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Fields of Contest:
Race, Region, and College Football in the U. S. South, 1945-1975

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An abstract of
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ABSTRACT

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This project explores how ideas of race and region suffused the popular enterprise of college football in the U. S. South, from the end of the Second World War to the days of desegregation in the seventies. It stands as the first full-scale scholarly consideration of how the racial integration of southern football unfolded, principally assessing the social and cultural dynamics which impelled, and impeded, black participation at traditionally white institutions (TWIs). In so doing, I fix my gaze on *the politics of sport* — the game away from the game that shaped institutional policies of race and competition. From College Station to College Park, gridiron ambitions were indissolubly bound by the same vicissitudes of law, custom, and popular will which governed the relationship between African Americans and the university itself. Situated as it was at the intersection of institutional politics and social revolution, the rise of the black athlete is justly appreciated as of a piece with the always complicated, ever maddening, and intractably deliberative process through which African Americans were brought into the life of the campus. I establish how the dilemmas of race consumed the university, from classroom to locker room, long before, and long after, black students first enrolled in it. In turn, this project not only lengthens the timetable by which the struggle for civil rights occurred in southern higher education, but widens the scholarly viewfinder, surveying the trends — competitive and commercial, academic and athletic, racial and regional — that ultimately dismantled the segregated culture of gameday.

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for

My mother and father

Elizabeth Ann and Josie

Mama and Papa

and

Dana F. White

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In developing, researching, and writing a project of this kind, one obviously incurs a number of debts. This is no less true for me than for any other soul intrepid enough to write a dissertation. In my case, I am most indebted to the members of my dissertation committee — Dana F. White, Joseph Crespino, and James L. Roark. All three of these professors gave me more than ample time and space — and encouragement — to produce this dissertation. Both Drs. Crespino and Roark took time out of their own work and obligations in the Department of History to serve on this committee, providing invaluable guidance and support throughout. Though I know he thought I was a wee bit crazy to have an expert on slavery in antebellum South Carolina serve as a reader on a project about college football, Dr. Roark — the consummate scholar and gentleman — dispensed his duties with great aplomb and good cheer, reading the complete manuscript in a matter of days. His positive impressions of the finished product will always be one of my most valued achievements. In the same way, Dr. Crespino consistently proved a useful sounding board for ideas, given both his expertise in the period and his passion for football. It was a great pleasure and honor for me to work and study with someone undoubtedly destined to become a giant in his field so early in his career. As for Dr. White, to whom this dissertation is, in part, dedicated, there really isn't any adequate way for me to express what he has contributed not only to this dissertation as its director, or in my six years as a graduate student at Emory, but (as maudlin as it might sound) my life. I simply couldn't have made it through this program without his steady hand and unfailing counsel. Aside from my father and grandfather, there is no man I admire more than him. Like Eugene Gant's realization about his Pulpit Hill professor, Vergil Weldon, upon his graduation, Dr. White has no less been for me "the last of those giants to whom we give the faith of our youth, believing like children that the riddle of our lives may be solved by their quiet judgment."

Two other professors, Matthew Bernstein in Film Studies and Ronald Schuchard in English, likewise deserve mention here, particularly for teaching me that all good scholarship should possess a relevance beyond the Ivory Tower. As Dr. Schuchard once put it, "we are all writing for a generally educated, generally interested audience" — precisely for whom I always believed I was writing here.

I am similarly grateful to the selection committees for the A. Worley Brown Southern Studies Fellowship and the Office for Undergraduate Education Program Assistant Fellowship, which I held, respectively, in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. In both cases, the financial support I received from these fellowships helped me complete this work. I might say a word of thanks (again) to Dr. Roark, who was the Brown advisor in 2007-2008; Joanne Brzinski, who acted as my direct supervisor for most of my time working in the OUE; Dee McGraw, with whom I worked most happily in the winter of 2008; and Philip Wainwright and Mollie Korski, to whom I was assigned in the spring of 2009, and graciously allowed me ample leeway to complete the final stages of dissertation writing.

