

# **“The Future of College Athletics is at Stake:” Black Athletes and Racial Turmoil on Three Predominantly White University Campuses, 1968-1972\***

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Life on America's predominantly white university campuses between 1968 and 1972 was anything but tranquil. Boards of trustees, university presidents, provosts, deans, and other administrative support personnel, were faced with a myriad of problems that threatened the basic structure of higher education in this country. Socially conscious faculty members became increasingly more outspoken on administrative policies, involved themselves in a number of hotly debated issues and radical movements outside the basic purview of the university community, and generally took more of an active role in university decision making. Students on university campuses during this period, through such organizations as the Students for a Democratic Society, were decidedly different than many students from previous generations in that they openly confronted university administrations, took an active role in world affairs, and adopted radical lifestyles that were symbolized by long hair, tie-dye shirts, drugs, and rock music. Perhaps most alarming to administrators on predominantly white university campuses were the demands being placed on them by black students. Sometimes in concert with sympathetic white students and faculty members, black students at institutions all across the country were pressuring administrations to hire black faculty members, include black studies in the university curriculum, help support black student organizations on campus, and make a more serious effort to recruit minority students. The pressure exerted by black students on university administrations took many forms, including sit-ins, boycotts, and occasional violence.]

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1. For general information on the role of black students in predominantly white universities, see Marvin W. Peterson, *et al.*, *Black Students on White Campuses: The Impacts of Increased Black Enrollments* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The Institute for Social Research, 1978); Charles V. Willie and Arline Sakuma McCord, *Black Students at White Universities* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972). Harry Edwards, *Black Students* (New York: The Free Press, 1970); James Charles Jones, "A Study of the Attitudes of Black Students in Integrated Universities Compared with their Counterparts in Black Universities" (Ph.D. Diss., Michigan State University, 1971).

One group that played a significant role in the black student revolts of the late 1960s and early 1970s were black athletes. Shedding their traditional conservative approach to racial matters, black athletes spearheaded the “athletic revolution” by challenging the racial discrimination that existed in athletic departments at various universities across the country. Sport sociologist Harry Edwards estimated that in 1968 alone some thirty-seven black athletic revolts took place on predominantly white university campuses.<sup>2</sup> The ensuing four years witnessed a gradual decline in the number of revolts, but there continued to be a number of black athletic disturbances on university campuses that frightened coaches, athletic directors, and school presidents to the point where they believed the future of college athletics was at stake. The disturbances became so intense on some campuses that black athletes lost their scholarships, black and white teammates became bitter antagonists, coaches either quit or were fired, athletic directors had their powers usurped, newly created organizations were established on campus expressly to look into the problems of racial discrimination, and national organizations such as the N.A.A.C.P. were called in to settle campus disputes.

Most of the revolts during this period emanated from confrontations that took place between black athletes and white coaches. John Underwood, in a three-part series of articles in *Sports Illustrated* titled “The Desperate Coach,” was entirely accurate in describing college coaches as “bewildered, angry and disillusioned, no longer certain of their mission, or, in some cases, of their relevance.”<sup>3</sup> Their authority was being challenged by different groups of people, but most noticeably by black athletes who, because of a lack of status consistency on predominantly white campuses and pressure to become actively involved in black political activities, were exerting both a new-found sense of independence and apparent willingness to speak out on racial issues. To guard against being labeled as an “Uncle Tom” by their black student peer group, a significant number of black athletes chose not to conform to the dictates of their coaches and took a more active role in the more militant aspects of the civil rights movement. This path was paved with dire consequences, however. Coaches could not allow team rules to be transgressed for fear that their authority would be undermined and team discipline disrupted. As a result, black athletes who refused to follow the dictates of their coaches were sometimes dismissed from the squad, and, therefore, ended up sacrificing both their education and years of training that might have landed them in professional sports. Coaches, on the other hand, lost the services of athletes who were, in many cases, crucial to the success of their teams and overall quality of the school’s total athletic program.”

2. See Harry Edwards. *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (New York: The Free Press, 1969). p. 88.

3. John Underwood. “The Desperate Coach.” *Sports Illustrated* 31 (August 25, 1969): 66-68 + ; idem, “Shave Off That Thing.” *ibid.*, 31 (September 1, 1969): 20-27; idem. “Concessions—And Lies.” *ibid.*, 31 (September 8, 1969): 29-32 +

4. For an interesting analysis of the relationship between black athletes and white coaches. see Harry Edwards. *The Sociology of Sport* (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1973), pp. 142-152. See also John Robert Lee, “Toward Black Consciousness and Acceptance: A Study of Relevant Attitudes and Practices in Big Eight Football” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Kansas, 1973).

Black athletic revolts took place on different kinds of campuses in various locations across the country and resulted from black athletes' complaints about everything from unfair dress codes to inadequate treatment of injuries by prejudiced athletic trainers. For example, in 1968 racial unrest among black athletes became evident at the University of Washington. The school's black athletes accused football coach Jim Owens of various forms of discrimination and threatened to boycott all athletic events until a black coach or administrator was hired on a full-time basis. That same year, nine track and field stars at the University of Texas at El Paso, including long jump champion Bob Beamon, were kicked off the team by coach Wayne Vandenburg for protesting the Mormon Church's treatment of blacks.<sup>5</sup> In January 1969, five black football players at Princeton accused the varsity coach, Dick Coleman, and the freshman coach, Walter "Pat" McCarthy, of "racist tendencies in coaching." The players complained that while being publicly praised, they were passed over for starting positions, particularly in the backfield. In October of the same year, Coach Lloyd Eaton of the University of Wyoming kicked 14 black players off the football team for asking if they could help draw attention to the Mormon Church's racial policies by lodging some form of protest in their upcoming game against Brigham Young.<sup>6</sup> About a month after the Wyoming incident, Coach John Pont of Indiana dismissed 14 black players from the football team when they boycotted practice two days in a row. The players complained, among other things, that Pont had created an atmosphere that was "mentally depressing and morally discouraging to blacks."<sup>7</sup> In 1970, several black members of Buffalo State's basketball team quit the squad, charging the athletic department with discrimination. The feud resulted in a violent disturbance on campus in which bands of students smashed windows, set fire to a truck, and used two cars as battering rams against the campus police headquarters. In December 1970, black athletes at the University of Pittsburgh charged the school's athletic department with racial discrimination. The players accused the department of not actively recruiting black athletes, failing to give adequate publicity to black athletes, and denying black athletes equal opportunity for starting positions. Finally, in 1972, the head baseball coach at Oregon State, Gene Tanselli, was brought to court by his one and only black player on charges of racial discrimination. While found innocent of the charges, the incident eventually led to Tanselli's dismissal as baseball coach.<sup>8</sup>

This paper explores the racial turmoil that took place on the campuses of the University of California, Berkeley, Syracuse University and Oregon State University. These confrontations were not necessarily any more significant than

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5. Edwards, *Revolt of the Black Athlete*. pp. 82-86; Jack Olsen, "In An Alien World." *Sports Illustrated*, 29 (July 15, 1968): 28-43.

6. *New York Times*, January 5, 19, November 1, 15, 16, 23, 1969; January 9, 1970; Pat Putnam. "No Defeats, Loads of Trouble," *Sports Illustrated* 31 (November 3, 1969): 26-27.

7. *New York Times*, November 6, 16, 1969.

8. *New York Times*, February 27, 1970. May 25, 1973; *Pittsburgh Courier-Journal*. December 26, 1970; *The Oregonian*, June 16, 25, 1972. May 25, 1973; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, April 18, 19, 27, June 2, 12, 13, 16, 23, May 24, 1973.

the other disturbances that occurred on predominantly white university campuses across the country, but serve as examples of the kinds of conflicts that ensued between white coaches, administrators, and black athletes at well-known institutions with major sports programs. The primary intent of the paper is to outline the major grievances and issues that sparked the three revolts, and analyze the institutional responses to those disturbances. On occasion, parallels are drawn between the three revolts and those that occurred on other predominantly white university campuses.

