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HILLTOPICS

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week of october 29, 2007

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Be Heard: *Hilltopics* is always looking for good submissions on virtually any topic. Email your ideas, feedback, or articles to hilltopics@gmail.com.



Should Kobe Bryant don a Dallas Mavericks jersey in the near future?

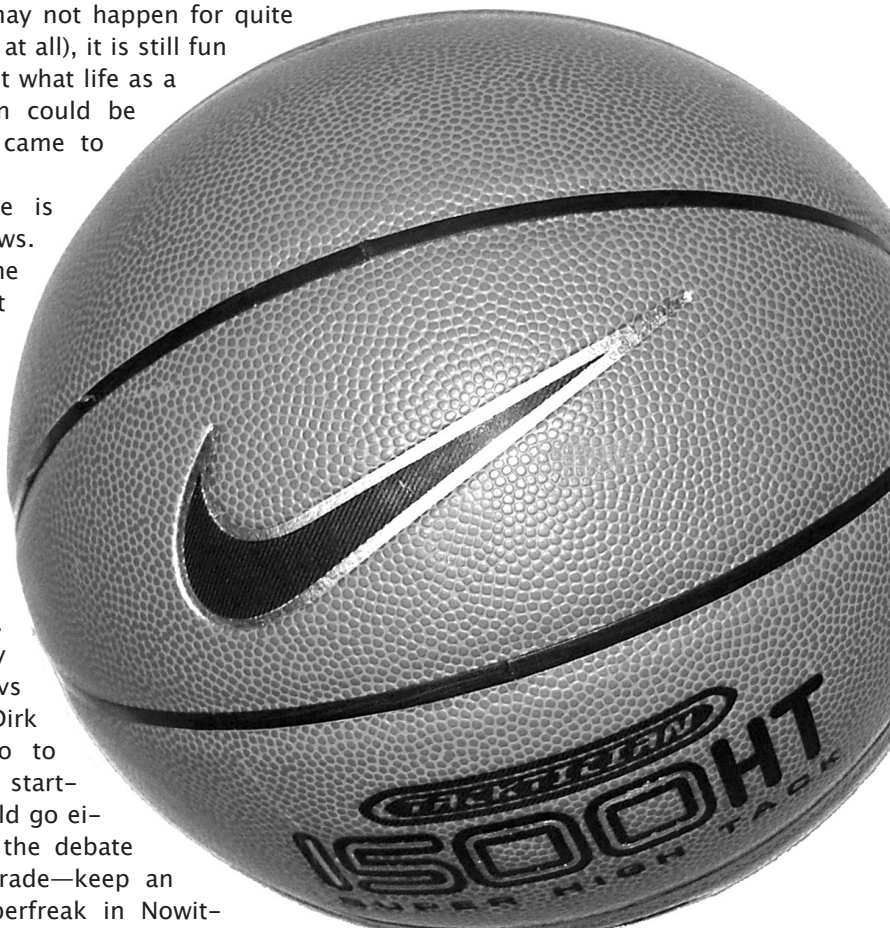
Josh Wood

If you have been watching any of ESPN's basketball coverage, one story that sticks out amongst the preseason scores and highlights is that of Kobe Bryant's unhappiness in Los Angeles. He wants out of his contract, and I don't blame him; he is stuck on a team that is going nowhere fast. Kobe's situation now is similar to what Kevin Garnett has had to deal with for far too many years—having superstar talent on a mediocre team.. Fortunately for Kevin, he got the hell out of Minnesota. While Kobe's departure from the L.A. Lakers may not happen for quite some time (if at all), it is still fun to think about what life as a Mavericks fan could be like if Kobe came to Dallas.

First, there is some bad news. Obviously, the Mavs can't snag an all-star like Bryant for pennies; sacrifices must be made for such negotiations to commence. Unfortunately for us Mavs fans, either Dirk goes, or two to three of our starters go. I could go either way on the debate on who to trade—keep an offensive superfreak in Nowit-

zki who chokes in the playoffs and can't block a shot? Or get rid of Dirk and hold onto an up-and-coming star Josh Howard, an aging but still viable Jason Terry, and Devin Harris, who can't make anything but a lay-up or dunk? Not exactly a no-brainer decision, eh? Whichever route is chosen, the Mavs sacrifice many relationships between team members, and things just won't be the same. In addition to this, Kobe has been known to have personal issues that affect his play. Be it

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We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of up to 300-600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to hilltopics@gmail.com by Wednesday at 7:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events. The opinions expressed in *Hilltopics* are those of the authors solely and do not reflect the beliefs of *Hilltopics* or any other entity. As such, *Hilltopics* does not publish anonymous articles.