Many friends lent a great deal of their time and energy to helping me realize this project. The greatest single contribution was made by Sarah Toton. Her suggestion, in April 2008, that we form a writing group — whose sole members would be she and I — became a pleasant surprise, supplying me with a dutiful audience and sharp-eyed editor. She read every word of this dissertation far too many times, bringing to each reading a freshness and sense of purpose which made the writing better and clearer and rooted firmly in the human dimension of this history. To put it frankly, this is a better dissertation because she read it. But, then again, in every way possible, my time here at Emory was better because she was here.

In different ways, Jay Hughes simply made life for a cloistered writer better. Whether it was concerts, ball games, or our (near) weekly lunches, I could count on him to pull me out of a life of the mind and back into living in the here and now. Since he joined the program in 2005, we have seen each other through some personal highs and lows and, at the end of my tour of duty in the ILA, Jay's friendship is one of those things I'm proudest to come away with. Like Guy Clark sings, "I got a pretty good friend who's seen me at my worst / And he can't tell if I'm a blessing or a curse / But he always shows up when the chips are down / That's the kind of stuff I like to be around."

Manuel Montoya similarly became a close friend and invaluable colleague — thanks, in part, to Jay. He has taught me that great intelligence should come with great humility. I simply cannot think of anyone who combines such boundless achievement — for God's sake, he's a Rhodes Scholar — with such boundless sincerity and decency. A better man you will not find.

I might say a special word about Michael Thompson and Erica Bruchko. In our first two years here, the three of us were among that small vanguard of Southern Studies students on campus — me in the ILA, they in History. In almost every class on the South, you would likely find two or more of us. From this experience, I already considered them friends and colleagues. But my relationship with them was enriched exponentially when we shared the Brown Southern Studies Fellowship in 2007-2008. As I was writing in the fall of 2007, and they were off in the various archives of South Carolina, I enjoyed nothing more than hearing back from them on what they were uncovering. In the spring, when we gathered for our periodic sessions with Dr. Roark, they couldn't have been better critics or more unfailing personal supporters. After we finished those meetings, we would wander down to the Emory Village, and eat lunch, still chatting away about our mutual interests. Those were happy days, spent in the company of two people who will surely prove lifelong colleagues and (more importantly) friends.

Still others did more than their part. Pellom McDaniels and Molly McGehee supplied early and enduring models for surviving the ILA with the integrity of your work (and sanity) still intact. Aukje Kluge provided a necessary spur at important moments — academic *and* otherwise. Michelle Miles offered constant, consistent encouragement. Jean-Paul Cauvin contributed theory, vocabulary, and laughter. Elizabeth Milewicz listened and listened. Shlomit Ritz Finkelstein exhorted. Yolande Tomlinson beamed. Shan Muhktar regrettably arrived too late.

Others who added to this work in their particular way: Ju-Hwan Kim, Erin Sells, Jennifer Hughes, Elizabeth Chase, Levin Arnsperger, Leah Rosenberg and Nathan Hofer, Haipeng Zhou, Lillien Waller, Jere Alexander, Kwesi DeGraft-Hanson, Randy Gue, Aimi Hamraie, Megan Friddle, Anne Koch-Rein, Brittney Cooper, Brenda Tindal, Mashadi Matabane, Katie Rawson, Kira Walsh, Betty Woodman, Melissa Anderson, Folashade Alao, Ellen Griffith Spears, Cary Jones, Martin Lütke, Mary Pinckney Battle, Sarah Franzen, and Jennifer Sarrett.

As for family, I thank my uncle, Buddy Burnett, and my cousin, Stephanie Burnett, for their encouragement and interest. (Now that it's finished, they finally get to read it!) During this project, I gained a brother-in-law in John Codega. Even though he's a Yankee from Rhode Island, who likes soccer no less, his increasing devotion to college football and the warmer climes of the South — and his deep and sincere love for my sister — evens things out.

Simply put, the dedication says everything which one would need to know about the six most important people in my world: my mother and father, Ann and Sam Baker; my sisters, Elizabeth Ann Codega and Josie Baker; and my grandparents, Gaines and Dorothy Burnett. Happily, everything in my life has always been *for* them. This dissertation, on the other hand, is but a small expression of everything they have done *for* me — mostly, *always*, of and by and through and in their love.