### *Trouble in the Den of the Cal Bears*

Three of the black athletic revolts that received a great deal of media attention occurred on the campuses of the University of California, Berkeley, Syracuse University, and Oregon State University. The troubles at Berkeley began on January 18, 1968 when basketball coach Rene Herrerias dismissed star center Bob Presley from the team for missing a practice. Two days later, Herrerias reinstated Presley to the team, giving no details as to why he had decided to overturn his previous decision. Unbeknownst to him at the time, Herrerias' reinstatement of Presley would result in internal racial strife on the team and eventually lead to his resignation as basketball coach.<sup>9</sup>

The reinstatement of Presley caused the immediate ire of the eleven white members of the squad. On January 22, just two days after Presley was allowed back on the team, the eleven white players announced that they would refuse to play any more games until "administrative pressure" on Herrerias was lifted. The white players contended that the University's administration, fearing repercussions because Presley was black, forced Cal's athletic director, Pete Newell, and Herrerias, to allow Presley back on the squad after the two-day suspension. The white players claimed that Vice Chancellor Earl Cheit and his black special assistant, Don Hopkins, met with Newell and Herrerias and pressured them to allow Presley back on the squad. While admitting that they had discussed the Presley incident with Cheit and Hopkins, Newell and Herrerias steadfastly denied the accusations made by the white players. Herrerias claimed that the decision to reinstate Presley was his and his alone.<sup>10</sup>

The allegations made by the white players were tame in comparison to what took place on the Berkeley campus the following day. On the afternoon of January 23, twenty-five of the school's thirty-five black athletes, including Presley and the four other black members of the basketball team, held a press conference where they demanded that Herrerias, two assistant football coaches, and the athletic department's business manager be dismissed because of their "incompetence" and "unwillingness to relate to black athletes." Imaginatively dubbing their newly created organization, "The Black Athletes of the University of California," the group of twenty-five athletes, through their spokesman, football star Bobby Smith, noted that unless the four men were fired and

9. *Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 25, 26, 1968.

10. *Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 25, 1968.

discrimination was eliminated in the athletic department, they would refuse to participate in any future athletic events and promised to discourage other black athletes from attending the university. The twenty-five black athletes also used the occasion to list several grievances that had been festering among their group for some time. The athletes complained that members of the athletic department made derogatory comments about their personal appearance, athletic trainers and student coaches unfairly regarded the injuries suffered by black athletes either as cases of "hypochondria or goldbricking," coaches grouped black athletes at positions in which they would encounter maximum competition to make the teams, the university reneged on its promise to find suitable housing for black athletes, black athletes were given inferior academic advice and counseling and, perhaps most important, the athletic department had failed to hire black coaches."

Athletic department officials and the University's administration responded to the black athletes' complaints in predictable fashion. Newell, a former basketball coach himself, who piloted the Bill Russell-led University of San Francisco Dons to two national championships in the 1950s, was taken aback by the grievances expressed by black athletes. He believed that the athletic department had made "real progress in race relations" during the last few years, noting that Berkeley had only five black athletes in 1960 but had increased the total to thirty-five in 1968 "through accelerated recruiting." Newell acknowledged that the school's stringent academic requirements, lack of "Negro coeds," and a "not-too-adequate living situation" made it difficult to recruit black athletes, but said those items had improved markedly over the previous couple of years.



Pete Newell (Courtesy Sports Information Office, University of California, Berkeley)

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11. *Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 1968. Harry Edwards noted that his organization, The Olympic Committee for Human Rights, lent support to the revolting black athletes at Berkeley, but I could not find confirmation of this except in his *Revolt of the Black Athlete*. pp. 80-82.

The Chancellor of the University, Roger W. Heyns, reacted to the black athletes' grievances by appointing a three-member fact-finding committee to investigate the entire dispute. Heyns charged Arleigh Williams, Dean of Students and former California football and baseball player; Donald Hopkins, special assistant to the vice chancellor; and William G. Dauben, professor of chemistry and chairman of the faculty's committee on athletic policy, with investigating the dispute and making specific recommendations relative to the grievances lodged by the black athletes.<sup>12</sup>

The complaints voiced by the black athletes further infuriated the white members of the basketball team. Just hours after the black athletes' press conference on the afternoon of January 23, the eleven white players met to discuss whether they should reconsider their boycott plans. After much debate, the players elected to go ahead with the boycott, stating that they would agree to play out the season only if the truth were made known about the pressure exerted on Herrerias, full authority was given back to Herrerias to direct the team as he saw fit, and several statements made by black athletes at their press conference were retracted. As things turned out, the hard line taken by the white players would not last long. The following morning they met with Herrerias and ended up deciding to attend that afternoon's practice session and play out the remaining thirteen games of the season. At a hastily called press conference with Herrerias the players explained why they relented on their previous decision and made it perfectly clear how they felt about the Presley incident. The players revealed, through a prepared statement read by student manager Pat Gilligan, that Herrerias had assured them that any player who violated training rules would not be allowed on the team. Unfortunately, said the white players, Bob Presley had lied at the previous day's press conference as to why he was dismissed from the basketball team. He was not discriminated against and kicked off the team for the length of his hair. Those people knowledgeable "of California basketball, black or white, know that Bob Presley was dismissed because of numerous violations of basketball ethics. We support our coach 100%. We are basketball players and want to play basketball."<sup>13</sup>

Shortly after the white players held their press conference the racially torn basketball team reported en masse to practice in Harmon Gymnasium as a crowd of some 200 persons looked on. There was an obvious uncomfortableness between the black and white players. A lot of mud-slinging had taken place between the two groups over the few previous days and tensions ran high. Perhaps the most bitter feelings on the team occurred between Presley and Russ Critchfield, a senior guard who had earned second-team All-American honors the previous season. While it is not entirely clear what caused the antagonism between the two players, it is apparent that Presley and Critchfield were very different kinds of people who were vying to become the team's star attraction.

12. *Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 25, 26, February 1, 1968 (quote).

13. *Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 25, 26, 30 (quote). 1968.

Presley, a 6'10" junior from the ghettos of Detroit, was viewed as a big, gangly villain by some folks in the Pacific Eight conference. He frequently encountered racial slurs during away games at other conference schools. Not one to hide his feelings or back down from controversy, Presley accused Critchfield of being selfish and refusing to play team basketball. "Everyone's trying to make Critchfield an All-American," said Presley. "We just look for him at all times to pass to. . . The negro players want to play team ball."<sup>14</sup>

Critchfield was different from Presley in almost every way. He was a white 5'10" guard who became an instant hero wherever he played. He was a symbol of the little guy or underdog, making good. He was also a pesky little player who could talk almost as quickly as he could shoot. When he found out that he had been referred to as a "white honkie" at the black athletes' press conference on January 23, Critchfield responded by saying that "talk like that doesn't bother me" at all. "I don't care what they [black athletes] think of me." Concerning Presley in particular, Critchfield implied that the disgruntled black player had not been on the Berkeley campus long enough to make a fair evaluation of the athletic department and university administration. Critchfield noted, in a rather sarcastic fashion, that he had been at Berkeley for three years, while Presley had been around for only 12 games.<sup>15</sup>

Presley, Critchfield, and the rest of the team put their differences aside long enough to make it through the January 24 practice. The white players decided there was nothing more they could do to alleviate the racial turmoil on campus, while the black players were apparently content to remain on the team until Chancellor Heyns' three-member fact-finding committee came out with its report. The remainder of the season also went remarkably well for the racially torn basketball team. There were no apparent confrontations between the players and the team surprised most of the experts by finishing the season in the upper half of the league standings. Herrerias proclaimed during the latter half of the season that he thought the "conflict at Cal was over. . . . Things are positive right now as far as I'm concerned," said Herrerias.<sup>16</sup>

Despite Herrerias' apparent optimism, "things" were not all right at Berkeley. It became noticeable before long that lurking behind the façade of tranquility on the Berkeley campus was a lingering racial problem that would result in personnel changes within the athletic department and university administration. On March 12, Pete Newell dropped a bombshell on the university community when he announced that he was stepping down as the school's athletic director. About a month later, Herrerias resigned his position as basketball coach. Not surprisingly, both men denied that the racial disturbances within the athletic department influenced their decisions. Newell told reporters that he decided to resign as athletic director immediately after the football season ended on November 18 and that the current racial problems did not affect him one way or the other. He failed to mention that he had turned down lucrative

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14. *Ibid.*, January 30, 1968

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, March 1, 1968.

job offers in the past because of his desire to upgrade Cal's porous athletic program. Herrerias also denied that the current racial problems on campus influenced his decision to resign as basketball coach, insisting that his stepping down as coach was necessitated by a desire to seek new challenges rather than a result of confrontations with Presley and other black athletes on the team. "I feel I'm leaving the program at California on solid footing," said Herrerias. "Now I must look to new horizons."<sup>17</sup>