Computer geeks, the cause of all the world's economic woe: Quick, throw away your ipods!

by Ben Wells

Ladies and gentleman, the economists have done it again. The IMF has shown that not only do they continue their amazing ability to ignore science, social science, and the general agreement that their policies tend to not foster positive capitalism or better globalization but they have now proclaimed another insane theory that shows what hilarity can ensue when economics stop talking about money and start talking about people.

Now the faithful and dutiful economists of SMU must be wondering why I, a lowly student of Anthropology with a firm love of science and technology, would dare to deride the hallowed marble and mahogany lined halls that is economics with such pedestrian nomenclature. Economists often make hilarious claims – either involving issues of social science which are misinterpreted entirely or often ignoring anything but economics and assuming that humans don't act with – well human interest. I am sorry to say friends that this will not be your common blasé attack on economics from a run of the mill anti-IMF hippy or raging pseudo-communist. Nay, the issue we have to look at is much more hilarious. The IMF in its infinite wisdom of everything has proclaimed from the mountain top in its World Economic Outlook for 2007 that the root of all evils (global inequality in wealth) is due not to horrible IMF policies, greedy American capitalists, or unfair and exploitative global economic exploration that is counter intuitive to capitalism itself. No friends, the problem lies in technology. You hear me – technology. Thanks to Bill Gates, Linux, and microprocessors, the plight of the world's poor rests solely on the shoulders of insomniac, techno listening, caffeine popping computer programmers. These wolves in IT workers' clothing are out to ruin global capitalism for the rest of us and insure a permanent underclass of the worlds poor to do their dark bidding from UNIX terminals in the local anime shops around the nation.

In an IMF release on their website they state that, "Technological progress alone explains almost all of the increase in inequality from the early 1980s". Perhaps The Register posits the best response, "In other words, overpaid scumbag IT people with their systems, networks etc are stealing bread from the mouths of poor but honest file clerks, printers, semaphore operators, call-centre people, recording execs and so on. IT, powered machinery, cheap tools, new drugs – it's all evil and divisive, promoting war, rebellion and strife. Big global business trading in old-fashioned stuff like commodities – you know, mining, agribusiness – these people

are your friends." The Register found a hilarious economist by the name of Clive Crook who makes the insane statement that "Let us agree that reducing inequality is the overriding goal – more important than lifting people out of poverty (which globalization is doing), more important than raising living standards in the aggregate (which globalization is doing). Let us also agree that efforts to improve education are useless palliatives, not worth discussing... It is surely time to

name the real enemy... the world needs critics of technological progress. If we can only stop or slow that, we can have more equal societies."

Yes, reducing poverty and inequality is the goal – but becoming Lud-dites and burning our iPods won't do it. Perhaps the IMF should quit pulling for pie in the sky reasons that their policies are failing and instead work to better themselves as an organization promoting global capitalism.

Perhaps the IMF isn't the only problem though. I think that Clive Crook's economic inquiries point us to the real problem. "Ned Ludd was right," he says. "The world has put up with progress and its consequences too long." Yes Clive – we have put up with progress for a long time. After all that is what science, technology, and democracy are founded on – back in the wonder years of the Enlightenment humanity decided that it would be good to try to constantly better ourselves and our environment. The Register points out Crook's final solution to end the tyranny of technology, "Here are some practical first steps. Punitive taxation is a no-brainer. Include a surtax on scientists and engineers. Restrict postgraduate education to the arts, humanities and the law. In fact, make postgraduate study in those fields compulsory." Clive Crook's arguments are hilarious at best and insane at worst – but thanks to his hilarious rantings we get a glimpse into some of the larger problems working to derail global growth and prosperity. Crook shows us that the stranglehold economics has on public policy is detrimental to our democracy, society, and the positive expansion of capitalism. Why don't scientists have a say in public policy? They used to. During World War II the government enacted a massive mobilization of the nation's greatest minds – Site Y at Los Alamos housed some of the world's best physicists to take the task of the grim work of the atomic bomb. Anthropologists flooded Washington D.C. to help the war department prepare for conflict, contact, and occupation of distant lands that were not even marked on many maps. Social scientists, physical scientists, nutritionists, and many other disciplines all helped to se-



IMF, continued from page 2

cure American military power and domestic life in a great outpouring of national unity and patriotism. Then the war ended. The scientists and professionally trained individuals went back to the university and who came to fill the void, the Economists. Since then almost all public policy is guided by the rantings of individuals who think that the power of the US Dollar guides all social interaction and relations from the bizarre (Freakonomics) to the mundane (IMF loan stipulations). All of this power was consolidated under these individuals (who do have a legitimate place in analysis of markets and financial procedures) to allow them to now guide public policy on matters of technology, science, and the problems of culture conflict and contact.

