take a somewhat conservative stance on fiscal matters, while staying liberally minded when it comes to social policies (the contradiction of the two is a discussion for a later date). My opinion of the war in Iraq does not stray from this ideology. Wars should be in the annals of history, not the headlines of today’s paper. Why bother trying to sort things out now? No, this isn’t a lesson in procrastination; I simply feel that struggling with some internal conflict that may or may not exist a few years down the road is a waste of effort. I’ve chosen to temporarily ignore my morals from interfering with my desire for accomplishment. My head was spinning from all the confusion, when I realized that time solves all problems. I was only going into my junior year of college. I don’t even know what my values will be in a few years. Why bother trying to sort things out now? Or when should I stop my morals from interfering with my desire for accomplishment? My head was spinning from all the confusion, when I realized that time solves all problems. I was only going into my junior year of college. I don’t even know what my values will be in a few years. Why bother trying to sort things out now? No, this isn’t a lesson in procrastination; I simply feel that struggling with some internal conflict that may or may not exist a few years down the road is a waste of effort. I’ve chosen to temporarily ignore my demons; this could lead to my success in the future or a prescription of crazy pills. I think I can handle the risk.

Josh Wood is a junior electrical engineering major
Not so marveled by the modern...  
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post-war period is making itself known on the high streets of Beijing, with the burgeoning middle class jumping at the chance to buy the Nike shoes and Vuitton purses they could never have afforded a decade ago. Hong Kong, once famous for its bustling street markets, has seen them gradually pushed back by convenience chains. With Vietnam’s recent admission to the WTO, a similar fate might not be far away.

I don’t mean to romanticize life in a developing country or completely disparage the Japanese lifestyle. I should note that my observations, except where supplemented by outside sources, are just my own impressions from the limited time I’ve spent in these two countries. I felt very safe in Japan and am indebted to my friends there for their kindness and hospitality. By the same token, it’s not as though I didn’t witness poverty and hardship in Vietnam. What disappointed me about Japan, however, were the things that reminded me too much of America: that which amounted, ultimately, to an emptiness in modern life.

Monica Chavez is a senior political science and foreign language major

this is part 1 or a two part series, part two will be published in the september 17th issue of Hilltopics

More than just a resume booster...  
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ferent political, social, cultural, and economic backgrounds, then you only need come to an Honors event or a political debate in Hughes-Trigg to find a refreshing academic undercurrent.

Perhaps the most important argument for checking out some campus clubs and organizations is the mere fact that they are fun, a great way to meet people, and form many of the memories you will carry away from college. College is about experiences, learning, and growth – make sure you do your best to pursue them with the amazing services, faculty, staff, and organizations that SMU has to offer.

Ben Wells is a Senior anthropology, history, and Asian studies major

NFL players gone wild? A scary thought...  
continued from page 1

even attempted to do right by the victim’s family.

If killing dogs for sport merits an indefinite suspension, I would think that being the cause of the death of a human being and failing to take responsibility for it would too. I don’t deny the seriousness of Vick’s sins, but I do have a problem with Commissioner Goodell’s enforcement of his code of conduct policy. It is good that Goodell is trying to hold players accountable for their behavior off the field. Sports stars, like all celebrities, are role models and they need to act with that in mind. However, the code of conduct needs to be enforced consistently and logically; players who act like thugs shouldn’t be a part of the league. Pacman Jones is a good example this. A player who has been arrested five times, questioned by police 11 times, and who is linked to the paralysis of a man should be forced to do some amount of penance before being allowed back in the league. The same is true of Little, Henry, Johnson and Vick.

The NFL needs to go out of its way to make sure that all players are complying with the code of conduct and that they have the skills to cope with the life of a sports star. As of now, the only players who have been punished by Roger Goodell are ones that have spent the most time in the news. Just last week Lance Briggs, a player for the Chicago Bears, initially filed a false police report when he wrecked his car, but he has yet to receive any sort of reprimand for his actions. This is the kind of thing that the NFL must stay on top of now that it has decided to punish players for their off-the-field transgressions.

I’m glad that the NFL is taking these steps to clean up its reputation, but it needs to look at all of its players, not just the ones in the news. Leonard Little is just one example of someone who does not deserve the right to play at all, but who is still richly compensated for his skills on the field. Playing in the NFL, or any sports league, is a privilege that lets players earn glory, fans, and wealth, and Commissioner Goodell needs to be careful about who he extends that privilege to.

James Longhofer is a senior political science, economics, and public policy major

Do you have an opinion about... politics, music, class, television, football, shopping, intramurals, fraternities, movies, tests, the Mavs, sex, restaurants, religion, sororities, driving, study abroad, Umphrey Lee, fashion, news, the war, parking, technology, magazines, bars, baseball, the weather, professors, the Mustang Band, dating, books, nightclubs, Texas, the Daily Campus, pets, club sports, or anything else?

we’re listening at hilltopics@hotmail.com
Thumbs up:
- Gonzales resigns.
- Superbad
  - Reed Hanson’s beard.

Thumbs down:
- Karl Rove is looking for a university job. (Prof. Rove at SMU?)
- Overdressing to class. (Put away the De La Renta.)
- 38 alcohol violations in the first weekend of class. Way to go freshman!

Headline of the week:
“Why We Need a Draft: A Marine’s Lament” by Cpl. Mark Finelli, Newsweek
“He was in the firefights of Fallujah. He saw gaps in America’s arsenal that he believes can only be filled when America’s elite puts its sons on the battlefield. A plea for selective service.” [from website]
http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/20478293/site/newsweek/

Events of interest spotlight:
“The Societe Anonyme: Modernism for America” Exhibit at the DMA
Through September 16, 2007

“The Dallas Museum of Art brings to light the extraordinary history of the Société Anonyme, Inc., an organization founded in 1920 by artists Katherine Dreier, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray as America’s first “experimental museum” for contemporary art.

The Société Anonyme: Modernism for America, organized by the Yale University Art Gallery, features more than 240 works, including examples by Constantin Brancusi, Marcel Duchamp, Louis Michel Eilshemius, Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, Lazlo Peri, Man Ray, Kurt Schwitters, Joseph Stella, and Nadezhda Udaltsova. The exhibition includes a representative selection of paintings, sculpture, drawings, and prints, as well as historical photographs and other memorabilia. Together, these offer a vivid portrait of the Société, including its history and activities, and the context in which it functioned.” [from website, www.dallasmuseumofart.org]

SMU Fact:
In 1915, SMU opened its doors on September 22 with 456 students, 37 faculty members, an endowment fund of $279,178.

In Fall 2006, SMU had an enrollment of 10,941 students, 924 faculty, and an endowment of $1,121,360,015

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