The university wasted little time in filling Herrerias' position. On April 25, it was announced that Jim Padgett, Herrerias' top aide the last couple of years, had been hired as head coach and Earl Robinson, the black coach from Laney Community College and former Cal basketball and baseball star, had been appointed as an assistant. The hiring of these two men was heartily endorsed by the black players on the team. Padgett was well liked by the black players while Robinson was viewed as a good choice by the University community. Like the resignations of Newell and Herrerias, no one was willing to admit that the hiring of Robinson had anything to do with the racial turmoil at Cal. Padgett emphasized that Robinson's "qualifications as a coach and as a man" were the sole criterion for the selection. "He's (Robinson) a very versatile, talented guy," said Padgett. "You just can't afford to pass up a chance to get a man like that."<sup>18</sup>

The racial confrontation at Berkeley came to an end, for all intents and purposes, when Chancellor Heyns' fact-finding committee finally released its report during the latter part of the school year. While the committee found no evidence of overt racial discrimination, it made some 17 recommendations intended to improve racial conditions on campus. The committee suggested, among other things, that the school's athletic department should develop an in-service training program that would enable its members to become knowledgeable about minority cultures and the problems of minority students at the university, make a determined effort to recruit minority coaches and administrative personnel, develop a recruitment program that was consistent with the university's policy of nondiscrimination, and enlist the participation of black athletes in the educational, social, and other meaningful functions of the university. Many of these recommendations, plus a number of others, were put into effect almost immediately. In addition to the hirings of Earl Robinson in basketball and another black assistant coach in football, a recruitment plan was designed to bring more blacks to the campus, and courses in black philosophy, history, and literature were included in the curriculum for the first time.<sup>19</sup>

### *Chronic Racism at Syracuse*

The circumstances surrounding the black athletic protest at Syracuse University were decidedly different from the one that took place at the University of California, Berkeley. It was not length of hair but the desire for a black coach that caused the disturbance at Syracuse. Racial tension on the school's football

17. *Ibid.*, March 13, April 12 (quote), 1968: *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 13, 1968

18. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 25, 1968.

19. See Edwards, *Revolt of the Black Athlete*, p. 81.

team had been running high since at least 1968 after a black student had been beaten by a white football player. From all available accounts, the black student started the fight by jumping the white player with a club, but decided to file racial charges anyway against the football team with the Human Rights Commission. The university, shaken by the incident and obviously concerned about the outcome of the racial charges filed by the black student, asked head coach Ben Schwartzwalder to talk to his players about racism.<sup>20</sup>

Schwartzwalder, a major in the 82nd Airborne during World War II and recipient of several medals for heroism in combat, was ill-prepared to talk about racial matters. After much persuasion, however, he agreed to hold a meeting with his players to talk about the problems of discrimination. It proved to be a disaster. Instead of ameliorating racial conditions, Schwartzwalder's little speech widened the racial gap between white and black players on the team. Blacks on the squad resented Schwartzwalder's patronizing attitude towards them, while the white players were angry at what they viewed as the coaching staff's preferential treatment of their black teammates. Schwartzwalder himself acknowledged that the meeting had hurt team unity. "Before the talk the team was a unit," noted Schwartzwalder. "After that it was two groups: one black, one white. If I had known what was going to happen, I would have refused to hold that stupid meeting."<sup>21</sup>

Racial antagonisms became more visibly apparent prior to spring football practice in 1970 when the black players on the team asked if one of two recently vacated coaching positions could be filled by a black. The players, according to their own story, were promised a black coach, but instead had to succumb to the verbal blasts of Floyd Little, the former Syracuse All-American who was brought in to work with the team on a voluntary basis. Frustrated by Little's barrage of insults, nine of the ten black players on the squad walked out of spring practice after three days, charging Schwartzwalder with reneging on his promise to hire a full-time black coach. Alarmed by the turn of events, the chancellor at Syracuse, Dr. John E. Corbally, Jr., met with the boycotting black players periodically during the ensuing week and ordered Schwartzwalder to hire a black coach by the start of fall practice. The crusty 60-year-old head coach met the demand by hiring Carlmon Jones, a recent graduate of Florida A&M who had been an outstanding player under the legendary Jake Gaither. Schwartzwalder did not, however, show any leniency towards the boycotting black athletes, informing seven of the nine players that they were no longer members of the Syracuse football team. An eighth player, Greg Allen, eventually elected to join the seven dismissed black athletes, stating that if the others couldn't play, then neither would he. In all, Schwartzwalder had lost the services of eight of his best football players. In addition to Allen, the suspended players were Al Newton, senior halfback; Bucky McGill, senior defensive end; Duane Walker, senior defensive halfback; John Lobon, junior linebacker; Dana

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20. Pat Putnam, "End of a Season at Syracuse." *Sports Illustrated* 33 (September 28, 1970): 22-23

21. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Harrell, senior linebacker; John Godbolt, senior halfback; and Dick Bulls, sophomore fullback.<sup>22</sup>

Schwartzwalder's decision to kick the black players off the football team caused further chaos on an already turbulent college campus and in the Syracuse community. In the early part of August 1970, three of the dismissed black players, including Newton, the team's leading ground-gainer from the 1969 season, filed discrimination charges against Schwartzwalder, his coaching staff, and the University, with the Onondaga County Human Rights Commission. The lack of black coaches was not the only complaint lodged by the disgruntled black athletes. There were far more serious problems on the football team and in the school's athletic department that raised the ire of the black players. Like many black athletes on other predominantly white university campuses during this period, the revolting black players complained that a "double standard in discipline" existed on the team, the team doctor gave preferential treatment to white players, there was a lack of academic advising and tutoring for black players, coaches on the football team used "racist language," black players received fewer "fringe benefits" than their white counterparts, and "discrimination existed in placing players on the first, second and third teams."<sup>23</sup>

Shortly after the black players filed their complaint with the commission, Chancellor Corbally decided once again to intervene in the affair. Over the bitter complaints of Schwartzwalder, Corbally worked with Norman Pinkard, executive director of the Civil Rights Commission, to draw up a plan that would have allowed the black players to return to the team. The chancellor announced that the black players could rejoin the team if they signed "a code for Syracuse



Floyd "Ben" Schwartzwalder (Courtesy sports Information Office, Syracuse University)

22. Ibid. See also *New York Times*, August 25, 29, 1970.

23. *New York Times*, September 28, 1970.

athletes" which obligated them to play any position designated by the coaching staff, to give 100 percent effort in all drills, and to follow a set of procedures for airing grievances.<sup>24</sup>

Corbally's plan did not receive universal support. The Syracuse alumni, for one, quickly pointed out to the chancellor that they were disappointed with his decision. Already upset with Corbally for his decision to close campus early the preceding year and for allowing seniors to graduate without taking final exams, the alumni believed that the chancellor was giving in to unappreciative and troublemaking black athletes. Perhaps even more despondent over Corbally's actions were the white players on the team. The sixty-six whites on the squad, along with the one remaining black player, walked off the practice field a couple days prior to fall practice in a symbolic counter-boycott to the one staged earlier in the year by the dismissed black players. Paul Paolisso, a quarterback and one of the team's three captains, noted at the time that the remaining members of the squad were in "full support of Coach Ben Schwartzwalder and his staff."<sup>25</sup>

The black players did not sign Corbally's plan and failed to show up for the opening of fall practice on August 28. Corbally, under the stipulation of his agreement and with an apparent eye toward the alumni, suspended the eight black players for the 1970 season. Two weeks into the season the black players changed their minds, signed the "code for Syracuse athletes," and asked to be reinstated to the team. The remaining members of the squad, apparently under pressure from the administration, voted to allow the players back on the team. The vote turned out, however, to be rather meaningless. The four black players who had not either dropped out of school, or been declared academically ineligible, ended up changing their minds once again and announced on September 27 that they were going to continue the boycott indefinitely and reiterated that they wanted the university to conduct a full-scale investigation of the school's athletic department.<sup>26</sup>

Chancellor Corbally acceded to the players' request by forming a 12-member trustee-faculty-student investigative group that was to look into the discrimination charges leveled against the athletic department. From approximately the latter part of September to the end of November 1970, the committee conducted some 28 hearings and questioned more than 40 witnesses, including the athletic director, current and former players, university administrators, Chancellor Corbally himself, and all coaches. The committee's findings were made public on December 8, 1970 in a student-owned newspaper called the *Dialog*. In a 38-page report, the committee declared that racism in the athletic department, while largely unintentional, was chronic and that the suspension of the eight black football players was "an act of institutional racism unworthy of a great university." The committee noted, among other things, that the personnel in the athletic department were insensitive to the needs of black players and that the

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24. Putnam, "End of a Season at Syracuse," p. 22. *New York Times*, August 25, 26, 1970.

25. Putnam, "End of a Season at Syracuse," p. 22; *New York Times*, August 28, 1970 (quote). See also *New York Times*, September 24, 1970.