The anti-technology stance of the IMF is not surprising when looking at these historical developments, but it is entirely wrong. If anything,



science and technology are the only tools we have to combat global inequality and the demands of a massive global population. This is not to say that technology itself will be the end all beat all. Different cultures respond to contact and change differently – science and technology will have to work hand in hand with social scientists, psychologists, and economists to guide and grow public policy and global capitalism for the benefit of all. Without technology we would still be serfs and indentured servants toiling bad plots of land for our feudal overlords (ancestors to the leadership of the IMF perhaps? I kid, I kid.) but thanks to the amazing developments in biotechnology, agriculture, medicine, physics, engineering, and computers, the possibilities of a more just and leisure filled world aren't an impossible pipe dream. The IMF would have you to believe that they can save the world single handedly – if only we would deactivate Facebook and quit exploring the mysteries of muons and anti-matter. Perhaps the IMF should look at itself and realize that while providing us with countless good laughs their policies may be the real cause of friction in this big, wide, wired world.

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

The Nobel Prize for Hypocrisy

by Beth Anderson

The news that Al Gore is a joint winner of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize has caused quite a stir in the U.S. and across the world, and it has sparked a variety of reactions. Some hail the decision, noting the fact that these days, you can't think of global warming without thinking of Al Gore. Others dismiss it as a criticism aimed at the Bush administration, or, in the words of well-known conservative Rush Limbaugh, a "joke."

The third reaction is a little more complex than the others. While recognizing that Gore has helped to make global warming a familiar issue, does he really deserve a Nobel Peace Prize for his actions?

Alfred Nobel stated in his will that he wanted the Peace Prize to go "to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between the nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses". The Prize is often awarded to those who have put forth a tremendous effort for a humanitarian cause.

Without belittling his cause or starting a debate about global warming, I have to say that I do not think Al Gore deserves the Nobel Peace Prize. He made a movie, he appears on television, and he tours the country speaking to crowds of people who want to hear him.

Notable past winners of the Peace Prize include the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King, Jr. To me, these three people exemplify the meaning of the prize. They got their hands dirty. They spoke their minds even when their messages were dangerously unpopular. They all over-



whelmingly emphasized the notion of peace.

Also, take into account the unfortunate little release made by the Tennessee Center for

Policy Research the day after Gore's film, "An Inconvenient Truth," won two Oscars. According to this independent, non-partisan organization, Al Gore's mansion in Nashville, Tennessee "consumes more electricity every month than the average American household uses in an entire year".

Obviously, taking care of our environment is a very important issue. Even if you do not believe in global warming, it doesn't do anyone harm to live conscientiously and try to avoid flagrantly using up the Earth's resources. Without a doubt, Gore has raised awareness about the environment. My dispute with his winning the Nobel Peace Prize has nothing to do with my politics, nor with my personal perspective on global warming.

It simply isn't fair to give an award to a man who does not practice what he preaches.

