



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

Coaching and Corruption

*A Study of the Cinematic Presentation of the Abuse of NCAA
Regulations for College Sports in America in the Films **The
Program and Blue Chips.***

Ritgerð til BA-prófs í ensku

Arnar Þór Jónsson

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Abstract

The essay examines the corruption in American college athletics programs and how it is portrayed in two specific films. The movies selected for this study and comparison are *The Program* and *Blue Chips* from the early 1990s, since they both deal with many of the problems that occur at college athletics programs adhering to the rules of the National College Athletics Association (NCAA).

The three main issues discussed in the essay that are portrayed in the movies are recruitment, steroid abuse and point shaving.

The first three chapters of the essay show real life example of scandals that involve these three issues, how they are portrayed in the films, and how the fictional coaches react to them. In the last two chapters the coaches are not only compared and contrasted with each other but also with real life coaches.

The Program follows the fictional Eastern State University's football team and its coach Sam Winters, while *Blue Chips* follows the also fictional Western University's basketball team and its coach Pete Bell; both coaches have to deal with the team's boosters and various problems regarding their players' conduct.

Coach Winters tries to accommodate people who are more powerful within the school than he is, while Coach Bell tries to fight against them and eventually sacrifices his job and reputation for his principles. After researching real life examples, it seems that both films are quite realistic in how they portray life within college athletics programs, but *The Program* is more so since it does not have the moral message that *Blue Chips* does. While it is unclear how much corruption actually persists in college sports in America it is almost certain that a good deal of it is still connived at and/or goes unnoticed.

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Introduction

As early as the mid-nineteenth century, sports programs in American Universities have been trying to break the rules in order to gain more success and money for their respected schools. The most common type of cheating at that time was the hiring of so called ringers in able to win sporting events. These ringers were not students but athletes that schools would hire to play for them. This activity was forbidden as only unpaid students currently attending the school were eligible to play.

In order to prevent schools from cheating, the National College Athletics Association was formed in 1910, after which, every university in United States of America was obligated to follow its rules regarding its athletic programs.

The issue of ringers has now been extinguished but many rules are still being broken to this day. Since the establishment of the NCAA many scandals have surfaced, ranging from the relatively harmless ones, such as the payment of student athletes, to federal crimes such as child abuse.

In the early 1990s two films attracted attention for depicting corruption in two of the most popular college sports in America, football and basketball. The movies follow a football team and a basketball team respectively.

The film *The Program* (1993), follows the fictional Eastern University's football team, while *Blue Chips* (1994) follows the also fictional Western University's basketball team.

There are three main topics discussed in the essay that the movies portray, the recruitment of high school players, steroid abuse and point shaving.

The essay will give examples of real life corruption from football and basketball programs in American colleges and compare how they are portrayed in the films. Also discussed in the essay is how the coaches respond to the corruption and to the players who break the rules.

The essay will start with a discussion on how the recruiting process works in real life and then how it is portrayed in the movies. The next two following chapters will discuss steroid abuse and point shaving respectively in the same fashion.

The fourth chapter will compare and contrast the two coaches depicted in each movie, their personalities and how differently they handle their situations with boosters and their players.

The last chapter then will explore how these two films represent reality and how the two coaches compare to real life coaches and which one of them resembles them the most.

1. Recruiting College Athletes

Sports culture in America is quite different from that of the rest of the world. Not in the case of crazy fandom, competitiveness or types of sport necessarily, but rather in the structure of its systems.

Sports for kids in America are usually connected with education, where students play on behalf of their schools. There are organizations like Little League where kids can play baseball outside of school but there are no Chicago Bulls or Pittsburgh Steelers youth teams.

College basketball and football are extremely popular in America, especially in Division I schools, which are on the highest level of college athletics. Due to this popularity, programs generate large amounts of money for their respected schools. Division I programs usually have big stadiums and have top-rated coaches. According to Learfield Sports (website), college sports are even more popular than professional baseball, which is dubbed America's pastime, and professional basketball. Only the National Football League (NFL) is more popular.

People often feel more of a connection to college teams since they or their family members attended that particular school, and therefore feel like they are a part of the team in some way. Another reason for its popularity could be the atmosphere at college games which is sometimes often electrifying since both current and former students attend the games while a school band plays during time outs and breaks between quarters, which helps create a sense of pride or unity for the fans.

After every season teams are bound to lose some of their players to the pros or through graduation, so they have to start rebuilding. Therefore, the first thing on each team's

agenda is finding new players who are coming out of high school. Thus starts the recruiting process, when coaches go out to meet with the players and their families to try to convince them that joining their school is in their best interest.

One of the most exciting days for football recruiters and fans is the signing day, which is the first Wednesday of every February. This is the first day that players can announce which university they will attend. Often it comes with quite a drama as the player puts on a cap with the logo of the program he will join as he makes the announcement.

One of the most shocking moments of signing day occurred when Peyton Manning announced that he would join the University of Tennessee instead of their biggest rival the University of Mississippi. Peyton's father Archie had been a quarterback star at Mississippi and is considered a legend by the fans. People became very angry that Archie would allow his son to do such a heinous thing, and was considered a traitor by some Mississippi fans, a testament to how people take college football seriously. People later started to relent about Archie when his youngest son Eli decided to play for the team. (*The Book of Manning*)

A lot is at stake for the coaches and the programs to get these future stars, and promises of good education and coaching sometimes just does not seem enough. So why do they not use other incentives like money and gifts to lure these kids into joining a specific college?

College programs adhere to the rules of the National Collegiate Athletics Association or NCAA. Under these rules schools cannot pay any athlete with money or gifts of any kind. All they can offer is a scholarship. This has sparked much controversy since the players are the main reason why people watch the games. They are not allowed to receive any payments for their efforts, however, while the school produces millions of dollars. The word slavery has been used as a criticism of this system. The main reasoning for this "injustice" is that maintaining the state of amateurism will uphold fairness towards schools that do not have big markets and cannot afford to pay much money to players.