26. *New York Times*, September 27, 28, 30, 1970

school's athletic director, James Decker, responded to the "year-long crisis" in a "totally unsatisfactory" manner. Corbally was asked by the committee to review the duties of the athletic director with the "purpose of strengthening the authority of the office." The committee also suggested that the suspended black players should not be punished for "focusing attention on the need for a racially diversified coaching staff" and that the players should be granted an additional year of eligibility. It was strongly recommended, moreover, that the current administrative board of athletics be dissolved and replaced by an "Athletic Policy Board" that would have the "responsibility for overall policy and direction, control and supervision of intercollegiate and intramural athletics at Syracuse." Last, the committee recommended that a "new code of athletics" be set up at Syracuse that would guarantee athletes the same basic personal rights as all other students at Syracuse, including individual choice in such matters as personal appearance, social activities, and political expression.<sup>27</sup>

The university took little action on the committee's recommendations. The school's administration was politically astute enough to publicly acknowledge the hard work of the committee and state that it would take a serious look into the committee's recommendations, but the changes they eventually made in the athletic department were cosmetic in nature. Two days after the committee's report appeared in the *Dialog*, Chancellor Corbally announced that he saw no reason why there needed to be personnel changes made in the athletic department. "I want to state firmly and unequivocally," noted Corbally, "that I find no mandate or suggestion in the report or its recommendations that leads me to conclude that personnel changes are necessary to accomplish the purposes of the report." Corbally was similar to many other college administrators in that he was reluctant to initiate changes in athletic department personnel over the wishes of alumni and financial contributors to the institution. And at Syracuse the alumni were not prepared to make personnel changes in the athletic department just because a group of rebellious black athletes complained about not having a black coach on the football staff. Ben Schwartzwalder was certainly not going to be easily dismissed at this time by the Syracuse faithful. He was a legend at Syracuse, having led his team to several bowl games since 1949 and coaching such famous players as Jim Brown, Ernie Davis, Floyd Little, and Jim Nance. Perhaps most important, Schwartzwalder did not yet have to concern himself with answering the age-old question "What have you done for me lately?" His 1970 team, remarkably enough, went 6-4 for the season and Schwartzwalder was named the East's outstanding coach in at least one poll.<sup>28</sup>

In all, the revolt of black athletes at Syracuse ended just about the way it had started. The administration went on with the normal course of business at the university while waiting for the whole incident to blow over. The dismissed black athletes, on the other hand, were left to find their own way in the world

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27. *New York Times*. December 9, 1970. *Pittsburgh Courier-Journal*, December 19, 1970

28. *New York Times*. December 11 (quote), 9, 1970.

without much help from those people who had induced them to attend the university in the first place. No one emerged a winner from the incident at Syracuse. For every one person who had his consciousness raised concerning racial matters, there were a dozen others who were left with a bitter taste in their mouths over the whole incident. Chronic racism still existed at Syracuse, but under a different cover.<sup>29</sup>

*“Shave Off That Thing”: The Great Pumpkin and Fred Milton Affair at Oregon State*

The last place you might expect a black athletic revolt to take place was at Oregon State University. Located in Corvallis, the quintessential college town situated in the beautiful Willamette Valley, Oregon State was not a hotbed for social causes and radical movements. Perhaps the only serious controversy that ever occurred on campus was when the school’s arch-rival, the University of Oregon, was perceived getting preferential treatment from the local press or the Board of Regents. All the apparent tranquility on campus, however, would change suddenly in 1969. In February of that year, Dee Andros, the burly head football coach known affectionately as “The Great Pumpkin,” happened to cross paths with one of his black players, Fred Milton, while taking a walk across campus. It was a chance meeting between the two men, but one that would have dire consequences for both Andros and Milton, and the university community at large. Andros, while obviously not realizing it at the time, sparked a campus uprising by telling Milton to shave off his newly sprouted Van Dyke mustache by the following Monday or be dismissed from the team.<sup>30</sup>

Milton refused to honor Andros’ request. When Monday rolled around, Milton was not yet clean-shaven and Andros followed through on his threat by informing the junior linebacker from Richland, Washington, that he was no longer a member of the football team, although his scholarship would be honored through the remainder of the year. “He [Milton] did not conform to the rules set up for the team,” Andros noted. “It is the policy of the team and the athletic department that no mustaches or beards will be permitted to be worn by an Oregon State athlete. It has nothing to do with discrimination but the fact we try to produce a team that the students, alumni, and ourselves can be proud of.”<sup>31</sup> Milton went immediately to the Black Student Union (B.S.U.) and filed complaints against Andros and the athletic department, alleging that his human rights had been violated.

The 57-member B.S.U. was in full support of Milton and wasted no time in drawing attention to his case. On the evening of February 24, the B.S.U. announced that its members, which included 17 black athletes, would boycott all classes and athletic events at Oregon State until a satisfactory solution to the Milton affair could be found. The following morning the B.S.U. made a more dramatic declaration of protest. Just prior to Dr. Linus Pauling’s (a two-time

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29. *New York Times*. December 9, 11, 1970.

30. Underwood, “Shave Off That Thing,” p. 22; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, February 25, 26, 1969

31. *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, February 25, 1969.



Fred Milton (Courtesy Sports Information Office, Oregon State University)

winner of the Nobel Peace Prize) Centennial Lecture, approximately 30 members of the B.S.U. and about an equal number of white sympathizers, crowded in front of the stage in Oregon State's Gill Coliseum and asked if they could explain to the several thousand people in attendance the reasons behind the proposed boycott. President Jensen, who was already on stage with most of the university's top administrators, consented to the request, giving the protesting students three minutes to explain their position. Rich Harr, a sophomore defensive back on the football team, and Mike Smith, president of the B.S.U., made short speeches to the crowd asking support for the boycott which was scheduled to start the very next day. Interrupted by occasional catcalls and

applause, the two black student leaders stressed the point that the Milton case was not simply a black issue but should be a concern of everyone in the community. Following the brief speeches by Harr and Smith, President Jensen mounted the podium amid much applause from the crowd and acknowledged his gratitude to the two previous speakers. "We believe that at Oregon State University we have kept the channels open," Jensen noted. "I pledge myself and I pledge to you to do what I can to see that there is no discrimination on this campus."<sup>32</sup>

The B.S.U.'s disruption of the Centennial Lecture was just the beginning of a very long day at Oregon State. Five short hours later the B.S.U. held a rally in the Memorial Union Commons dining hall where it tried to drum up additional support for the planned boycott of classes. The leaders of the B.S.U. emphasized to those in attendance that the boycott should be an orderly affair and not marred by demonstrations, picketing, or violence. Officers of the B.S.U. also stressed that the struggle for human rights and the right of black students to "follow their culture, their beliefs, and select mode of dress and hair style" would be seriously compromised if students who opposed the boycott were prevented from attending classes.<sup>33</sup>

At about the same time the B.S.U. was holding its Memorial Commons rally, Oregon State's coaches and white athletes began to express their feelings on the Milton affair. The school's coaches let their opinions be known at the noontime luncheon meeting of the Beaver Booster Club. All the coaches of the major sports, except Andros who was out of town at the time, extolled the virtues of college athletics and spoke of the essentiality of team discipline and refusal to give preferential treatment to individual players. Oregon State's white athletes completed the day's events by presenting President Jensen with a petition signed by some 173 athletes supporting Andros' decision to dismiss Milton from the football team. Less encumbered by what they could say on the Milton case than the school's coaches, white athletes at Oregon State were very outspoken in their support of Andros and the athletic department. With the notable exceptions of Dick Fosbury, gold medalist in the high jump at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, and Bill Enyart, an All-American fullback, Oregon State's white athletes closed ranks and stood solidly behind Andros' decision. John Didion, an All-American center on the Beaver football team, became the chief spokesman for the white athletes, leading about sixty of them on a walk from Gill Coliseum to President Jensen's office to present him with the signed petitions. Jess Lewis, an All-American defensive tackle and N.C.A.A. heavyweight wrestling champion, was also a member of that group, as were such other Beaver notables as Steve Preece, Billy Main, Vic Bartolome, Bobby Mayes, Greg Marks, and Bob Beall. To these athletes the Milton case was not a racial matter at all, but merely the instance of a head coach handing out proper punishment to an athlete who failed to follow team rules. Fred Milton under-

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32. *The Oregonian*, February 26, 1969; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, February 25, 1969.