Beth Anderson is a junior accounting major

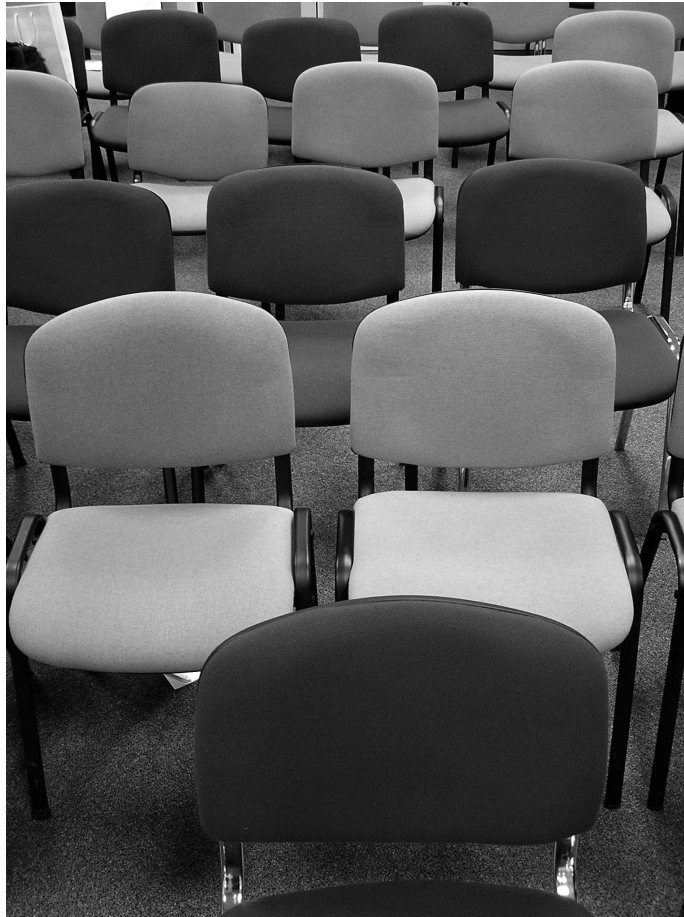
The task force is looking for answers in ALL the wrong places and in the process has forgotten that SMU is first and foremost a university

by Todd Baty

At a sparsely attended Town Hall Meeting last Monday, the Task Force for Substance Abuse Prevention met with students in an open forum to discuss the culture of drugs and alcohol that dominates this campus. Yet, despite everything that was said during the meeting, little was addressed with the right perspective in mind—the vantage point that first and foremost, SMU is an educational entity. How can we treat the existence of drugs and alcohol on campus as merely a judicial affair? How can we blind ourselves to the obvious conclusions such an issue raises about SMU's academic nature? Or are we afraid of the embarrassing realities that surface when such questions are posed? Out of an hour and a half of questions at the Town Hall Meeting, only one addressed SMU as an educational institution and that was mine, but what is more surprising is that out of all that time, only my answer addressed SMU in this fashion.

But it goes to reason that no one, especially the Task Force, desires to answer such questions (mine was politely ignored in a response that was so general and elusive it was sure to be non-memorable) because it will reveal very ugly truths about SMU. If students can participate in a culture that is dominated by Greek party life and substance abuse yet still pass classes, even earn degrees, what does that say of our academic standards? How can students go out four or five times a week yet still maintain 3.0 GPAs? How can an individual feed a substance abuse problem time, energy, and money when he or she is more concerned by impending paper deadlines or lab reports? If SMU's undergraduate experience is truly academic in nature, why are incoming freshmen annually sucked into a life-threatening culture that disrespects healthy choices and actions?

We are doing our students a huge disservice (not to mention being untruthful in the image we emit) if we do not reinstate the "liberal" aspect back into our liberal arts education. SMU is failing its students, its donors, and its self-created image if it ignores the grossly disproportionate amount of time the average SMU student spends at a bar rather than



the library—where is the rigor of a college education? Sure, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, but when does Jack grow into a man and realize that work is required before fun can ensue? SMU is operating at a level that is often a continuation of high school level work and thus it is natural that the student body treats it like such; everyone could go out during the week in high school and still make good grades, but shouldn't SMU be different?

Thus, what does the present issue of drugs and alcohol reveal about SMU? It shows that (1) most of the college experience at SMU takes place outside of a classroom, and that that experience is not academic in nature, (2) that many SMU students coast through their four or five years with little intellectual challenge or confrontation, (3) that SMU is failing at its responsibility and creed to educate its students in an empowering way, and (4) that academic standards are so low that even individuals suffering from severe addictions and unhealthy life-styles can graduate and/or remain enrolled. Not to be irreverent, but Meghan Boesch was scheduled to graduate last May before she prematurely died.

However, the Task Force doesn't seem concerned in couching the debate within academic terms. Instead, it seems to endorse policies such as Good Samaritan or Medical Amnesty which do not attempt to change the campus culture but merely the enforcement of law. It seems difficult to argue that these measures by themselves would even remotely alter drug or alcohol use by SMU students, especially since these policies would in effect be added safety nets. Furthermore, it is incredibly ironic that Co-Chair Dr. Tom Tunks closed the Town Hall Meeting with a statement that in essence asserted the individual as the ultimate determinate of responsible choice. Of course, he is correct: SMU will never be able to make wise decisions for its students, nor should it.