Although these rules are in place they do not seem to deter that many programs from breaking them. A lot of payments and gifts to the players come from so called boosters. Boosters are wealthy people, usually alumni, who support the program financially. This has led to many scandals and quite a few star athletes have been accused of taking money from boosters.

Two of the biggest individual names in each of these sports are football player Reggie Bush and basketball player Chris Webber. Both have seen their college careers tainted by accepting money from boosters.

At his time at the University of Michigan, Chris Webber was a part of the Fab Five, one of the most exciting starting line ups in NCAA history, where he played alongside future NBA stars Jalen Rose and Juwan Howard. Webber was the leader of the team and led them to the 1991 NCAA finals, but lost the game. This was a great feat for a team that had a starting line-up consisting of only freshmen.

Webber was selected with the first overall pick in the 1993 NBA draft by the Orlando Magic, but was subsequently traded on draft day to the Golden State Warriors in exchange for their fourth overall pick Anfernee “Penny” Hardaway, who interestingly played the role of Butch McRae in *Blue Chips*.

In 2002, while playing for the Sacramento Kings, Webber was found to have received over \$200,000 from a booster named Ed “Big Money” Martin. What got him most in trouble was not that he had accepted the money but that he had lied in court about having accepted payments at his time at Michigan. He was indicted and the University vacated all the wins that were acclaimed during Webber’s time at the school (Nish, web).

Bush, a running back from the University of Southern California, and his family, had accepted \$100,000 along with suits, limousine rides and paid-for expensive hotel rooms. He was described by ESPN analyst Stephen A. Smith as “Jordan-esque” (“Reggie Bush Returns Heisman”) during his time at USC and won the highest honor an NCAA football player can receive by winning the Heisman Trophy, which is given to the most outstanding player in college football each year. Bush was later selected second overall by the New Orleans Saints in the 2006 NFL draft.

Bush’s Heisman win was revoked as well as the Orange Bowl win over Oklahoma, and USC was banned from postseason play for two years, which meant that they could not compete for a championship and lost 30 scholarships over the following three years (Forde, web).

But no other university, before or since, has received a harsher punishment for paying their players than Southern Methodist University in 1987.

During the early 1980s SMU had come from being a mediocre football program to one of the best in the country. The reason for this was that all of a sudden top recruits were

starting to gravitate towards the school. Players like Eric Dickerson, who was considered to be the best running back in all of Texas at the time, joined their team among other top ranked players. This awakened suspicions and before long an investigation was under way and SMU was banned from postseason admission for two years.

Regardless of the punishment, SMU did not change their recruiting process, so in 1987 the school received the “Death Penalty”, which meant that the school was forbidden to participate in any games for two years.

A two-year ban does not seem so devastating but it sure was. The team’s best players were allowed to transfer to other universities and soon representatives from schools all over the country visited the campus. As a result SMU lost their best players and were not able to lure any high ranking players to replace them.

When the ban was finally lifted in 1989 their squad had become depleted. Their players were not of the same standard as the teams they competed with. Brett Kershaw, who played for SMU at the time, described the team as “we weren’t strong, but we were slow.” (*Pony Excess*)

It was not until 2009 that the team had seemed to be on the road to recovery. The two-year ban had knocked the school almost into oblivion for two decades.

In *The Program*, from 1993, James Caan plays Sam Winters, a football coach at the fictional Eastern State University. The movie begins where his team loses a football game. It is the last game of the season and Winters learns that the alumni are not very happy about the team’s recent struggles, as the last two seasons have been subpar and this is having negative effect on the school’s fundraising. The school’s chancellor tells Coach that they need a winning season next year and implies that his job might be at risk, even after having been at the school for twelve years as the head coach.

Winters needs to improve the team for next season and the first thing on the offseason schedule is the recruiting. We only see one recruiting visit from him, while accompanied by his assistant coaches and starting quarterback, Joey Kane. He manages to recruit Darnell Jefferson who plays as a running back. Winters is not completely honest during this process. Darnell’s father wants his son to get a good education to which Winters replies that education is the top priority of the program. This is a lie since one of his star players, linebacker Alvin Mack, receives test scores beforehand so he can keep his eligibility.

When Jefferson arrives to visit the school campus on the team bus, Kane is there waiting for him as cheerleaders are cheering and chanting his name as the school band is playing. A smart and beautiful girl is there as well to show him around. He decides to attend ESU, but when he arrives again on campus after having signed his letter of intent, only Kane is there to greet him along with offensive guard Bud-Lite Kaminski. Jefferson is mildly disappointed by not having the same greeting as before at which Kane and Kaminski explain that since the school already got him “he’s just another worthless freshman.”

The Program does not dwell much on recruitment but as the title of the movie *Blue Chips* suggests, it is its main focus. A blue chip is a name given to a player who is highly touted coming out of high school.

In the movie Nick Nolte plays Pete Bell, a basketball coach of the fictional Western University, stationed in California. He has had a long successful tenure at the school having won the national championship two times.

Similar to the opening of *The Program*, *Blue Chips* begins as Bell's team is losing a basketball game. At this point the team is going through a slump, having had three losing seasons in a row. Coach Bell is clearly frustrated by his team’s display during the game which comes to a boiling point when he kicks the game ball into the stands in an argument with the referee, after which he is ejected from the game in which his team loses.

After another loss in the following game as well, the season ends and the recruiting period starts. Bell and his assistant coaches set their sights on two of the best prospects in the country, power forward Ricky Roe and shooting guard Butch McRae. He proceeds to pay each of them a visit by himself in the hope of talking them into joining Western. McRae lives with his single mother as well as his grandmother and three younger sisters in a small apartment in Chicago. Their neighborhood is a poor one and probably somewhat dangerous. A siren of a police car is heard as Coach Bell walks into the apartment building where they live. McRae's mother sees her son as a ticket out of the slums and demands a new house, with a lawn specifically, and a new job, which Bell is not ready to give her. He tries to persuade her by telling her to teach her son integrity and not break the rules, at which she replies, “A foul is not a foul unless the referee blows his whistle.”