33. *The Oregonian*, February 26, 1969.

stood Andros' rules and the consequences if he failed to abide by them. He made his own bed; now he would have to sleep in it.<sup>34</sup>

The B.S.U.'s scheduled boycott of classes officially began on February 26. It was not, however, a smashing success. The 57 black students on campus participated in the boycott, along with a handful of sympathetic white students, who were apparently motivated by the support shown by student body president John Frazer, and the surprise backing of the usually conservative student senate the previous evening. University officials could not determine the impact of the boycott on class attendance, but it apparently was slight. Unless they had known ahead of time, visitors to Oregon State would not have noticed anything unusual about student traffic on campus or that a boycott of classes was even taking place.<sup>35</sup>

The relative peacefulness at Oregon State lasted for only a short time. On February 27 the battle lines between the school's athletic department and B.S.U. were drawn much tighter as the two groups staged separate noontime rallies to defend their particular positions and, on occasion, to throw barbs at one another. An estimated crowd of 5,000 crowded together on the quad outside the school's Memorial Union Ballroom to hear the coaching staff reiterate its position on the Milton affair. The central theme of the speeches was that coaches had the right to establish team rules without the consent of players and that individual sacrifices on the part of players led to a kind of discipline lacking in most areas of contemporary society. The school's coaches were similar to coaches everywhere in that they viewed competitive athletics as one of the last arenas in which to develop character, self-control, and loyalty. College athletics were one of the last bastions against long hair, drug freaks, and a world generally gone mad. Andros, the portly ex-football star at Oklahoma and Marine war hero whom sportswriter John Underwood once described as a 250-pound man in a 170-pound body, was obviously upset with having his authority challenged and very sensitive to charges of racial discrimination. He noted, in his deep, gravel-like voice that occasioned many imitators among members of his own football team, that "there has never been nor will there ever be racism in the athletic department." "I just ask you to believe," said Andros, "that I have never discriminated against any athletes, regardless, black or white. And I promise you that I will always try-and I know my staff will always try-to be 100 percent fair with every athlete that chooses to further his education at Oregon State University."<sup>36</sup>

The B.S.U.'s rally took place in the Home Economics auditorium, not more than 100 yards from where the coaches were delivering their speeches. This meeting was very different from the one held by the coaches at the Memorial Union. Staged before a standing-room-only crowd of about 1,000, the B.S.U. rally was more spirited, involved a more heterogeneous group of people, and

34. *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, February 25, 26, 1969.

35. *The Oregonian*, February 21, 1969; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, February 27, 1969.

36. See Edwards, *Sociology of Sport*, pp. 142-152; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, February 28, 1969. See also *Corvallis Gazette Times*, February 27, 1969; *The Oregonian*, February 28, 1969.

included participants from outside the Oregon State community. Substantially outnumbered and with far less resources than their antagonists, the B.S.U. realized the importance of expanding their power base and they did so by enticing people of high profile to address the rally. Both John Frazer, Oregon State's student body president, and his counterpart at the University of Oregon, Dick Jones, pledged their support of the B.S.U., as did representatives from the Students for a Democratic Society. Dave Roberson, a football letterman from the University of Oregon, brought the house down when he announced that black athletes at Oregon had voted unanimously not to take part in athletic contests with Oregon State until the present conflict had been resolved. The main headliner at the B.S.U. rally was John Carlos, the same John Carlos who sent half the world into a tizzy with his black power salute at the Mexico City Olympics. Carlos told the audience that coaches had no right to dictate what athletes should wear or how they should look. He emphasized that a beard could be "very special and significant to a black man and to force him to remove it" was inexcusable. Like the other speakers, Carlos laid most of the blame at Andros' feet. "This cat (Andros) must be an idiot," Carlos said at one point. "Without athletes he doesn't have a game."<sup>37</sup>

While the B.S.U. and athletic department were engaging in verbal warfare, the 17 black athletes at Oregon State and university administrators were faced with some difficult decisions. The school's black athletes found themselves somewhere between a rock and a hard place, with seemingly no effective way to maintain an allegiance to their fellow black students and at the same time continue to participate in competitive athletics which were helping to pay for their education and serving as a training ground for a possible career in professional sports. Being members of a numerically small racial minority at a predominantly white university, Oregon State's black athletes could not easily say no to their fellow black students because these same students were almost their only source of social contact outside of athletics. In many ways, Oregon State's black athletes established a familial relationship with other black students on campus that was very supportive at times, but also stultifying and restrictive. They risked being scorned, if not ostracized, by their black peer group if they did not show at least tacit support of the B.S.U. boycott or failed to stand up to the school's sport establishment.<sup>38</sup>

The predicament for Oregon State's black athletes was that they also felt an allegiance to the school's coaches and athletic department. As competitive athletes, they had been taught since their careers began to be loyal, obedient, and respectful of authority. Breaking rules and defying the authority of their coaches was incomprehensible to most of Oregon State's black athletes. On a more practical level, the school's black athletes were careful to follow the dictates of their coaches because to do otherwise might cost them their scholarships, limit their playing time, or ultimately hurt their chances of advancing to

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31. *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, February 28, 1969. See also *The Oregonian*, February 28, 1969.

38. *The Oregonian*, February 26, 27, March 1, 1969; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, February 27, 1969. See also Willie and McCord, *Black Students at White Colleges*, pp. 22-23.

the next level of sport. Sacrificing those things was far from easy, particularly if as a player you thought you had been treated fairly by a coach who had become your mentor both on and off the field.<sup>39</sup>

The school's black athletes handled the pressure in various ways. While early press reports indicated that all 17 athletes would withdraw from the university, only two of them who figured to get any playing time in their respective sports withdrew from school. Fred Milton, the central figure in the whole affair who, by some accounts, never had any intention of playing football for the Beavers the following fall, reportedly transferred to Portland State. Rich Harr, who was actively involved in the B.S.U. and was expected to get some playing time as a defensive back on the football team, transferred to the University of Washington where he continued to be active in black student affairs. The school's four black basketball players put their careers on the line by failing to report for practice following the announcement of the proposed boycott of classes and athletic events. Coach Paul Valenti immediately dismissed the players-who included Freddie Boyd, star freshman guard; Andrew Hill, red-shirt junior college transfer; Dave Moore, starting guard; and Jim Edmunds, a reserve guard-from the team and threatened to have their scholarships revoked. The dismissals forced Valenti to go into the last two weeks of the season without any black players and caused Oregon State's opponents to withhold their black athletes from competition. Some black athletes at Oregon State continued to concentrate on athletics while at once espousing the B.S.U. party line and keeping their distance from the racial problems on campus. Two athletes who seemingly fell into this category were Willie Turner, the leading sprinter on the school's track team, and Tommie Smith's younger brother, Ernie, who was Oregon State's second best sprinter.<sup>40</sup>

The university's administrative officials made legitimate efforts to respond to the B.S.U. demands. President Jensen actually seemed to relish the spotlight and attempted to negotiate in good faith on behalf of the university. While it was not easy to give in to the B.S.U. demands in the face of personal insults and bitter condemnations, Jensen seemingly made every effort to settle the dispute between black students and the school's athletic department. On February 28, he charged the Committee on Minority Affairs with the "responsibility of bringing the B.S.U. and the athletic department together to identify issues and needs more clearly and to define the proper boundaries of disciplinary control." Five days later, Jensen appointed another committee called the Commission on Human Rights and Responsibilities, which was asked to settle disputes that arose when decisions by coaches or other university personnel conflicted with a student's individual human rights. Jensen stressed that the committee, which was chaired by James Oldfield, head of the animal science department, and included five other faculty members and three students, would not supersede the Committee on Minority Affairs.<sup>41</sup>

39. See Edwards. *Sociology of Sport*, pp. 142-152.

40. See *The Oregonian*, February 26, 27, March 1. 1969; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, February 21, 1969.