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PROLOGUE
“To defer to some future date”

In late April 1950, the University of Texas Board of Regents received a copy of the schedule which their athletics director, gridiron legend D. X. Bible, had contracted for the upcoming football season. Aside from the Longhorns' typically rugged slate of Southwest Conference games, and their annual date with arch-rival Oklahoma in Dallas, Bible put his considerable contacts throughout the world of college football to good use, inking deals with Texas Tech, Purdue, and the same overmatched Temple team they whipped, 54-0, a year earlier in Philadelphia. Usually, the Regents paid Bible's schedules no more attention than to mark the dates of all the big games — Oklahoma, Texas A&M, Arkansas — down in their pocket calendars. Not so this year. Barely three weeks had passed since the state of Texas pleaded its case for keeping the UT School of Law segregated before the United States Supreme Court, in *Sweatt v. Painter*, which, vice president James Dolley would mildly advise Bible, “involves the University directly and the whole principle of segregation indirectly.” Already skittish about the survival of segregation, Bible's home game with an integrated Temple varsity, on October 7, situated as it was a week before the Oklahoma contest, raised more than a few eyebrows among the nine Regents. Declaring it “a matter of . . . grave institutional concern,” Dolley reminded him, “the Board has always had in effect a policy prohibiting mixed competition on the University campus.” Transgressing this rule so blatantly at a time when the *Sweatt* case was still pending could jeopardize “the welfare of the University.” Although “an opinion in this case may be handed down during the present term of the Supreme Court,” Dolley and the Regents believed a decision was far likelier in October “at the time of our game with Temple” — precisely when their institution could ill afford such a coincidence. “Whether active participants or not,” Dolley asserted, “the appearance

of colored football players in the University stadium” under those circumstances “certainly would flout an aroused public opinion in the state and attract very severe criticism.”

Anxious “to do everything possible to avoid an extremely embarrassing situation,” Dolley, on the orders of the Regents, directed Bible to either “induce the Temple athletic officials” to pledge “that colored boys would not be included in the traveling squad,” or wriggle his way free of the game contract.¹ Easier said than done, on both scores. For his part, Bible knew that it was almost unheard of to cancel a game little more than five months before it was set to be played. What’s more, “for the lack of a suitable replacement,” he had turned a deaf ear to the unremitting pleas of Temple athletics director Earl Yeomans to let his hapless Owls out of the series until they could “compete on a more equal basis.” Scrambling now to book an unprecedented December contest in Austin, against the all-too-reliably segregated LSU Tigers, he went back to Yeomans, hat in hand, asking that Temple give Texas what Temple had long wanted Texas to give it — a release. “Earl,” he implored, “to make the necessary adjustments would no doubt prove a rather difficult problem for you, yet I want to let you know that at the present time we are not only willing but are in a position of wanting to defer to some future date our game.” Never mentioning race, keeping strictly to competition, Bible persuaded an agreeable Yeomans to tear up their contract. With that, the Temple date fell off the 1950 schedule.²

Dolley and the Regents insisted that their instruction to Bible to take “all possible steps” to cancel this game “does not stem from personal prejudice on the matter,” but the desperate desire to forestall a confrontation between the university and the dilemmas of race. What was the difference?

¹ James C. Dolley to D. X. Bible, May 5, 1950, Folder “Intercollegiate Athletics, 1949-50,” Box VF28/B.a, UT President’s Office Records, 1907-1968, CAH (quotations).

² D. X. Bible to Earl Yeomans, May 24, 1950, Folder “Intercollegiate Athletics 1949-50,” Box VF28/B.a, UT President’s Office Records (quotations).