When he visits Ricky Roe on a farm in Indiana, Bell finds out that other scouts have offered his father farming equipment, notably a new tractor, since the old one is on its last legs. Bell makes no such promises but tries to sweet talk them by claiming to have been

raised a Baptist. A First Baptist mind you, not Southern Baptist, since the Roe's "don't think much of Southern Baptists around here." This claim by Bell is probably a lie since he had told the McRae's earlier that he was a Catholic, which he mistakenly thought they were.

After a visit to the Western campus, Ricky Roe goes to Coach Bell to tell him that he has decided to attend WU, which of course he is happy to hear, for a few seconds at least. Ricky then proceeds to tell him his demands. He wants \$30,000 in cash and a new tractor for his father since other schools have offered him the same. Bell reacts angrily and yells at Roe, "Get the hell out!" and tells him he's not fit to wear the Western uniform.

Bell has always prided himself of running a clean program but recently a booster named Happy, a man Bell disdains, has been offering money and gifts to the new recruits. Bell initially tries to fight against him interfering with his team but realizes that he cannot attract the two blue chips without breaking the rules, and begrudgingly gives up and decides to look the other way. This is evident when Butch McRae wants to have a talk with him. He tells him that he wants to go to another school since he is homesick and that the style of play at Western does not suit him. He then asks if he were to leave, would his mother keep her new house and job. Bell tries to shy away from the conversation and says he does not know what kind of deals they have made and that he is not the right man to talk about the situation, but Butch is persistent. Bell begrudgingly phones Happy who reacts angrily and gives him an earful; "If that son of a bitch is not happy, it's your job to make him happy!" Bell then tells Butch with a heavy heart; "You better be at practice on Monday."

The situation is starting to weigh on Bell but it will take another straw to finally break this camel's back.

2. Steroid Abuse in College Football

In *The Program*, Coach Winters of Eastern State football team has to deal with a greater variety of problems than Coach Bell. One such problem is steroid abuse by one of his players, defensive end Steve Lattimer, who has been on the team for three years but has never been a starter, having always played on the punt team. His teammates are impressed with him since he has gained 35 pounds of muscles over the summer.

After an intense practice all players in the locker room are totally exhausted except Lattimer. The two assistant coaches watch him as he does barbell exercises grunting like a madman. Coach Winters walks in on them as they discuss Lattimer's sudden weight gain and

suspects him of taking steroids. Winters is quick to say “we’re not doctors, it’s not that hard to gain 35 pounds over the summer if you hit the gym real hard”. After the assistant coaches leave the room, Winters seems to have a slight concerned look on his face as he watches Lattimer, as if he knows he must be using some performance enhancing drugs. Their suspicions are correct since Lattimer is in fact using steroids.

Curiously enough, there have not been that many high profiled steroid scandals involving football as one might think. In a sport where a big part of it is to push people around and tackling your opponents with the purpose of bringing them down, football is one of the most aggressive types of sports in the world.

The most famous scandals have occurred in sports that, although physical, would not be considered to be very aggressive, like sprinting and cycling. Runners Ben Johnson and Carl Lewis caused big scandals when they were tested positive for performance enhancing drugs, as has cyclist Lance Armstrong. That does not mean that performance enhancing drugs are not as, or even more, prevalent in football than most other sports.

One of the better known steroid abuse scandals hit the University of South Carolina when a former player decided to disclose the rampant use of performance enhancing drugs by the football players attending the school. In an article entitled “The Nightmare of Steroids” in *Sports Illustrated* in October of 1988, former defensive end Tommy Chaikin talks about his experience with steroids during his time with the football team.

After arriving at campus Chaikin found out that he was not one of the strongest players on the team like the recruiters had told him in order to convince him of joining them. Training seemed more like a boot camp than practice. The coaches would push the players to the maximum, where on occasion some players would drop due to exhaustion.

If the coaches did not seem make things hard enough, Chaikin also had a hard time since he was constantly being pushed around by players who were bigger and stronger than him. He knew they were taking steroids and they tried to convince him to do the same. Chaikin, however, had heard of the side effects of the drug and was apprehensive about it. He worked hard without it but it did not get him very far. He was still being abused in training by his teammates and felt increasing pressure to succeed. The coaches encouraged aggressiveness and would even instigate fights between the players.

After the first season he finally caved in. “Being light and quick meant nothing” he said, “You have to be big and quick.” During the summer Chaikin started “juicing up”, a term

used for using steroids, and showed up in training camp 25 pounds heavier than the season before.

His transformation did not go unnoticed. His teammates, and especially the coaches, were thrilled to see the new chiseled Chaikin, whose performance on the field improved significantly.

According to Chaikin, 50 percent of the team's players were using performance enhancing drugs of some sort. "Bury me massive or don't bury me at all" was their motto. They were not even hiding it. There were syringes stuck in the walls and bottles lying around the dorm room at times. The coaches knew about it and either encouraged it or did not care. He describes one incident where one of the coaches even picks up one of the bottles and laughs with him about the instructions being in German.

During drug testing, players would use hidden vials of someone else's urine in the bathroom stalls where they used to provide samples. "Even if players were tested positive, nothing would happen to them" said Chaikin (Chaikin and Telander).

He noticed he was becoming more and more aggressive. He describes an incident where he is dancing with a girl at a club. He gets enraged when a guy bumps into her as he is walking by them. Chaikin then follows the man to where he has taken a seat and tells him a piece of his mind. The guy stands up aggressively and bumps the top of his head under Chaikin's chin, resulting in him biting an inch of his tongue off. Chaikin did not even feel or notice it. He then punched him so hard that he almost knocked the man out and then proceeded to grab the man in a "headlock and started hitting him in the ribs and kneeing him in the back". "I was becoming more of an animal than a man" he says, which was a far cry from "the mild mannered man from Maryland" like his teammates used to call him during his freshman year.