41. *The Oregonian*, March 1, 6, 7, 8. 1969; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*. March 1, 5, 6, 1969

The B.S.U. found Jensen's proposals unacceptable. On the same day the president announced the formation of the Commission on Human Rights and Responsibilities, the B.S.U. held yet another rally at the Memorial Union Commons at which it blasted Jensen for his actions and declared that some 47 black students planned to withdraw from the university. The president of the B.S.U., Mike Smith, branded Oregon State a "corrupt and racist institution" and said that black students would leave the "university with its plantation philosophy of operation." Smith called Jensen a "spineless figurehead" and accused him of relegating "authority to numerous other college officials in his attempt to solve the problem." At the conclusion of his brief speech, Smith led a group of about 40 black students on a symbolic march across campus and off the university grounds.<sup>42</sup>

Oregon State's athletic department was slightly more optimistic than the B.S.U. about Jensen's proposals, including the establishment of the Commission on Human Rights and Responsibilities. While the department was obviously concerned about having its power usurped by the newly created commission, it publicly expressed support for Jensen's plan. The athletic department's stand on the Jensen proposals and the entire Milton affair was most fully expressed by athletic director James Barratt at an Oregon State Faculty Senate meeting on March 6. Barratt, who had been relatively silent on the subject up to this time, did not leave a stone unturned in his address to the Senate, touching upon everything from Fred Milton's possible motives for breaking team rules to specific changes made by the athletic department to foster a more positive relationship with Oregon State's black students. Barratt told members of the faculty senate that the Milton affair was "not, and never has been," a case of racial prejudice. In his opinion, Oregon State's black students had confused "discipline for discrimination." Barratt stressed that the athletic department was "not for an all-white program" and that the apparent decision by the school's black students to leave the university "distresses all of us." In an obvious tone of discouragement, Barratt noted that since 1951 the department had had a terribly difficult time attracting black student-athletes to Oregon State. He cited the lack of a black community in Corvallis, high out-of-state entrance requirements, and lack of a black studies program, as primary reasons for not being able to recruit more black athletes to the university. Last, Barratt pointed out that all black student-athletes were "welcome back to the athletic department at any time under absolutely no duress."<sup>43</sup>

The Commission on Human Rights and Responsibilities began their work almost immediately, asking Fred Milton and Oregon State's athletic board to submit written reports detailing their side of the story. Between the time, however, that the committee began its investigation in March and filed its final report some two months later, a number of events took place that would keep the racial problems at Oregon State in full view of the sporting public. On March 6,

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42. *The Oregonian*, March 6, 1969; see also *ibid.*, March 7, 9, 1969; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, March 7, 1969.

43. *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, March 7, 1969. See also *The Oregonian*, March 7, 1969.

the Portland chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.) endorsed the black student walkout at Oregon State in protest of Andros' decision to dismiss Milton from the football team. Silent on the issue until now so that black students and the school's athletic department could hopefully iron out their own differences, the N.A.A.C.P. conducted an investigation that illuminated more fully the specific grievances of Oregon State's black students. Thomas R. Vickers, chairman of the N.A.A.C.P.'s local chapter, conducted the investigation, interviewing several black students about the Milton case. In perhaps the most accurate appraisal of the Milton affair to date, Vickers reported that the "beard blowup" was merely a symptom of other black student grievances at Oregon State; grievances which had been festering for some time. Vickers was told by black students, for example, that Corvallis "merchants and businessmen had gone to deliberate lengths to make blacks feel uncomfortable and leave their places of business." Racism also extended to the housing facilities provided black students on campus. A majority of black students complained to Vickers that they were consistently housed in second-class dormitories that were so inferior to white student housing that it appeared to be "official university policy." Perhaps the major complaint of Oregon State's black athletes was the athletic department's "unwritten policy" that they date only women of their own race. Black athletes told Vickers that pressure was quickly brought to bear on them if they dated white co-eds.<sup>44</sup>

Following closely on the heels of Vickers' investigation were two incidents involving Oregon State black athletes that also would help keep the university's



Dee Andros (Courtesy Sports Information Office, Oregon State University)

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44. *The Oregonian*, March 7, 1969

racial problems a hot topic of conversation. On April 8, Bryce Huddleston, a black wingback from California, pulled a Fred Milton by showing up for spring football practice wearing a mustache. Andros, who by this time was more determined than ever to enforce team rules, kicked Huddleston off the squad, with the understanding that he could return once he was clean-shaven. Huddleston immediately appealed to the Commission on Human Rights and Responsibilities. The committee adopted, with the approval of Jensen, a rather nebulous directive, telling the Board of Intercollegiate Athletics "that pending final decision, Huddleston shall be granted an excused absence from spring football practice and not be penalized under any disobedience clause." The committee further confused the issue by declaring that all other athletes must comply with "existing rules and physical appearance until pending cases are settled."<sup>45</sup>

Andros was anything but nebulous in responding to the committee's actions. While obviously concerned about disobeying the edict of Jensen and the committee, Andros noted, nonetheless, that he could not run a football program "by letting a kid appear when he wants to. As far as I am concerned, he [Huddleston] is off the squad." Any questions of ultimate authority in the case eventually became a moot point because Huddleston was allowed to rejoin the team after shaving his mustache and admitting the error of his ways. He had missed three days of practice, just enough time to go from first string wingback to last on the depth chart.<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps more noteworthy than the Huddleston affair were the problems encountered by Willie Turner and Ernie Smith some three weeks later during a dual track meet with the University of Washington. Turner and Smith traveled to Seattle with every expectation of gaining big points for their team against the largely outmanned Huskies. Circumstances, however, would prevent them from doing so. No sooner had the two athletes stepped off the bus in Seattle when members of Washington's B.S.U. began pressuring them not to compete in the track meet. Under the leadership of its president, Larry Gossett, and former Oregon State footballer Rich Harr, the Washington B.S.U. was determined to keep Smith and Turner from participating because it felt the two athletes had turned their backs on black student rights by rescinding their initial commitment to leave Oregon State. Smith and Turner were traitors, plain and simple.<sup>47</sup>

The pressure exerted by Washington's B.S.U. proved successful. On the advice of Coach Berny Wagner, Smith and Turner decided not to compete, returning to Corvallis on the day of the meet. The two athletes were bitter about

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45. *The Oregonian*, April 10, 11, 12, 1969; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, April 9, 10, 1969. Another well-publicized incident occurred between Eugene Register-Guard sportswriter Jerry Uhrhammer and Oregon State's coaching staff. In particular, Uhrhammer criticized Andros for his handling of the Milton incident, an action that resulted in his disbarment from the Oregon State locker room for a short time. See the Eugene Register-Guard, March 13, 1969; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, March 13, April 4, 1969; *The Oregonian*, April 4, 1969.

46. *The Oregonian*, April 10 (quote), 12, 1969; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, April 11, 1969.

47. *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, April 28, 1969. See also *The Oregonian*, April 28, 1969; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, April 29, 1969.

the treatment they had received at the hands of the Washington B.S.U. A day after their arrival back in Corvallis, Smith and Turner issued a statement through the Oregon State Athletic Department in which they condemned the actions of the “misled black students” from the University of Washington. The two athletes saved most of the criticism for Harr. The former Oregon State athlete was accused by Smith and Turner of being, among other things, insensitive to the needs of black students at both Oregon State and the University of Washington. Harr encouraged black students to forego their educations, knowing full well that you “can’t deal with the educated without being educated yourself.” Harr had run away from his problems; now he was selfishly pressuring everyone else to do the same.<sup>48</sup>

After two months of eager anticipation, the university’s Commission on Human Rights and Responsibilities finally came out with their report. Not the most decisive document ever published, the report contained the kind of doubletalk that would have done Oliver North and John Poindexter proud. The gist of the four-page document was that Fred Milton’s human rights had been violated. The committee stressed, however, that the violation was not deliberate but resulted from “insufficiently sensitive discipline rules.” Andros and his staff were insensitive to the changing needs of individual team members, “including the emerging social and cultural values of members of the black community.” At the same time, the committee was quick to point out that it shared Andros’ “sincere dedication to the principle that effective discipline is essential to successful organizational endeavor” and is a valuable and necessary instrument in constructive character formation. The committee specifically recommended that the Board of Intercollegiate Athletics request the football coaching staff to re-examine and modify its “neatness” clause, a suitable channel of appeal open to all athletes and coaches should be maintained by the Board of Intercollegiate Athletics, a list of team regulations should be presented to all of the school’s athletes and all prospective recruits prior to making a formal commitment to Oregon State, and Fred Milton should be given every opportunity to re-enroll at the university and become a member of the 1970 football team.<sup>49</sup>

Neither Milton nor Andros was pleased with the commission’s report. Milton believed the committee’s recommendations were worthless because President Jensen had not established guidelines to ensure that they were enforced. Andros was troubled by the commission’s announcement that he had violated Milton’s human rights. But rather than automatically accepting the committee’s recommendations, he dug in and stubbornly declared that “as long as I am head football coach at Oregon State, my staff and I will make the rules and policies of our football program.”<sup>50</sup>

Andros’ reaction to the committee’s report was not surprising. While he enjoyed playing the role of the country bumpkin, Andros was not stupid. He

48. *The Oregonian*, April 28, 1969.

49. *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, May 8, 10, 1969.

