



We've already fixed over 3 million vehicles.



SPORTS OF THE TIMES

Business of Game Quells Thrill

By WILLIAM C. RHODEN
Published: March 21, 2010

Buffalo

The Quad

Stay on top of all the news, on and off the court, on The Times's college sports blog.

[Go to The Quad Blog](#)



Men

[Schedule and Results](#)
[A.P. and Coaches Poll](#)
[Standings](#)
[Statistics](#)

Women

[Schedule and Results](#)
[A.P. and Coaches Poll](#)
[Standings](#)
[Statistics](#)

College basketball is still buzzing after Northern Iowa's dramatic victory over top-ranked Kansas. But Syracuse was having none of it. No upsets here.

Jim Boeheim's Orange crushed Vermont on Friday, revenge for an embarrassing tournament loss in 2005. On Sunday, Syracuse routed Gonzaga, the nation's perennial sentimental favorite, 87-65.

Although the first week of the [N.C.A.A.](#) tournament will be remembered for the upsets, two comments provide sobering insights into the business of basketball.

Before Syracuse took on Gonzaga, Boeheim reflected on the firing of Coach Norm Roberts last week after six

seasons at St. John's. Roberts, regarded as one of the gentlemen of the Big East, was hired to pull the Red Storm from the ashes after the [Mike Jarvis](#) era.

"I know he's a great guy; he's as good a guy as anybody I've known in the league," Boeheim said. "I have tremendous respect for him. The reality is in this business, wherever you coach, if you don't go to the N.C.A.A. tournament, you are not going to keep your job. Period."

Roberts never did.

Boeheim simply reminded us of the realities of the game. A more troubling assessment was offered by Russell Smith, the coach of the New York Gauchos, one of the major arteries in New York's Amateur Athletic Union scene.

Smith essentially criticized Roberts for being too laid-back, for not playing the game. "You got to hustle, bend some rules or do something," Smith said.

Most programs in this N.C.A.A. tournament, from Gonzaga and St. Mary's to Syracuse and Kentucky, rely on A.A.U. affiliations for a supply of talent.

At some programs, there is an accepted give and take, ranging from A.A.U. coaches getting employment within the university to an illicit exchange of money.

Recruiting through the A.A.U. has become a fact of life, although some coaches, like



Stuart Elliott's In Advertising E-mail



Sign up for Stuart Elliott's exclusive column, sent every Monday.

Is Chevy Malibu right for you?
Click here to find out »

MAY THE BEST CAR WIN.

MOST POPULAR

1. Plan B: Skip College
2. Frank Rich: A Heaven-Sent Rent Boy
3. Your Money: A Toolkit for Women Seeking a Raise
4. Building Is Booming in a City of Empty Houses
5. In Search of Adorable, as Hello Kitty Gets Closer to Goodbye
6. The U.S. Issue: 36 Hours in Kansas City, Mo.
7. Strange Signs From Abroad
8. Maureen Dowd: Supremely Girly Girl
9. The U.S. Issue | Choice Tables: In the Seattle Area, an Assortment of Treats
10. The U.S. Issue: The Mighty Colorado at a Glide

[Go to Complete List »](#)



Text-blocking apps for drivers

ALSO IN TECH »

[Microsoft Office will be free on the Web](#)

Gonzaga's Mark Few, try to limit their reliance. "I just chose to stay out of it," he said.

For a coach with integrity, bending the rules is problematic. Can you win without operating in a gray area?

You have to talk to A.A.U. coaches, Boheim said. "That doesn't mean you have to go in a gray area — I don't even know what that means," he said. "Bend the rules, I don't know what that is. You can't bend the rules; you either break it or you don't. There is not bending to me. You either do or don't."

There is a story told of the time this season that Roberts met with a McDonald's all-American from New York about attending St. John's. Roberts told the recruit that he would play behind the incumbent, and the recruit's mother, who was in the meeting, hit the ceiling.