The use of steroids would not mix well with alcohol. Another such incident occurred where he pointed a loaded gun at a pizza delivery boy in the dorm room. The whole incident was meant to be a joke but "I could have blown the kid all over the floor," laments Chaikin. The drugs started to mess with his mind and cloud his judgment (Chaikin and Telander).

Chaikin's story has many parallels with Lattimer's. When Lattimer learns that he has been selected to the starting lineup he gets pumped up and runs outside shouting "Starting defense! Whoo!" There he proceeds to smash side windows of cars in the parking lot. The two aforementioned assistant coaches observe him as he continues to break car windows

while blood runs down his face. “Should we tell coach?” says one of them, to which the other replies “No, he doesn’t want to know about this.” The scene seems on the surface to have a comedic purpose besides showing Lattimer’s erratic behavior, but it is not as farfetched as it may appear.

Tommy Chaikin’s describes a night where he and his teammates drive around looking for cars. They would smash the car windows with their heads, and not just the side windows, but the windshields. Unlike the side windows, the windshield is made of fiber glass, which makes it much harder to break. He does not mention that the players were on some sort of a special high like Lattimer was on when he found out he was in the starting lineup. They did it because they wanted to (Chaikin and Telander).

Lattimer, in *The Program*, is also becoming more violent as of the result of the drugs. One night at a party he is making out with a girl, who looks half the size of the beefed up Lattimer, who probably has been drinking as well. When the girl refuses to go any further he becomes enraged and screams “Were you leading me on?” He throws her about the room like a ragdoll and tries to force himself on her. Luckily, two of Lattimer’s teammates hear the girl’s cry for help and struggle to hold the “roid raged” Lattimer down.

It is not before his attempted rape of a booster’s daughter that Winters feels the need to do something regarding Lattimer. Even though the girl’s father is not going to sue for the good of the program, Winters suspends him for three games although he is not actually obligated to do so. “Should I wait for him to kill somebody,” says Winters, realizing that Lattimer can be dangerous due to his aggressiveness, and tells him to stop using the steroids because after those three weeks of suspension he is going to test him by himself.

To avoid the program getting a bad press and from getting sued by Lattimer for hurting his draft stock, he tells the press that his absence is the result of a hamstring injury. Lattimer is grateful for this and flushes his drugs and syringes down the toilet.

Lattimer gets clean and is again selected into the starting line-up for the second to last game of the season. At the end of the game Lattimer has the chance to stop the game-winning touchdown, but the opposing team’s running back runs through him. Since his lack of strength played a hand in losing the game, Lattimer becomes demoralized and starts using steroids again for the last game of the regular season.

In that game he is playing well as the defense keeps ESU competitive while the team’s offense struggles early on. Winters sees his aggression and becomes suspicious. As

the defense comes off the field he grabs Lattimer's facemask, looks at his face and sees the crazed look in his eyes, after which Lattimer bows his head in shame. Winters pats him on the back of the head and Lattimer takes a seat on the bench. After the game he is still sitting there while his teammates celebrate their victory. He is crying, not tears of joy like the announcer thinks, but tears of sadness as he knows he will never be a good football player without the steroids.

3. Point Shaving in College Basketball

Betting companies use spreading to make each team equally enticing for the bettors regardless of their strength. More often than not, when two teams play against each other, one is deemed the favorite over the other. Sometimes the margin can be quite big. If Team A is considered ten point favorites against Team B, for Team A to win the bet they would have to win the game by more than ten points. For Team B to win the bet, they would have to win the game or lose by less than nine points. If team A wins by exactly ten points there is a "push", which means a tie. In that situation there are no winners or losers, and the bettor gets back exactly the same amount that had been placed on the bet.

College basketball players who are not, or should not be making money for playing, are the best targets for bookies to be roped into these kinds of schemes. Players then try to fix the final score of the game. The purpose of point shaving is not to throw games, but to help the bettor cover the spread. Players can be easily convinced to participate since they are not really making their team lose. Therefore these kids might not see how they are doing anything wrong. But point shaving is a very serious crime and is considered a federal offense, which can result in prison time.

Stevin "Hedake" Smith, a basketball player from Arizona State University, served time in prison for his part in a point shaving scheme that he took part in during his time at the school. In an article titled "Confessions of a Point Shaver," published in *Sports Illustrated*, Smith reveals how he got involved with a bookie who convinced him to shave points in games.

Shortly after attending college Smith developed a gambling problem, and before too long he owed \$10,000 to a bookie named Benny Stilman. Smith had a tough time paying him back, so Stilman suggested to him that he could pay off his debt by fixing game results.

Smith knew he could not do it alone so he approached his teammate Isaac Burton, who agreed to participate in the deed. This is a decision that Smith regrets since he feels responsible for dragging Burton into his own mess.

The trick of point shaving is subtlety, and can be done in many different ways, a bad pass here, a bad shot there etc., but Smith on the other hand did so on defense. Since he was a great shooter himself he knew just about how much space he would have to give his opponent, “I stepped back a half step from where I would normally guard a shooter like Drakeford (the player he was guarding), and he had the room he needed. No one else noticed,” explains Smith (Stevin Smith, web).

The scheme seemed to be working quite well. Smith was making up to \$20,000 after games and spent it extravagantly, “I went out and bought \$7,000 in jewelry. I bought clothes, shoes, anything I wanted.” But soon their collaboration was about to end.

Stilman had told some of his gambler friends about the deal he had made with Smith, and advised them to put a bet on Arizona State’s game against Washington. Smith also made the same mistake. He wanted to help his friend make money so he let him in on the secret. The friend then talked to some of his own friends as well. As a result, so much money was being placed on the game “that the spread changed 42 times in one day – dropping from 11 points to three – and the Las Vegas sports books suspected something was up” (Stevin Smith, web).