The power of SMU to actively fight the culture of substance abuse on campus is limited and relies heavily upon

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Identity matters: implementing self-discovery in the task force agenda

by Jenny Simon

In the spirit of the Town Hall meeting that occurred last Monday, I have decided to discuss one issue I think the Task Force and the SMU community have overlooked in regards to the “abusive” nature of our campus when it comes to alcohol and drugs. Money, popularity, acceptance by the Greek community and an easy academic curriculum have all been discussed as possible mechanisms contributing to the high levels of binge-drinking and illegal drug use on campus. My idea stems from something a lot more personal that requires individual students to engage in internal examination.

At the beginning of each fall semester, all the new Mustang freshmen gather for the opening week festivities, like Week of Welcome (which they canceled this year), Mustang Corral, convocation, and lastly, a mandatory assembly that usually tackles the consequences of over-drinking by providing a speaker to enlighten freshmen through his or her own tragic story. I do think this can be an effective tool to exemplify that, yes, bad things can happen to good people, and often drinking or drugs are involved when the disastrous situation unfolds; but most students respond with, “That won’t happen to me.” I’m a firm believer that the “that won’t happen to me” bit is only reliable if you know your limits and are confident in your personal identity; but even then, tragic episodes can still occur.

The question the SMU community and the Task Force need to ask is, “Why does SMU have such a prominent binge-drinking and recreational drug-use culture?” The simple answer, everyone experiments in college. My answer, students at SMU have not discovered their personal identities, and don’t know who they are, and therefore they follow suit. Being in a new school with new people is hard. Being yourself around new people, hoping they will become life-long friends, can be even harder. As a result there are a lot of students at SMU that drink or do drugs socially to meet people, but then

slowly become consumed by the lifestyle SMU has unfortunately been acclaimed for. Now this is just my opinion, and believe me, there are far more contributors to the current problem on campus, but this specific issue is one I think SMU as a community can easily fix.

If the university and the Task Force really want to help implement change in the overall social and recreational culture at SMU, they need to not only recommend policies that will influence students to seek help when necessary, but also establish opening-week activities that encourage first-years to learn who they are, who they want to be and what kind of decisions they want to make. When students maintain a solid internal identity, they possess more confidence, and I believe that when people have more confidence, they are less likely to engage in hazardous behavior. Knowing who you are can make saying “no” to trying an illegal drug, or calling it quits when you can’t handle more liquor, much easier. Overloading your body with numerous types of alcohol and drugs (and by the way, you never really know what kind of shit is all mixed in with that little line of blow), has a multitude of damaging effects. In reality, no one wants to harm their bodies, so the reasons behind this “substance abuse” culture SMU has become known for must have deeper implications.

Jenny Simon is a senior sociology major.



Task Force Focus, continued from page 4

student voluntary participation (which, by gauge of the number of students that bothered to show up at the Town Hall Meeting, is pathetic). However, what SMU has more influence over is the academic nature of the undergraduate experience. Why then, does the Task Force continue to see the issue of substance abuse only as a societal or judicial affair? Undoubtedly, it is both of these, but why not focus on an area that SMU can actually change? It is time for SMU to reassert itself as a prominent national university, one committed to the power of an intimate liberal arts education and the fostering of healthy, sound-minded students. But I am afraid, this will never happen if the Task Force continues to perceive the issue of substance abuse in a two dimensional fashion.

What is needed is an honest look at SMU’s academic culture. If we hope to create realistic policy that will im-

pact positively the social culture of this campus, academics can not be ignored. A rededication to rigorous course work by the faculty and a redevelopment of the General Education Curriculum by the Provost to promote such would do wonders more in combating substance abuse than yet another online education course. Realistically, more stringent academic requirements for individuals that desire to rush Greek organization would probably do more to combat drug use than any Good Samaritan policy. Thus, I openly charge the Task Force for Substance Abuse Prevention to address their concerns and make their recommendations in a manner that will have the most impact, and that is undeniably through academics. After all, is SMU not first and foremost and educational entity? Let us not forget why we are all here.

Todd Baty is a senior history and music major

Bowl Championship Series: could this be the year that the system changes to a fair one?

by James Longhofer

(Note: This issue went to press before last weekend's games were played 10/25-10/27, so the premise of this article could by now be completely junk because of the results of those games. Oh well...)

This year's college football season has entertained me to no end. It's not because of the many exciting upsets or the emergence of new programs like South Florida. It's certainly not because of SMU's on-field performance. The reason why this year has me entertained is that this may finally be the year that the BCS loses all credibility as a way to choose a national champion, and we can realistically talk about having a playoff system.