50. *Corvallis Gazette-Times*. May 8 (quote), 9, 1969

realized as well as anyone his status in the university community and that the commission had done nothing to usurp his power as football coach. Andros was the greatest thing to hit Corvallis since sliced bread. It would be no exaggeration to say that other than President Jensen, Andros was the single most powerful person at Oregon State. He had led the school's football program back into national prominence, realizing the kind of success on the gridiron that had been unknown at Oregon State since the glory years of Tommy Prothro. Andros had the support of most of the alumni and majority of faculty members at Oregon State. He had parlayed his popularity into a recently agreed upon contract with the school, utilizing a job offer from the University of Pittsburgh as leverage in the negotiations. Word had it that Andros had asked for and been promised total control of the football program by the school's administration.<sup>51</sup>

With such enormous support shown for his program, Andros was not about to make drastic changes in his coaching philosophy and succumb to pressure from a small minority of disgruntled students. This was particularly true because Andros genuinely believed that the rules he set down were in the best interests of his players, the football team, and Oregon State. He was similar to other coaches around the country in that he saw himself as the one man on campus who was in position to teach such neglected values as sportsmanship, self-sacrifice, and team loyalty. Andros also was not prepared to redress the grievances of black students because he believed he had already made substantial changes in team regulations in an attempt to accommodate the special needs of his athletes. He was certainly more progressive than his predecessor, Tommy Prothro, who supposedly prohibited his players from smiling the day before a game and forced them to march two by two onto airplanes. Andros proudly noted that he had made concessions to his players by shortening practices, making changes in meals at training table, and not forcing team members to live in an athletic dormitory. On the other hand, Andros was reluctant to be too accommodating for fear that he would be viewed as capitulating to black students. In fact, his show of force seemed to be motivated as much by concern that he would not be seen as yielding to group pressure as by his fear of the consequences of the black student revolt. Andros believed, moreover, that since the athletic department was paying for the services of black athletes, he had every right to ask them to obey team rules and regulations. While he would never admit it publicly, Andros believed that athletes like Fred Milton showed a serious case of ingratitude by refusing to follow the dictates of those who had made it possible for them to receive a free education.<sup>52</sup>

Athletic department officials were terribly disappointed by the report but promised to consider and act upon the commission's various recommendations. Athletic Director Barratt and Wallace E. Gibbs, chairman of the Board of Intercollegiate Athletics, noted that reforms would be made in the athletic department that would reflect a changing society and proper concern for human

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51. Underwood, "Shave Off That Thing," p. 23; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, March 8, 1969.

52. See *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, May 9, 24, 1969.

rights. Barratt and Gibbs both seemed serious about making changes in the athletic department. But, as was the case in many of the black athletic revolts at predominantly white universities, the changes made would only be token gestures rather than anything substantive. Barratt announced, for example, a new "personal appearance code" that would allow players to wear facial hair during the off season. One of the most talked about changes made in the athletic department was the appointment of a black coach. Gene Hilliard, a thirty-year-old teacher and coach at Highland Junior High School in Corvallis and former Beaver football player, was hired by Andros as an assistant football coach and thus became the first black to join the Oregon State coaching staff on a full-time basis. Hilliard was expected to help recruit black players, act as a counselor to minority athletes, and then coach.<sup>53</sup>

The Oregon State Athletic Department, then, came out of the Milton affair relatively unscathed. Andros had his armor tarnished slightly, but not dramatically enough to lessen the enormous popularity he enjoyed in the community and around the state. Of the department's 17 black athletes, 11 chose to stay at Oregon State and complete their education. Athletes the caliber of Freddie Boyd, Willie Turner, Ernie Smith, Mel Easley, and Bryce Huddleston continued to excel in their respective sports and bring recognition to the school. Several developments took place in the athletic department, however, that did not bode well for the future of the program. Not surprisingly, there were no black players in Andros' 1969 recruiting class. Black high school football stars had been warned not to attend Oregon State, and they heeded the advice. Paul Valenti's popularity as basketball coach was waning and he would be replaced within the next couple of years by Ralph Miller, the former Wichita State and University of Iowa head coach. Perhaps most important, trouble would arise in the Beaver baseball program. In December 1970, 13 members of the baseball team would present Jim Barratt with a petition asking that coach Gene Tanselli be dismissed as coach for his failure to help players improve their skills. The charges would be repeated the following year and underscored by player resignations and the threat of a boycott. Finally, in 1972 Tanselli was accused of racial discrimination by Verdell Adams, a black outfielder from Portland. While exonerated of racial discrimination charges, Tanselli was fired as Oregon State's baseball coach on June 15, 1972. In a most revealing statement, Barratt explained that Tanselli was being replaced because of his record. In effect, Tanselli was ill-equipped to handle the various criticisms leveled against him because, unlike Andros, he had made the mistake of losing more games than he had won during the three seasons prior to his firing.<sup>54</sup>

53. *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, May 8, 27, 1969. See also *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, May 9, 13, 24, 1969.

54. See *The Oregonian*, June 16, 25, 1972, May 25, 1973; *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, April 18, 19, 27, June 2, 12, 13, 16, 23, May 24, 1973; *New York Times*, May 25, 1973.

*Lessons to be Learned: Black Student Athletes and the Dynamics of Institutional Conflict*

One of the most striking features of the revolts at Berkeley, Syracuse, and Oregon State was that black athletes did not go it alone but were ably assisted by their respective black student organizations. In large measure, black athletes either worked in concert with or were utilized by these groups to effectively bring about change in their particular institutions. While they felt an obligation to adhere to their institutionally defined role as athletes, black athletes also belonged to a family of black students who worked through their campus organizations to accomplish a range of functions, which included: to educate or confront their institutions about limitations of their programs for black students; to sponsor social and other special activities for black students; to raise funds for black programs; to provide black cultural experiences for black students; to provide educational or support services for black students; and to unify black student interests.

In all three revolts, black students adhered to the strategy of confronting the administration at the highest level possible with their demands, assuming that that was where the power was located. Chancellor Corbally of Syracuse, Chancellor Heyns of Berkeley, and President Jensen of Oregon State accepted the challenge and attempted to negotiate in good faith with black athletes. Corbally bent over backwards trying to bring Ben Schwartzwalder and the boycotting black football players together to discuss their differences. Jensen did the same at Oregon State, making every conceivable effort to settle the bitter confrontation between black students and the school's athletic department. Heyns tried desperately to mend the fences between disgruntled black athletes and Berkeley's athletic department, and see that the school was more sensitive to the needs of all black students on campus. Like most of his counterparts at other institutions facing similar problems with black athletes, Heyns set up a committee to determine the facts surrounding the confrontation and make policy changes where necessary. Unlike many of the fact-finding committees at other universities, however, the recommendations made by Berkeley's committee were not mere window dressing but substantive changes that were similar to those made across the bay at both San Jose State and San Francisco State.<sup>55</sup>

Black students at the three institutions went to the bargaining table with university administrators armed with as many weapons as they could muster. While black students were always careful to keep control of the conflict, they used a variety of groups to garner support and legitimacy or to exert pressure on the universities. Activist community leaders, black faculty, white faculty and students, and the N.A.A.C.P., all played, in varying degrees, a part in the revolts at Berkeley, Syracuse, and Oregon State. On the other hand, black

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55. The black athletic revolts at San Jose State and San Francisco State were two of the best-known and publicized confrontations. See Edwards, *Revolt of the Black Athlete*, pp. 153-158; James Brann, "San Jose: The Bullhorn Message." *The Nation*. November 6, 1967, 665-67; *Chicago Defender*, October 5, 1967; *New York Times*, May 12, 1968.

student leaders resented the fact that the schools' presidents brought more institutional representation into negotiations. Their demands were predicated on the assumption that the president was the person who had the power to make changes, not special university committees made up of faculty members who were both ill-informed and possibly unconcerned about the needs of black students. Nowhere was this attitude more apparent than in the confrontation at Oregon State. Mike Smith, Annette Greene, and other B.S.U. members at the school were adamantly opposed to President Jensen's creation of the Commission on Human Rights and Responsibilities, charging Jensen with "relegating his authority to numerous other college officials in his attempt to solve the problem."<sup>56</sup>

In efforts to gain bargaining power, black students at all three schools fostered confrontation and heightened tension in a number of different ways. Symbolic behavior and gamesmanship were certainly evident in the revolts at Berkeley, Syracuse, and Oregon State. The use of four-letter words, class boycotts, building occupations, and staged rallies were all used by black students in an attempt to seek legitimacy in a situation in which they had virtually no autonomy or power. The central ploy utilized by black athletes to foster confrontation and heighten tension was, of course, the threat or actual withholding of their services. Black athletes risked their educations and, in some cases, their chances at a professional career, to become involved in the struggle for human rights at their respective institutions. For example, Bobby Smith, spokesman for the black athletes at Berkeley, apparently lost out on a professional football contract because of his involvement in the racial turmoil on campus.<sup>57</sup> Other black athletes discontinued their collegiate careers, transferred to other institutions, or dropped out of school entirely.