By halftime the point spread rumor had reached the players and coaches, “Coach started screaming about how badly we were playing. While he was yelling at the team, he was looking at me. At least that’s how I felt,” Smith said. He played as best as he could in the second half, and helped his team to win 73-55, which meant that Washington had not covered the spread. Stilman and some of his friends were not happy but Smith promised them that he would pay them back as soon as he had signed an NBA contract, which he was sure about getting.

Smith had expected to be picked in the 1994 NBA draft but was not selected by any team, because of the suspicions of him participating in a point shaving scheme.

After college Smith had stints in Argentina, the Philippines and France as well as in the now defunct CBA league. In 1997 he finally managed to break into the NBA by signing two ten-day contracts with the Dallas Mavericks. After the season the team expressed interest in having him as a part of its training camp squad for the following season. Smith was

optimistic that his NBA career was about to take off, but it was not to be. FBI's investigation of the point shaving had gone into full gear. Smith's friend, whom he had tipped off about the Washington game, had been working with the FBI and helped fingering him for the offense (Stevin Smith, web).

In *Blue Chips* we find out early in the movie that Western University had been in an alleged point shaving incident before. At a post-match conference Ed, a hardnosed reporter, mentions this incident to Bell, who in return reacts angrily, saying that there was no such incident but an "alleged" incident which Ed had invented and yells at him, "If I assert that you sleep with sheep, it is "alleged" that you sleep with sheep!"

Later in the film, when Bell is having an argument with Happy about giving car keys to Ricky Roe, the booster reveals that he had already bought one of his players before, "The alleged point shaving incident? That thing happened" claims Happy. Bell looks at him with disbelief, smiles and answers "Get the hell outta here." Happy then proceeds to tell him the date of the incident and encourages him to look at the game tape.

Bell goes into his office and frantically searches for the videotape of the game in question and calls for his three assistant coaches to watch it with him.

As they watch the tape they notice Tony, the team's starting point guard, making some terrible passes and letting opposing players get by him to the basket quite easily at times. Despite the fact that Tony had played well, scoring 25 points, in a game which Western became victorious, he was making mistakes the whole game. One of the assistants defends Tony, saying that he was a freshman at that time and was just making freshman mistakes.

As the assistant coaches argue about Tony's honesty, Bell jumps out of his seat and heads over to a party, which is held in one of the fraternity houses, and confronts Tony about the subject. He initially denies ever taking money for shaving points but finally admits to the offense when Bell becomes aggressive and pushes Tony against the wall, "Just once, but we won the damn game right? ... Who cares about the spread, it's just for the damn gamblers ain't it?" Tony tells Bell he is sorry and starts crying. A teary-eyed and angry Bell responds, "You lied to me Tony. Son, you've taken the purest thing in your life and you corrupted it, and for what?"

The next game Western takes on Bobby Knight's Indiana. The game is even and Western wins after a hard fought victory. The crowd is cheering as well as the players who

pick Bell up and carry him around the court. Bell meanwhile has a very serious look on his face, almost as if he is annoyed by the situation.

At the press conference after the game, Ed, the reporter asks Bell if there is any truth to the fact that Leon Bodeaux, a player he had recently recruited, had received an automobile. Bell responds by implying that Ed is not doing his job properly and says “it wasn’t an automobile; I mean it was a fully loaded Lexus!” Bell goes on to disclose all the boosters’ illegal dealings while Ed has a perplexed but an amused look on his face. Bell ends the press conference by resigning his position as the head coach of Western University.

4. Comparison of Coaches in *The Program* and *Blue Chips*

Both Winters and Bell have long and successful tenures at their respected colleges but as each movie begins they are finishing a difficult season with their teams. Winters has served twelve years as the head coach of Eastern State University, but is now in jeopardy of losing his job since the alumni and board of governors are unhappy with the team’s performance which is affecting its fundraising.

Bell has led Western University to two national championships but finishes his first ever losing season as its head coach. He is starting to hear in the news that “it’s time for Coach Petey Bell to take a hike.”

There is also unhappiness from both sets of fans in the films. As Winters is walking out of the stadium he sees an effigy of himself hanging from a noose. He tries to make light of it by saying “Damn. Looks like I lost some weight,” as he looks at it along with his assistant coaches. Bell is also getting signs of dissent from his fans as Western lose the last game of the season with a chorus of boos ringing from the stands.

During the recruitment process both coaches show a little bit of dishonesty. Despite Bell’s integrity, he tells a little white lie regarding his religion in order to make his school more enticing for the players and their parents. When he meets McRae and his family he is Catholic, when he meets Roe’s family he’s First Baptist, and when he meets Bodeaux he is from a Pentecostal church.

He is also not entirely honest with McRae’s mother regarding the university’s commitment to provide good education for its athletes. He reassures her by saying; “my

players take real classes, my players do graduate”, meanwhile his best player Tony is flunking a TV course.

When he is recruiting Jefferson, Winters does not offer him or his family any compensation for joining his team, but he does lie to them when asked about the school’s education. “Education is the first priority of the program. That’s why all the players are smarter than me,” he answers smarmily. This is clearly a lie since some of the players receive test scores beforehand.

Winters and Bell share a distaste for news reporters. Bell’s contempt for them is apparent as he begins his post-match conference by congratulating the opposing team for its victory and by saying irritatingly, “any questions, stupid or otherwise?” Shortly after that he argues with Ed about the alleged point shaving incident and storms off.

Winters’ distaste for reporters is made clear by his comments about wasting his time talking to them and when asked about late season struggles he responds by saying “I thought you guys would know that if we won next week that we’d still be conference champs and go to a major bowl. See, I always knew you couldn’t write but at least I thought you could count.”

In his review of the movie, film critic Roger Ebert describes Winters character as “without much depth; his function is to move the plot along with lots of furrowed brows and lip twitches.” Granted all the drama in the movie revolves around his players, but Winters needs to resolve most of those problems. Ebert is right about Winters being there to move the plot along, but I think he underestimates the character’s depth (Ebert, web).