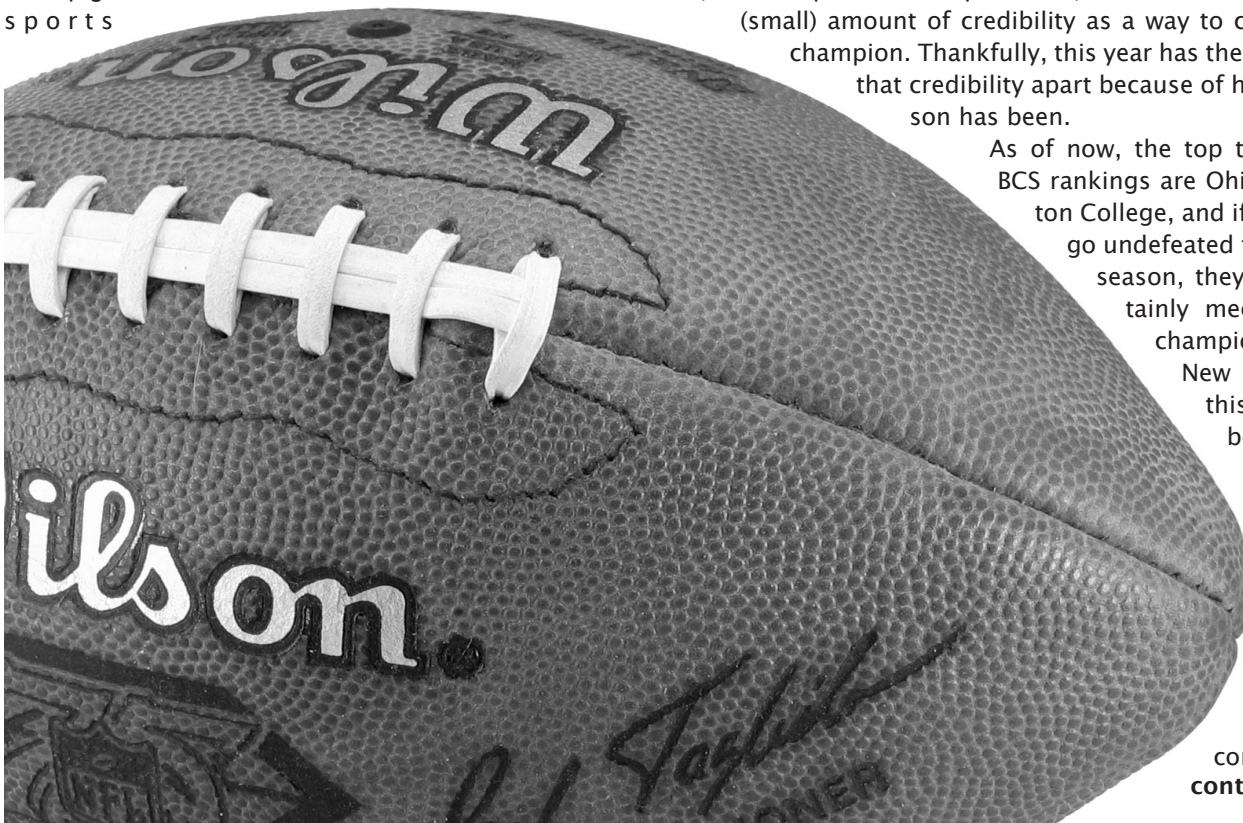
The Bowl Championship Series was created in the 1998-99 season to choose an undisputed national champion. Using a mix of computer formulas and human polls, the BCS ranks teams and takes the top two to play in a national championship game. Since its creation, sports

fans have grumbled about the lack of a playoff system since it seems contrary to the spirit of sports that contenders for a championship would be arbitrarily chosen instead of playing against each other in order to earn the right. This problem is only complicated in years where there is not a consensus on the top two teams to play in a championship game. During the 2003-04 season, no team finished undefeated and three teams were left as possible contenders. Oklahoma and LSU were chosen to play in the big game while USC was excluded with much controversy. This caused a split championship where the BCS chose an official champion (LSU) while the AP chose a different one (USC). The next season had a completely different problem where instead of having no undefeated teams, there were five, and so three teams were prevented from playing for a chance to prove their worth as a national champion.

In spite of these problems, the BCS has still retained some (small) amount of credibility as a way to choose a national champion. Thankfully, this year has the potential to blow that credibility apart because of how wild this season has been.