School officials generally neither knew how to deal with the black athletes nor did they realize where their commitments would lead them or how much support they would receive from people within and outside the university community. As we have seen, presidents of the three universities responded to the revolts in similar ways, finding it difficult to distinguish sometimes between rhetoric and genuine bargaining ploys. White faculty members as a whole showed little interest in the revolts, although they expected to be kept informed on the negotiations. While white faculty members served on the special grievance committees appointed by the presidents, they had a more limited role in the negotiations than many of their colleagues at other institutions. The few black faculty members and administrators at each institution seemed to play a more crucial role in negotiations, although it tended to be on a more informal basis rather than in an official university capacity. The head coaches involved in the revolts were certainly more decisive in their dealings with black athletes than other university personnel. It took Ben Schwartzwalder a matter of minutes

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<sup>56</sup> *The Oregonian*, March 3, 1969.

<sup>57</sup> Edwards, *Revolt of the Black Athlete*, pp. 81-82

to dismiss the black athletes at Syracuse, Rene Herrerias slightly longer to get rid of Bob Presley of Berkeley, and Dee Andros some two days to say good-bye to Fred Milton at Oregon State. These were not decisions made without some forethought, however. Not one of these men wanted to get rid of players who could lead them to victory and ultimately determine their fate as coaches. But, in their minds, they were given no choice. They either disciplined their black athletes or risked having their authority undermined and team unity disrupted.

The decisiveness of the three coaches, however, did not prevent school officials from interceding in the confrontations or curbing the inevitable dispute that took place between white and disgruntled black athletes. In large measure, the schools' white athletes acted as willing spokesmen for coaches who did not always have the freedom to speak with total candor and who recognized the advantages of having someone speak on their behalf. White athletes at the three institutions were almost uniformly loyal to their coaches, believing that black athletes were treated fairly and without racist intent by Herrerias, Schwartzwalder and Andros. The coaches did not just have the right to dismiss the black athletes, but were obligated to since rules had been disobeyed and team discipline violated. White athletes did not take kindly to the fact that black students hid behind a façade of racial discrimination for breaking rules for which they themselves would have been seriously reprimanded. The majority of white athletes, moreover, were disturbed by the seeming attempt of their black counterparts to disrupt the institution of sport, an institution that relied heavily on humbleness, submissiveness, and respect for authority. White athletes believed that their black counterparts mistakenly confused racial discrimination with the discipline that was necessary for the success of any athletic team.

Black athletes did not confuse discrimination with discipline as much as they probably used their coaches as scapegoats. They conveniently alleged discrimination as a justification for their actions, according to Harry Edwards' interpretation, in an attempt "to ameliorate and help resolve the dilemma of conflicting demands in which they found themselves." The black athletes at Berkeley, Syracuse, and Oregon State were enrolled at institutions with a relatively small number of blacks in the total school population. Their informal social contacts at these institutions were limited to a small minority of black students on campus. While this situation provided black athletes at the three schools with an important support system, it also placed enormous pressure on them because they were unable to seek out new social contacts when their role as athletes conflicted with the political views of the majority of blacks on campus. By alleging discrimination, black athletes could at once express empathy with or become actively involved in the black protest movement and convince themselves that they had not violated their proper role as athletes.<sup>58</sup>

It became noticeably apparent that the charges of racism lodged by black athletes were partly an ideological justification when white athletes were disciplined or actually dismissed from a team for the same reasons as their black

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58. Edwards, *Sociology of Sport*, pp. 146-51. 148 (quote)

counterparts. Black athletes paid virtually no attention, let alone claimed discrimination when a white athlete was dismissed from a team for length of hair or some other rules infraction. When the white sprinter, Bob Hertan, was kicked off Oregon State's track team by coach Berny Wagner for refusing to shave his mustache and sideburns, the black athletes on campus voiced no complaints about Wagner and his coaching methods. They acted as if the incident never took place. The sit-in staged in the office of Wallace E. Gibbs, University Registrar and Chairman of the Board of Intercollegiate Athletics, to protest the dismissal of Hertan was composed entirely of white students.<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps the most glaring indication that white coaches were used as scapegoats was the fact that organized turmoil was virtually nonexistent at historically black colleges. Eddie Robinson of Grambling, Jake Gaither of Florida A&M, and coaches at other black schools adhered to similar policies, required the same discipline among their players, and meted out similar kinds of punishments to rebellious athletes, as their counterparts at predominantly white institutions. They never experienced, however, charges of racial discrimination by their athletes. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but it probably stemmed, first of all, from the fact that black athletes were among the numerical majority on black campuses and could always pursue alternative social contacts to alleviate the pressure arising from their incongruous role demands as both athletes and black men in American culture. Unlike their fellow athletes at white institutions, the black athletes at historically black colleges could find new social contacts when particular groups of black students made demands on them that were inconsistent with their role as athletes. Second, black athletes could not be true to the essential values of the black student movement if they treated the black coach as a scapegoat and charged discrimination. They realized that the whole movement was, to a large extent, predicated on the assumption that all blacks were potential converts to their way of thinking and therefore, attacks on black coaches were illogical as well as counterproductive. Last, attacking black coaches at predominantly black colleges was out of the question because such action was incongruous with the black power movement's demand for more black coaches in organized sport.<sup>60</sup>

The utilization of coaches as scapegoats did not erase the fact that black student athletes experienced various forms of insensitivity and discrimination on predominantly white university campuses across the country. The small number of blacks in the total school population did play a part in the revolts at Berkeley, Syracuse, and Oregon State. In some respects, the three schools were guilty of condemning black athletes to an inadequate social life and intraracial as well as interracial discord by deliberately recruiting them to their schools but failing to attract a large number of other black students. While black athletes entered these institutions of their own volition and were given an opportunity to receive a free education and participate in college athletics, they were thrust

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59. See the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, May 16, 17, 1969; *The Oregonian*, May 17, 1969

60. Edwards, *Sociology of Sport*, pp. 148-151.

into an environment where people did not always understand black culture, racial slurs were common, and acts of discrimination were committed on a regular basis. Berkeley in particular was begging for trouble by recruiting more black athletes, but failing to attract a substantial number of other black students to its institution. As athletic director, Pete Newell could brag all he wanted about the fact that the department had more than tripled its number of black athletes during his eight-year tenure at the school. At the same time, he and his coaches were unwittingly assembling a critical mass of black athletes who were capable of exerting a great deal more pressure on athletic department policy than their counterparts at either Syracuse or Oregon State.

Playing a part in the revolts were the types of communities in which the three institutions were located. Oregon State was ripe for racial disturbances because it was located in a small, rural town with few black citizens. The athletic department at the school inadvertently put its black athletes in an almost impossible position because there was no local black community in Corvallis in which the athletes could feel at home, nor in some cases, was there any off-campus housing available to them. In contrast to black students at colleges located in areas with a local black community, the black athletes at Oregon State felt uncomfortable patronizing the community facilities that were essentially established to service the personal, recreational, and other leisure-time needs of local whites. While there was seemingly no active community opposition to the entry of black athletes at Oregon State, the fact that there was such a small black population in the town tended to interfere with the black athletes' free use of local facilities and places of public accommodation. In this situation, black athletes and many of their fellow black students were left with the feeling that they had been recruited by a school that was more interested in improving its institutional prestige than in helping them as individuals. Oregon State was terribly slow in seeing that its nearly all-white location was acceptable to blacks. By the time the school got around to revising campus housing patterns, liberalizing social regulations, and offering various social and cultural programs for blacks, a number of black athletes and their fellow black students had matriculated at universities that were either located near large black population centers or were more sensitive to the needs of minorities.

In sum, black athletics were forever changed by their participation in the revolts at the three predominantly white universities. They had experienced first hand the inner workings of university administrations, experiences that were at once exhilarating and enormously frightening. Because of their age, constrictive role as athletes, and limited experience in the political arena, black athletes made some tactical mistakes that put them in a vulnerable position not only with coaches and university administrators, but with other black students as well. They were forced to do some real soul searching and ultimately decide what was most important for them personally. It was not an enviable position to be in, particularly for some black student athletes who were only a year or two removed from high school. While their fellow students faced the usual problems

of preparing for classes and deciding upon a major, black athletes had to deal with these obstacles plus decide how they could maintain an allegiance to other black students and remain in the good graces of their coaches. Whatever path individual black athletes chose to follow, it was one they decided upon very carefully and after much deliberation. It was their future at stake, not college athletics.