Pete Bell is the main character of *Blue Chips* and is therefore a more complete character than Winters, since *The Program* is more of an ensemble piece.

Both coaches seem to put their careers before their personal life. The only person Bell seems to interact with outside his job is his with ex-wife Jenny, with whom he has an on-again, off-again relationship. According to her, their marriage ended because Bell “is impossible to live with.”

It is suggested that Bell has never had much time for their relationship because of his obsession with his job, which is apparent when he brings tapes of basketball games to Jenny’s house to watch with her. Also later, when he gets home to his own house, we see that his television is surrounded with game tapes.

Winters also seems more concerned with his job than his personal life. The only glimpse we see of Winters interacting with his family is when he is chastising his daughter Luann when she gets expelled for helping back-up quarterback Bobby Collins cheat on a test. Winters seems more concerned about his job than his daughter's future when he says to her, "You weaken my authority with the players, it looks like I'm running a dirty program ... and Bobby Collins of all people." He explains to her that he can't use his influence to get her reinstated since it will destroy his credibility with the university. Luann understands this and says she will apply for community college.

Personality wise, Bell is much more volatile when interacting with his players. The movie begins as the team is in the locker room during a half time in a game which Western is losing. Bell storms into the room and starts yelling angrily at the players saying things like, "You sons of bitches don't deserve a locker room the way you're playing!" and "You are the dumbest team I've ever coached!" Also during his tirade he throws the bottle of the water cooler across the room. His frustration comes to a peak when he kicks the basketball into the stands in the second half.

Unlike Coach Bell, who gets furious with Ricky Roe and Tony when they disappoint him, Coach Winters seems sympathetic towards his players when they do so.

When starting quarterback Joey Kane gets arrested for drunk driving and assault on a man in a sports-bar, Winters seems more disappointed than angry. Winters sympathy is probably related to the fact that Kane had been defending himself. A man had accosted Kane as he was sitting peacefully drinking beer. The man was confrontational with him and started a fight by trying to hit him as Kane started to walk away. The fight ended with Kane throwing the man into a trophy case, which resulted in him having to go to a hospital. Kane then fled in his car in a hurry and got picked up by the police.

The media gets a hold of the story and Winters tells Kane that there is nothing he can do and he needs to send him to rehab for four weeks in order to avoid a trial and miss the last game of the regular season. Kane is not happy about this but Winters tries to be encouraging as Kane leaves his office, saying to him sternly: "You make the best of this Joe. I mean stuff happens."

Back-up quarterback Bobby Collins is the only one who seems to get Winters angry with his antics. Collins, who had been dating Winters' daughter Luann, had convinced her to take the test for him. Both of them get expelled after she gets caught when she is asked for an

ID during the test. Winters lets him know that he could try to use his influence to get him reinstated but he will not since he has disgraced the school and his family and finishes the conversation by saying, “Now get out of here before I knock the piss out of you,” after which Collins scurries out of his office. Assault and attempted rape are far more serious crimes than cheating on a test, but since he got his daughter in trouble the offense is personal. Therefore he is a lot angrier at Collins than at Kane and Lattimer who Winters reacts almost apologetically for having to punish.

Although Winters does not get very angry about his players personal problems he can show his temper when his team is not playing well. For instance, at halftime of the last game of the season he says to his team “If you play that second half like you did the first, this is how what the rest of your season is gonna look like!” and overturns a table full of Gatorade cups on the floor.

Winters has come to accept the fact that boosters have their influence on his team and that corruption takes place within the program. Bell, on the other hand, prides himself of running a clean program. He despises the boosters who he describes as “bunch of obnoxious slugs.” He especially dislikes the main booster Happy who tries to convince him to start paying off athletes. It is not until Ricky Roe demands \$30,000 dollars and a tractor for his father that Bell agrees to let Happy and the other “friends of the program” interact with his players.

After he decides to do so, Bell seems to be in a similar situation that Winters is in at Eastern State. Bell does not want to get involved with his players relationships with the boosters and does not get angry at Butch McRae when he wants to leave the team. He seems rather sympathetic towards him and claims not to know of the deals between his mother and the boosters even though he is fully aware that she had demanded a house and a new job.

Winters does not seem to want to deal with his players’ problems off the football field. That attitude is clearly shown regarding Lattimer. He tries to rationalize that his new look might not be because of steroids. The reason for Winters ignoring the problem seems to stem from him wanting to coach football without distractions. The slightly concerned look on his face as he watches Lattimer lift weights suggests that he is not making excuses in order to take advantage of the fact that one of his players is suddenly a lot stronger than he used to be.

Also when his assistant coaches see Lattimer breaking car windows they decide not to tell him about it since he does not want to know of such things.

When Butch approaches Bell about his homesickness, Bell and Winters seem the most alike. While Winters does not want to be bothered with problems outside of football. He does what he can to help his players out, but does not seem to want to be bothered about alumni's dealings.

When Western wins a hard fought victory over Indiana, everyone celebrates except Bell. He starts the post-match conference by saying "nine hundred million Chinamen couldn't give a damn. They couldn't care less about this press conference. But I love basketball." Bell realizes that in the grand scheme of life, a basketball game is not that important, but he has betrayed what he believes in and decides to come clean, and resigns as the head coach of Western University.

Hearing the truth about the point shaving incident seems to be the catalyst for Bell's motivation for telling the truth. He is not just angry with Tony; he is hurt and feels betrayed by him. The words he says to Tony, "You took the purest thing in your life and you corrupted it," can also be applied to himself. Bell has compromised the principles he used to pride himself on having in order to keep his job and to be successful at it.

Winters is also forced to compromise his principles because of booster pressure. With Kane going to rehab and Collins being expelled, Eastern State is left depleted at the quarterback position. This situation does not sit well with the school's alumni since the last five games of the season are crucial for the team to reach the postseason. With pressure mounting on Winters, he begrudgingly agrees to vouch for Collins' character to get him reinstated into the school, even though he got his daughter expelled.