By scrubbing the Longhorns' schedule clean of controversy, especially on an issue "of the greatest importance to the entire State" (or, at least, its whites), they successfully kept the field of play inside Memorial Stadium the exclusive preserve of white privilege. The black athlete existed thereon only as an abstraction: the threat of equality, clad in a helmet and shoulder pads. Football for a segregated South was a white boy's game: the 100-yard stretch of well-manicured turf on which they battled each autumn Saturday the only place on campus where the increasingly urgent crises of race could be, in Bible's words, deferred to some future date. Only UT didn't have that luxury. Its inevitable day of reckoning arrived on June 4, days after Bible and Yeomans reached their understanding, when the high court leveled a unanimous decision against the state, and the university, in *Sweatt*. Ordered to admit the petitioner, a 42-year-old mail carrier from Houston named Heman Sweatt, so he might "claim his full constitutional right" of a "legal education equivalent" to that of whites, the university was suddenly confronted with all of the dilemmas that the Temple cancellation was supposed to prevent — and more. By the last Saturday in September, when the Longhorns took the field in their home opener against Purdue, the emergent realities of integration had sidled up to the chalky in-lines of the field itself. There, in the student section, among a sea of whites, sat none other than Sweatt, a human face for a human dilemma.³

Only the Regents were persistent in the aftermath of *Sweatt* in denying this human dimension of the racial change that washed over their campus in the fall of 1950. Seeking refuge in their power to set policy, Sweatt's own withdrawal the following spring gave them license to impose continued

³ James C. Dolley to D. X. Bible, May 5, 1950, Folder "Intercollegiate Athletics, 1949-50," Box VF28/B.a, UT President's Office Records (first and second quotations); *Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U. S. 629, 635 (1950) (third quotation); Dwonna Goldstone, *Integrating the Forty Acres: The 50-Year Struggle for Racial Equality at the University of Texas* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 29.

limitations on black enrollment. While a select number of black applicants were accepted into its Graduate and Professional schools, its undergraduate programs remained intractably segregated, for fear that whites and blacks might live together in its dormitories, eat together in its dining halls, even play together on its football team. A Wichita Falls businessman told Board member E. E. Kirkpatrick that “I do not believe you boys can get too radical about these negroes.” A Mission lawyer counseled Kirkpatrick that, if the Regents eased any of their racial bars, “it won’t be many years before we have a Negro football team at the University instead of a white team” — the ultimate horror of UT fans. By May of 1954, however, the Regents came face-to-face with the assumptive end of segregation. With its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court pushed further in dismantling segregation than it had in *Sweatt*, striking down the separate but equal doctrine as unconstitutional, and leaving the Regents flummoxed. They could throw wide the campus gates to black students, yet many of them anticipated — even sympathized with — the widespread outrage such a precipitous move would awaken among white Texans. Ever so deliberately, then, they milked the clock. Putting off a “method for implementing the recent Supreme Court decision,” explained dean of admissions H. Y. McCown in July, they elected to “admit Negroes to our Graduate School or to professional schools provided the course of study which they wish to pursue is not offered in one of the Negro State-supported schools” — either Prairie View or Texas Southern. Taking “a more calculated approach,” too, were the applicants, who “are constantly probing for programs of work not offered at one of the Negro institutions.” The tactic worked: for the fall term, McCown reported, “we have accepted six Negro freshmen for professional fields (all Engineering).”⁴

⁴ Orville Bullington to E. E. Kirkpatrick, September 5, 1950 (first quotation); D. F. Strickland to E. E. Kirkpatrick, September 5, 1950 (second quotation); both in Folder “Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1951,” Box 28, UT Chancellor’s Office Records, 1941-1971, CAH; H. Y. McCown to Marion G. Ford, Jr., July 23, 1954 (third and

