

George Beahon

With the possibility that male chauvinist pigs in major college athletic factories may have to share their budget with women, one proposal for a solution sticks out.

There is agitation for professional sports, in this case, particularly, football and basketball, to reimburse the universities for the talent developed in the college "farm systems" each year.

Baseball is loaded with cases of clubs sponsoring student-athletes through college. College baseball is not what you'd label a money-maker at the box office, but at least baseball pays the scholarship freight, rather than free-loading on the finished product, as in basketball and football.

The idea that the pros pay a "head fee" for every body produced by the colleges has its pros and cons.

Former Michigan State football coach Duffy Daugherty points out that all colleges are feeling the pinch. "The very least the pros can do," suggests Duffy, "is reimburse the colleges by contributing to their scholarship funds. What would it cost? Maybe \$100,000. And that's before taxes. Actually that would amount to only about \$40,000 to each club, with their deductible tax.

"Most industries are generous in their aid to colleges. General Motors and Ford make huge donations, and our Hotel Management (Michigan State) course gets high grants from the various hotel chains who are interested in developing top talent. And there are no strings attached to these gifts.

"The colleges need all the help they can get from their friends these days. If the pros would just add 50 cents to the price of each ticket and print on the ticket that this 50 cents was going into a college scholarship fund, they wouldn't get a single squawk from sports fans."

Now hear it from another famous football figure, Alabama's Bear Bryant.

"It's a great idea. It has to happen that way, to help some colleges where the pros have already saturated their area with television. It could save the programs for some institutions. I know the pros have problems with big bonuses and high salaries but they should at least pay for what the colleges have put into these

boys, especially when they sometimes grab them before they have finished their four years."

Walter Byers is executive director of the NCAA, and he resents the "farm system" label. "The percentage of college student-athletes signed to professional sports contracts is minimal (less than 3 per cent annually) when compared to the total number of senior participants in college sports. Although I am sure any college could use the 'rebate' monies, I do not think this is the answer to our economy problems." Byers expressed fear that pro groups would begin to influence college athletics, give coaches financial stakes in signing players, weaken amateur and NCAA rules, and benefit the schools with the most pro-sponsored players, thus widening the gap between "haves" and "have nots."

NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle nailed the problem to the wall with a one-liner: "It would involve an understanding with the NCAA, and I believe that would be hard to come by."

Not hard. More like impossible.

BLESSED SACRAMENT

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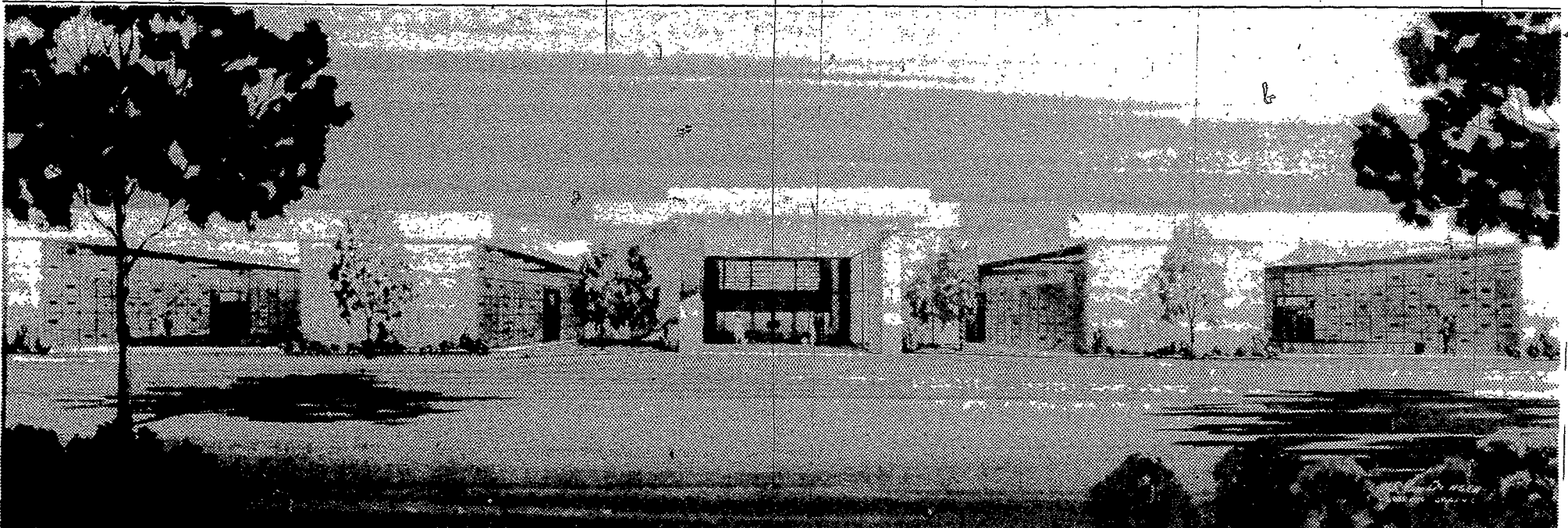
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