

# Which Is No. 1: Sports or Education?

TEXAS A&M University has hired a new football coach who will become the highest-paid employee of any college in the nation.

The same day this announcement was made a national news magazine reported that "a crisis is developing in the supply of scholars America needs to maintain its system of higher education."

The same week a federal judge ruled that a star basketball player's future as a professional had been jeopardized because the University of Minnesota made unreasonable demands that he attend classes and make passing grades in order to be eligible to play.

Coaches long have enjoyed the highest incomes on numerous campuses, through salaries, perquisites, testimonials and TV shows.

Practically every college and university is conducting campaigns to persuade legislators, alumni, corporations, foundations and other sources to provide funds to keep classroom facilities in as good repair as athletic buildings and to raise faculty salaries.

Enrollment in the nation's col-

leges and universities has hit an all-time high of 12.3 million. Presumably most of these wish to acquire an education that will prepare them for careers and for enjoyment of life. Only a very small percentage are physically qualified to participate in collegiate sports.

Nevertheless, athletics has become the big business end of education. Ticket prices now range as high as \$15 per person, assuring gates of more than a million dollars and billion dollar athletic funds for "amateur" sports activities in many cases.

With everybody getting a cut of the pie except the playing squads and bands which make the shows worth attending, it is not surprising that charges of corruption are frequently made. Competition for talented players is as keen among major universities as it is in highly-paid professional leagues and money is a powerful influence.

Meanwhile, back in the classrooms, administrators worry that the decline in doctoral programs will bring universities to a situation with aging faculties and too few

competent young scholars to replace them. Athletics may be the biggest income producer on the campuses but funds are not shared with the universities for other uses.

Many universities, of course, are emphasizing academic education to prepare students for lifelong careers and to make lasting contributions to society. These still may be overshadowed by sports programs even in so-called "minor league schools." Business majors hired aren't as spectacular as "big bucks" athletes drafted by pros.

"The prime business of a college and university is its academic program, and we must never lose sight of that fact," Dr. Robert B. Kamm, former president of Oklahoma State University, wrote in his book, "They're Number One," referring to students.

Yet the teaching of truths and the impact of ideas seldom attract as much attention as the spectacle of behemoths engaged in physical combat. The manner in which we set our priorities forecasts the future cultural status of our society — brains or brawn!