The last of this sextet to be accepted was Marion Ford, Jr. — “Big Drip,” to his friends — a 16-year-old aspiring Chemical Engineering major from Houston. Brilliant, extraverted, ambitious, Ford graduated atop his class at all-black Phyllis Wheatley High. That he was able to maintain such good grades was nothing short of impressive given his lengthy resume of odd jobs — truck driver, cashier, lifeguard, paper boy, even a columnist for a local newspaper. There was seemingly nothing he hadn’t tried his hand at. Including football: as a senior on the Wheatley varsity, he earned all-City honors as both guard and fullback. Under any other set of circumstances, he was precisely the sort of student the university would have fought tooth-and-nail to get its hands on. Instead, McCown did his best to run Ford off. Challenging the veracity of his chosen major, McCown contended that “your original application stated Bachelor of Science, which could mean anything,” since “neither your original application or reply to my letter indicated that you wanted to take Chemical Engineering.” Bachelors of Science degrees were readily available to black students elsewhere: so, taking him at his word that this major, not Chemical Engineering, was what he wanted to study, McCown initially declined his application. Only when Ford pushed back, alleging that “Southern Discrimination” was holding up his acceptance, did McCown relent, admitting him with the other black freshmen. “I hope you will do well in the University,” he brayed in Ford’s official letter of acceptance, “and that you will get over your inferiority complex and the idea that your being discriminated against.”⁵

In setting his foot for Austin, Ford wanted “the best formal training in my state” — nothing

fourth quotations); H. Y. McCown to Logan Wilson, memorandum, August 30, 1954 (fifth and sixth quotations); both in Folder “Negroes in Colleges, 1939-1954” (1 of 4), Box VF20/B.a, UT President’s Office Records.

⁵ Rushee Information Card for Marion G. Ford, Jr., August 19, 1954; H. Y. McCown to Marion G. Ford, Jr., July 23, 1954 (first, second, and fourth quotations); W. B. Shipp to Logan Wilson, memorandum, August 25, 1954 (third quotation); all in Folder “Negroes in Colleges, 1939-1954” (1 of 4), Box VF20/B.a, UT President’s Office Records. On Ford’s biography, see also Richard Pennington, *Breaking the Ice: The Racial Integration of Southwest Conference Football* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1987), 114-17.

more. “I am not interested in living in your dormitories or becoming socially prominent with the Caucasians,” he reassured McCown. Once he was admitted, however, his tune changed considerably. On his birthday, August 21, a month to the day the fall term began, he welcomed a sportswriter from the *Houston Chronicle* to his home, where he confessed that, “if I don’t have to spend too much time studying, I would like to play football.” It was an honest declaration, based on what he thought was the honest opportunity his admission to the university signaled. He was going to be a student; surely he could do what any student might do, including going out for the freshman football team. But, if he had suspected that he was the victim of discrimination during his row with McCown, the frantic conspiracy his announcement inspired within the Board of Regents only made it so. Asked for his reaction to Ford’s intentions, a speechless Leroy Jeffers, a prominent Houston attorney who had been appointed a Regent by the conservative Democratic governor, Allan Shivers, composed himself long enough to declare that, “when the matter arises, it will be considered from all angles for the best interest of the university.” By circulating copies of the *Chronicle* interview through the tight circle of Regents, as well as to Bible and UT president Logan Wilson, Jeffers telegraphed a rather unobvious message about what their response should be: judged “from the standpoint” of his own expectations, “the best interests of the University” meant halting Ford’s drive to play well short of a tryout.⁶

Reading over Ford’s comments in his Midland law offices, Tom Seely, the Board chairman, was doubly concerned — for his university and his governor. A Shivers appointee, also, he knew as well as Jeffers that their political patron was entangled in a tight run-off battle for a third term against

⁶ W. B. Shipp to Logan Wilson, memorandum, August 25, 1954 (first and second quotations); Leroy Jeffers to Tom Seely, August 25, 1954 (fifth and sixth quotations); both in Folder “Negroes in Colleges, 1939-1954” (1 of 4), Box VF20/B.a, UT President’s Office Records; “Houston Negro Seeks Grid Tryout at Texas,” *Houston Chronicle*, August 22, 1954, E3 (third and fourth quotations).