Unlike Bell, Winters knows about, and has apparently accepted, the corruption that takes place within his program, although he seems not to want to be a part of it.

A man walks up to running back Darnell Jefferson at a crowded banquet and puts an envelope with \$50 into his pocket and says: "Here's a little something for ya. Keep up the good work." The man, who is obviously a booster, does not seem to hide the fact that he is paying money to a student. Jefferson is perplexed and immediately goes to his teammate Alvin Mack, who is also at the banquet, to ask him of what had just transpired. Mack responds by saying; "Don't worry, you get about five or six hundred when you're starting, depending on how you're playing." This conversation also takes place in an earshot of the people at the banquet, which suggests that such things are common practice and well known within the school.

While Bell resigns his position, Winters on the other hand gets ready for next season as he and his assistants talk about who they should recruit.

5. Comparison of Films with Reality of College Sports

How do these films represent reality? After having watched them it seemed as if *Blue Chips* was the more realistic one, but after researching the topic it turned out that the opposite was true. In *The Program*, all kinds of violations and problems mar Eastern State's season, which seemed too embellished to be realistic. But truth is often stranger than fiction and sometimes the movie does not seem embellished enough.

In the film, Steve Lattimer is the only one who abuses steroids. Not even the team's best defensive player, Alvin Mack, is a user, as is evident when he chastises Lattimer for taking them in one scene of the movie. This is far less severe than Tommy Chaikin's account of steroid abuse at South Carolina, where half of the team's players were using some sort of performance enhancing drugs.

It is unclear if Bell and Winters are based on any real life coaches, but they do share some characteristics of some of them. Personality wise, Pete Bell is remarkably similar to basketball coach Bobby Knight. The filmmakers probably acknowledged the similarity since in his last game before coming clean, Bell's Western play against Knight's Indiana Hoosiers. Knight, who plays himself in the movie, was known to have his share of temper tantrums. One of his most famous incidents occurred in 1985 in a game against Purdue, when in a fit of rage he threw a chair onto the court following an argument with the referee, after which he was ejected from the game. This is reminiscent of the incident where Pete Bell kicks the ball into the stands in the film.

Bell's story, albeit not exactly the same, shares some resemblance to that of Jerry "Tark the Shark" Tarkanian, who coached the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. Tarkanian was forced to resign, amid a scandal involving boosters paying players in 1992, after having served as head coach for nineteen years (Garber and Kozak, web). Like Bell, it had been alleged that his team had participated in an alleged point shaving incident along with other alleged infractions such as grade fixing. Also, like Bell, he had to deal with a booster who was giving his players money and gifts. Tarkanian told his players to stay away from him but they did not, which resulted in the recruitment scandal. Tarkanian also has a cameo in the movie as one of Bell's rival coaches as they vie for McRae's and Roe's services.

Winters personality does not come out as strongly as Bell's. He just wants to coach his team without any of the hassle that comes with dealing with boosters and players' personal problems. This is a very similar description of SMU's head coach, Bobby Collins, during the time the school's scandal broke out. Collins, who interestingly shares the same name as Winters' back-up quarterback, was described by ESPN analyst Skip Bayless to be; "a nice man who walked into an overwhelming situation, who certainly let the machinery run and the payments be paid, but he really just wanted to coach football." (*Pony Excess*)

As with Collins' SMU, the boosters have more control over Winters' ESU football team than he does. To Winters, and at some point to Bell, fighting against the boosters/alumni is a lost cause if they are to keep their jobs. When Winters is forced to fight for Bobby Collins' reinstatement, not only shows how powerful the alumni are, but also how much they consider athletics to be much more important than any other school activity. Luann, Winters' daughter, does not get the opportunity to get reinstated since she is not an athlete.

Many real life coaches have had their reputations tainted, but as far as I know there has not been a single case where a coach has disclosed the corruption within the school that they have been working at. Therefore, Winters seems more realistic, although his character is not as deep as Bell's.

Both Bell and Winters are well respected but only Bell leaves with his reputation tarnished since his school's corruption has become public, albeit by his own volition.

When a school is found guilty of NCAA violations, the most serious punishment for coaches is the loss of their job. The head coach of University of Indiana's basketball team, Kelvin Sampson, received a five-year ban in 2008, which was the harshest penalty a coach had ever received at that time. The penalty insured he could not coach a college program for five years. The severity of the punishment was probably due to the fact that Sampson had been involved in another such incident when he coached Oklahoma. The penalty only applied to college coaching, so the same year he was fired by Indiana, Sampson got a job as an assistant coach in the NBA for the Milwaukee Bucks (Katz, web). Such violations of rules do not seem to put too much of a shame on coaches reputations as one might think.

But no coach has probably had their reputation have as much of a nosedive as the beloved Joe Paterno of Penn State. Paterno, who was affectionately referred to as JoPa by the school's students and alumni, had served as football head coach of the university for forty

five years, before that he had served as an assistant coach at the school for fifteen years, until the school board was forced to fire him in 2011. The reason for the firing was not because of violations against the rules of the NCAA, but for heinous criminal behavior. One of his assistant coaches, Jerry Sandusky, had been sexually abusing at least eight underage boys within at least a fourteen-year span. He was caught in the act by a fellow assistant coach in the locker room showers but instead of going to the authorities, Paterno and the Penn State football team staff covered up the molestation and kept Sandusky as a coach.

When the scandal broke in 2011, the school received very harsh punishments as a result. The University had to pay sixty million dollars in fines, was banned from postseason play for four years, scholarships were reduced from 25 to 15 per year for four years and Paterno had 111 of his wins vacated. Paterno's fall from grace was complete as a bronze statue of him was removed from the school's premises as well. Paterno died in January 2012, only two months after his firing (Weinberg and Carey, web).

When a school gets caught in the act of cheating, the punishments are usually a ban from postseason and the loss of scholarships. Postseason play does generate a few million dollars, but for a program that generates hundreds of millions each year it is not a very powerful deterrent.