Kenny Charles, a major figure in the New York City youth basketball scene, said Roberts should have told the recruit that in all likelihood he would be starting. "You could say that's bending the rules because typically a coach won't say, 'You're going to start,'" Charles said. "That's a kid you can bend the rules for without breaking the rules: Look, you come here and you're starting. That might be bending the rules you normally use, but in that case, that's what you needed to do."

The A.A.U. circuit does not encourage the sense of discipline or obligation that players presumably receive during their high school seasons.

"You don't have to even go to high school," Rob Murphy, a Syracuse assistant and a former A.A.U. coach, said. "You can play A.A.U. ball, you don't need a 2.0, you don't have to get up and go to class. On game day, you don't have to make sure you attend every class or you can't play in that game at 4 o'clock or 7 p.m. You just kind of practice and travel."

In this respect, the A.A.U. system, which began as a sort of trust to protect the interests of young players and their communities, has become part of the problem.

"It's a different mind-set that you put into the kids early, and if you don't have a person around them that keeps them grounded, it hurts their mind-set going forward," Murphy said.

Little wonder.

You have one A.A.U. coach advocating bending the rules in exchange for winning talent. And Charles bluntly spells out the rules of the road in New York for Roberts's successor. "For good or for bad, we are who we are," he said. "If you're the faint of heart, you should not apply."

The early name surfacing for the job is Paul Hewitt, [Georgia Tech's](#) coach. Charles said Hewitt was a favorite of the A.A.U. community, but who calls the tune? The N.C.A.A. has an ocean of rules already, but it has to take on the unwieldy, largely unregulated world of A.A.U. basketball. Especially the coaches.

"There are a lot of great ones," Murphy said of A.A.U. coaches, "but there's a lot of them who won't deal with you unless it's going to benefit them. Sad to say, it's the nature of the business. That's just how it is. I tell people the game of basketball is crazy."

The bracket part of March Madness is exciting; the business of college basketball continues to be beyond belief.

E-mail: wcr@nytimes.com

A version of this article appeared in print on March 22, 2010, on page D4 of the New York edition.

Times Reader 2.0: Daily delivery of The Times - straight to your computer.
Subscribe for just \$4.62 a week.

SIGN IN TO E-

Price of Facebook privacy? Start clicking

nytimes.com

TECH

ADVERTISEMENTS

Find your dream home with
The New York Times Real Estate



Follow The New York Times on
Twitter

The new issue of T is here

See the news in the making. Watch
TimesCast, a daily news video.

Stay connected to the news.
Without being connected to the web.

The New York Times
TimesReader 2.0
Powered by ADOBE AIR

LEARN MORE

RELATED ADS

What are Related Ads?

- » Coaches
- » Girls Basketball
- » Basketball Hoops
- » Football Sports
- » Basketball Gym

- [MAIL](#)
- [PRINT](#)
- [REPRINTS](#)

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

Business Coaches Needed

Advise & Coach Local Area CEOs, Senior Executives & Entrepreneurs.

[Vistage.com](#)

Related Searches

- [Basketball](#) [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [NCAA Basketball Tournament \(Men\)](#) [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [College Athletics](#) [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [National Collegiate Athletic Assn](#) [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



FASHION & STYLE »



[Weddings and Celebrations](#)

OPINION »

**IF YOU MEAN SOMETHING,
YOU MAY HAVE TO PROVE SOMETHING.
IF YOU CAN'T PROVE SOMETHING,
YOU MAY REGRET SAYING SOMETHING.
IF YOU LIKE SOMETHING,
BUY SOMETHING.
IF YOU KEEP SOMETHING,
GIVE AWAY SOMETHING.
IF YOU LOSE SOMETHING,
TOO BAD SOMETHING.
IF YOU SHOOT SOMETHING,**

[Rick Moranis: Something Else](#)

WEEK IN REVIEW »



[Plan B: Skip College](#)

OPINION »

Editorial: Justice for Abuse Victims

The New York State Legislature should rise above lobbying by the Catholic Church and pass the overdue Child Victims Act.

BOOKS »



[Special Section: Children's Books](#)

THEATER »



[Farewell to a Brand-Name Season](#)