the popular liberal Democrat, Ralph Yarborough. As Election Day drew near, on August 28, Shivers was forced to exploit white fears about what the *Brown* decision would mean for segregation, telling voters that racial equality “just won’t work.” Now, Seely worried, Ford’s open desire to play football at Shivers’ own beloved alma mater would unwittingly contradict — or even disprove — the whole basis for his campaign’s recent surge in the polls. There would be hell to pay if the university cost the governor re-election. Careful, then, “to avoid any adverse publicity pending . . . the Governor’s race,” Seely bided his time until a Shivers victory. Two days after whites in East Texas — “who,” a scholar noted shortly thereafter, “were by tradition strong adherents to the principle of segregation” — propelled this newfound champion of white privilege back to office, Seely pounced, sending state Attorney General John Ben Sheppard, a vocal segregationist, a request for his “official opinion” on whether the university was “required to permit such negro students upon admission to participate in such extracurricular activities as band and football.” Moreover, “under existing law,” he inquired, was the university “required to admit negro students . . . at the undergraduate level,” even if “such courses are not offered or given” at either of the state’s black universities?⁷

Rather than replying in writing, Sheppard did so in person, during a closed-door meeting in Shivers’ capitol office, with not only Seely, but Jeffers, Wilson, McCown, and Bible in attendance. Huddled together, drawing up a method by which they might shut Ford out of their football program, McCown observed that “the Regents could, if they decided this policy” of black admissions “unwise under present conditions, reverse this action and the students could be notified accordingly.” And,

⁷ William H. Jones, “Desegregation of Public Education in Texas — One Year Afterward,” *Journal of Negro Education* 24 (1955): 348-60, esp. 353 (first and third quotations); Tom Seely to Leroy Jeffers, August 28, 1954 (second quotation); Tom Seely to John Ben Sheppard, August 30, 1954 (fourth through seventh quotations); both in Folder “Negroes in Colleges, 1939-1954” (1 of 4), Box VF20/B.a, UT President’s Office Records.

yet, he warned, “such action” would only “cause a storm of protest.” So would the appearance of a black athlete on the Longhorn team, Seely exploded, a development that most assuredly would spell greater trouble for their university than the abrupt dismissal of a few black students. With that, they agreed, the Regents couldn’t be seen as singling Ford out: whatever they did, Sheppard counseled, it had to be directed across the board, with all six freshmen affected or none of them — including Ford himself. The human cost of this crisis now spread far beyond this precocious teenager alone.⁸

Returning to campus, President Wilson and McCown’s staff pulled all the course catalogues from Prairie View and Texas Southern, spending a full afternoon laboring over a solution. Making “a careful check of offerings,” they cobbled together enough classes to prove to the Regents how “the freshman course of study each of these students requires is available in Texas at a tax-supported institution of higher learning for Negroes.” More importantly, Wilson giddily reported, “in Chemical Engineering, M. G. Ford, Jr., can obtain at Prairie View all the freshman courses required here.” And eliminating his freshman study in Austin was particularly vital as no athlete could try out for football past their first year in college. Unceremoniously, Wilson directed McCown, who still opposed this ploy, to “write each of these students” to inform them that UT “cannot accept you for admission at this time.” Seely rejoiced. “The mistaken impression” of the curriculum at Prairie View and Texas Southern now saved his university from the pressure of integration. Once more, the prospect of racial change within Longhorn football had been successfully deferred to some future date.⁹

* * *

⁸ H. Y. McCown to Logan Wilson, memorandum, August 30, 1954, Folder “Negroes in Colleges, 1939-1954” (1 of 4), Box VF20/B.a, UT President’s Office Records (quotations); Pennington, *Breaking the Ice*, 115-16.

⁹ Logan Wilson to H. Y. McCown, memorandum, August 31, 1954 (first through fifth quotations); Tom Seely to Board of Regents, September 2, 1954 (sixth quotation); both in Folder “Negroes in Colleges, 1939-1954” (1 of 4), Box VF20/B.a, UT President’s Office Records.