As of now, the top two teams in the BCS rankings are Ohio State and Boston College, and if these two teams go undefeated for the rest of the season, they will almost certainly meet in this year's championship game in New Orleans. (Again, this was written before last weekend's games.)

The reason this is unfair is that these teams are playing substantially easier schedules than their rivals in other conferences. OSU
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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@gmail.com

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plays in the Big 10 Conference, and while the Big 10 has historically been strong, it has shown weakness this year with its powerhouses losing in embarrassing upsets. BC is currently on top of the ACC which is full of teams that have seen better days like Miami and Florida State. Compare this with the Southeast Conference. The SEC has some of the most talented teams in the country and it's generally considered the strongest conference in college football. In spite of this strength, the team who wins the SEC is unlikely to go the championship game unless OSU and BC lose, because all of the SEC teams have at least one loss. However, those losses are more a reflection of the quality of the SEC instead of the weakness of the teams that play in the SEC.

This exposes the real problem with the BCS: it rewards teams that schedule easy opponents and punishes those who play in tough conferences against talented teams. There is no incentive for a school to schedule a strong opponent because a single loss could destroy any hope that the team has of winning a national championship.

So why is this year potentially the one that will destroy any shred of credibility the BCS may have left? Simply put, the teams at the top are too weak to be taken seriously. A national championship game between OSU and BC is not a real championship game. There are too many teams out there who deserve a chance to play for the championship for there not to be a playoff system. The long-term trends in college football show greater parity between teams. Since the difference between BCS and non-BCS schools is shrinking, it is becoming increasingly ridiculous to arbitrarily pick teams instead of having them play for the right to be in a championship game. A more fair system would junk the computers in favor of having teams face each other on the gridiron. Then again, there is little that is fair in the world of college athletics.

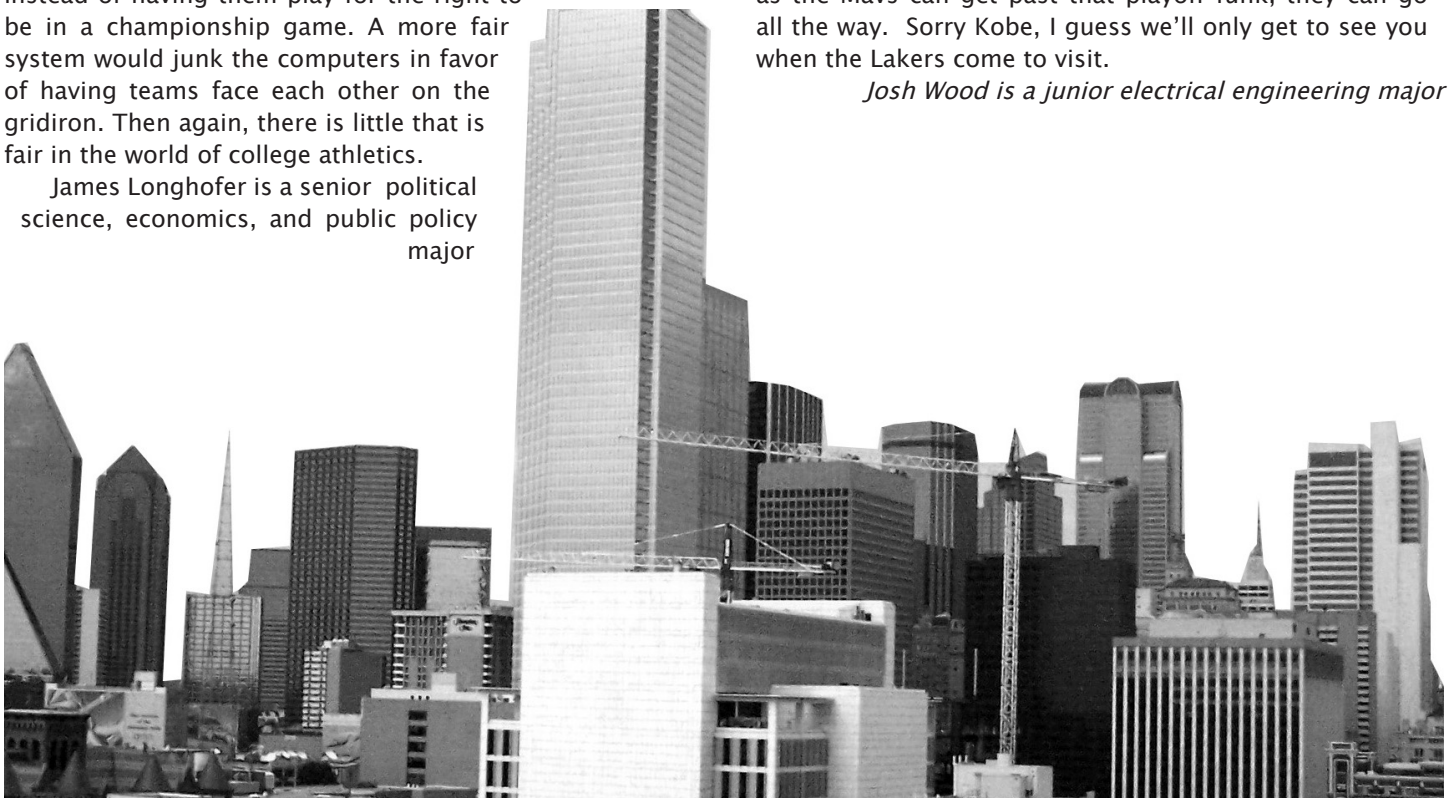
James Longhofer is a senior political science, economics, and public policy major