The Program shows how things are in college sports without praise or condemnation, while *Blue Chips* seems to have a moral message. In the end, Eastern State goes unpunished while Western gets a harsh punishment that will undoubtedly cripple the program for decades to come.

After Bell decides to reveal the corruption at Western University, the school is banned from tournament play for three years. This penalty is even more severe than when SMU got the so called "death penalty" in 1987. No program, before or since, has received such a harsh punishment.

It is unclear how much corruption still actually exists in college sports, but it is most likely that much of it goes on undetected. The main reason for this is that the NCAA does not have an investigation team that investigates the conduct of colleges, but rather relies on schools policing themselves. A lot of scandals come from information from someone within the schools or from the press. Also people within schools might not be willing to reveal illegal activities since it might be seen as treacherous. Tommy Chaikin received hate mail and death threats for tainting his school's reputation. Scandalous behavior is therefore not as

easily detected, and schools are often allowed to work as they please. Mark Yost, author of the book *Varsity Green: A Behind the Scenes Look at Culture and Corruption in College Athletics* claims that a lot of college presidents understand the corruption, but fighting against it would take too much of their time since they would have to go against the alumni who provide vast amounts of funding to the school (Vietzke, web). The alumni have a lot of power regarding their school's athletic departments because of their capability to provide financial support.

Both movies represent reality quite well, but *The Program* does have the edge, especially since Coach Bell in *Blue Chips* decides to come clean at the end. The fact that he has been running a clean program, or believes he is running a clean program, does seem to be a deviance from what is believed to be the norm in successful Division I basketball and football programs. As the aforementioned Tarkanian said, "in major college basketball nine out of 10 teams break the rules. The other one is in last place" (Tarkanian, et al.).

6. Conclusion

Scandals in the NCAA are rather common compared to scandal in other sports associations. The reason for this is the strict rules that teams have to follow. Unlike in other associations, teams in the NCAA are not allowed to pay an athlete, which makes it more difficult for them to provide incentives other than the promise of a scholarship and an opportunity to further their talents under a top-rated coaching staff.

Due to the fact how popular college sports are in America they provide vast amounts of money to schools that rely on funds through their athletic programs. This leads many programs to cheat by paying athletes to join them usually by so called boosters who provide significant amount of funds to the school.

Also college athletes are more susceptible to coercion in exchange for money since they are not getting paid for playing.

Many scandals involving payments to athletes have surfaced, but no school has had as harsh of a punishment as Southern Methodist University's football team in 1987. After having been found guilty of paying athletes for the second time in the eighties, the association dropped the hammer on SMU and gave it the so called "death penalty" which meant the team was not able to play any games for two years which crippled the program for over two decades.

The movie *Blue Chips* shows how recruiting players works in for a college basketball team. Coach Bell, of Western University, struggles to convince players Ricky Roe and Butch McRae to join his school without providing some sort of payments in return. When he realizes that he can't fight for his principles he turns a blind eye towards the corruption within his team.

Coach Winters, coach of the Eastern State University football team in the movie *The Program*, has seemingly turned a blind eye towards the payments that his players receive.

In Tommy Chaikin's interview with *Sports Illustrated* in 1988, he reveals how he and other players on the South Carolina Universities football team used steroid with the coaches' acceptance. When arriving on campus, Chaikin soon realized that he needed to use performance enhancing drugs to be able to compete with his teammates who were abusing him in training. When he started to become a user, Chaikin's demeanor changed and became more aggressive and he started to play better on the field but his mental state was becoming erratic (Chaikin and Telander, web).

One of Eastern State's players in *The Program*, Steve Lattimer, starts to use steroids, which turns him from being a special team's player into being one of the best players on the team. Coach Winters turns a blind eye towards his sudden muscle gain despite his assistant coaches' worries.

Due to his steroid use he assault's a girl at a party and tries to rape her. Since the girl is a daughter of a booster, Lattimer does not get arrested since it would hurt the program. Winters' conscience does not allow him to go unpunished though, and Lattimer gets a three-match suspension and a warning to stop using steroids. He does so but it hurts his performance on the field, so he starts using them again. Winters notices this by seeing Lattimer's aggression and looks into his eyes. Lattimer bows his head in shame and Winters pats him on the back as if consoling him.

Stevin "Hedake" Smith, of Arizona State University was, by his own account, expected to be taken in late first or early second round of the 1994 NBA draft. He went undrafted, probably because he had been involved in an alleged point shaving incident while playing for ASU. Smith had got himself into gambling debt that he had trouble paying, so his bookie suggested that he shaved points in some games. Smith agreed to the proposition but was later arrested which ended his dream of having a career in the NBA (Stevin Smith, web).

Point shaving is not a prominent issue in *Blue Chips* but it serves as a catalyst for Coach Pete Bell to come clean at the end. When he finds out that one of his players had participated in such a scheme he feels betrayed but realizes that he himself has also betrayed his principles.

Both coaches want to do their jobs without any involvement from outside influence. Winters seems to want to push problems aside that might interfere with his coaching, but concedes that he has to obey the boosters in order to keep his job. Bell also just wants to coach in peace, but unlike Winters he tries to fight against the boosters until he realizes they are more powerful than him and decides to ignore the problem. At this point the coaches are the most alike.

Personality wise, the hot-headed Bell is similar to Indiana coach Bobby Knight who is notorious for his outbursts, while Winters is similar to SMU coach at the time of its “death penalty” scandal, Bobby Collins, who was aware of the corruption around him but only wanted to coach his football team.

It is unclear how much corruption persists in college sports in America but there is probably more than has been discovered. *The Program* therefore seems to be more realistic than *Blue Chips* since Eastern University’s corruption goes unnoticed and unpunished by the NCAA while Western University’s coach Pete Bell sacrifices his job and reputation for his principles which leads the school to get a three-year suspension from tournament play, which is a harsher punishment than SMU received. *Blue Chips* has a moral message while *The Program* neither condones nor condemns the corruption within the school.

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