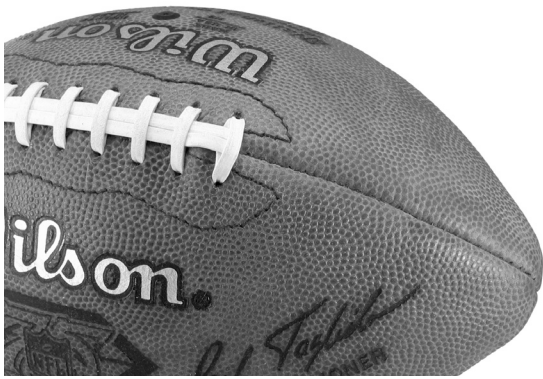
Koby, continued from page 1

the rape allegations from a few years back, or turbulent relationships with teammates (namely Shaq), Kobe has been known to cause problems off the court. To all those worried about this, I have two words: Terrell Owens. We brought him to Dallas, knowing how much trouble he stirs up on and off the field, and now the Cowboys made the playoffs last year and are sitting at 6-1 this year. Clearly, great teams like the Cowboys and Mavericks can handle turbulent players.

So, assuming we do overlook Kobe's troubled past and the unfortunate trades that must take place to acquire him, the benefits are clear. You know how the Mavericks have been consistently making the playoffs the past few years? Then you also know how bad they choke once they get there. Take last season for example. Best record in the NBA, number 1 seed, losing to the number 8 seed Golden State Warriors. How about two years ago, when we gave up a 2-0 lead in the NBA finals to let the Miami Heat run away with our trophy. The Mavericks do great things in the regular season, but can't finish the spring. Now, imagine if Kobe came to town; Kobe is clutch, and the Mavs desperately need that dimension to their game (they might actually make it back to the NBA finals). Kobe is a better balanced player than any current Maverick, being as ridiculous as Dirk on offense and still making plays on defense. Unfortunately, I'm not sure the benefits outweigh the costs of bringing Kobe to the Mavericks. Sure, it'd be fun to see all his flashy moves and great postseason play, but why fix something that's (almost) not broken? As long as the Mavs can get past that playoff funk, they can go all the way. Sorry Kobe, I guess we'll only get to see you when the Lakers come to visit.

Josh Wood is a junior electrical engineering major





**Homecoming Game
SMU vs. Rice
Saturday, November 10, 2007
2:00 PM**



Headline of the week:

“Delhi’s deputy major dies after falling from a terrace while trying to fight off a horde of wild monkeys.”
http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/em/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/7055625.stm



Thumbs up:

- To Fall Weather
- To trick-or-treating and Halloween parties
- To having a Task Force Town Hall Meeting



Thumbs down:

- To unsalvagaeable football season
- To prostitute Halloween costumes. Those are getting old now.
- To no one showing up to the Town Hall Meeting

Events of interest spotlights:

Community Service Day
Saturday, November 3
8:00 AM meet at the flag pole

Fall Dance Concert
Wednesday, November 7 &
Saturday, November 10
8:00 PM in the Bob Hope Theater

Hilltopics Heros:

Hilltopics would like to take a moment to recognize on of the many people in this world that bring joy and humor into the our lives.

Stephen Colbert for running for president in South Carolina and inspiring the fastest growing Facebook group in history
<http://smu.facebook.com/group.php?gid=7406420086>

We’re not going to say you give us hope, but you do make us laugh.

Hilltopics Staff

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