In October of 1956, after the Regents decided to give black admissions another try, McCown's office received an inquiry from Clinton Givans, "a Negro Air Force enlisted man," about playing football. "I do not wish to make any national scandal or bring any bad reputation upon the school by a matter of racial segregation," Givans professed, "but I merely want to get a chance to try to make the varsity squad of the football team." "Being a native of Texas," he knew quite well that "there are no Negro schools that rate as high as the University of Texas in subject matter or intercollegiate athletics." If anything, playing service ball, where "the competition was rather stiff," spurred his "small ambition" to "make the University's football squad" and compete in the Southwest Conference.¹⁰

But the situation proved no different for him than for Ford two years earlier. "We have been expecting a Negro athlete to apply for some intercollegiate sport," McCown reported, "but this is the first case that we have had to face up to so far as football is concerned." "It appears desirable" in the wake of Givans' letter "that the University should establish a policy concerning Negro participation in intercollegiate sports, particularly football," given that "we must answer" him "with reference to future participation." Taking McCown's recommendation under advisement, Wilson judged it to be "necessary for us to answer any queries on this subject by stating that as yet we have no authority to permit integrated participation in intercollegiate sports." Ever since dismissing Ford, the Regents had determined it "unwise" to extend the Supreme Court's "mandate" to supply black students with "full educational opportunity" to "all areas of student life, many of which are not directly educational in character." And, he noted, they were still strong believers that "the best interests of colored as well as white students" rested in those "long-established traditions in this region" prohibiting interracial

¹⁰ H. Y. McCown to C. P. Boner, memorandum, October 11, 1956 (first quotation); Clinton A. Givans to D. X. Bible, October 5, 1956 (second through sixth quotations); both in Folder "Negro Students," Box CDL2/E32, UT Dean of Students Records, CAH.

play. Indeed, Bible advised Givans, “our Conference has not taken any action” on the issue of black participation, leaving “the picture . . . most uncertain at this time.” Under these circumstances, “you may find it more desirable and economical to attend a school in a section where integration is no problem and where you could be assured at this time of full participation.” Givans, like Ford before him, was chased away, thanks to the stark subtleties — and technicalities — of university policy.¹¹

“No one school is any more racist than the other, or any less racist than the other”: this was how Darrell Royal, who Bible hired as head football coach just two months after answering Givans’ letter, described his university’s steely opposition to black participation. Royal intended these words as an absolution for UT’s many sins born from institutionalized racism; instead, they supply a telling glimpse into the mind set which instructed white coaches and administrators like him against making the first move to integrate their football programs. McCown would report, following a meeting with him in November 1959, that “Darrell was quite pronounced in not wanting any Negroes on his team until other Southwest Conference teams admit them.” He was taken aback by Royal’s unflinching insistence that injecting black players into an otherwise all-white team dynamic would only “create problems.” McCown took him at his word: though a young man, Royal had coached integrated teams during a short stint in the Canadian Football League, in 1953; and at the University of Washington, in 1956. He was the one who would know about such things, seemed to be McCown’s position. And Royal’s adamance informed the recommendations which he presented Wilson about recruiting black athletes. The administration, he argued, should “continue our delaying tactics” as “we are not ready

¹¹ H. Y. McCown to C. P. Boner, memorandum, October 11, 1956 (first through third quotations); D. X. Bible to Clinton A. Givans, October 3, 1956 (eighth and ninth quotations); both in Folder “Negro Students,” Box CDL2/E32, UT Dean of Students Records, CAH; Logan Wilson, “Confidential Memorandum Concerning The Participation of Negro Students In Intercollegiate Athletics,” October 13, 1956, Folder “Athletic Policies, 9/1/56-8/31/58,” Box 51, UT Chancellor’s Office Records (fourth through seventh quotations).

for integration in Intercollegiate Athletics at the present time.” “Neither is our public” — and, by all rights, neither was Royal. In fact, he would take his dear sweet time in signing an athlete of color to a football scholarship: the all-white profile of the Longhorn program would stay in place for another decade. That is, until February 11, 1969, when Julius Whittier, an offensive tackle from San Antonio, signed a Southwest Conference letter of intent. At the end of his official campus visit, when he shook Royal’s hand goodbye, Whittier couldn’t help wondering “whether he knew that he had just recruited the person who would eventually be the first black to play, start, and graduate from Texas.”¹²

Of course he did. Nothing happened at Texas — or, for that matter, any other traditionally white institution (TWI) in the U. S. South — by mere happenstance when it came to matters of race. Grambling legend Eddie Robinson could argue that “coaches don’t have control of what will happen at the university, of who will and who won’t attend,” but coaches are the point of intersection in that peculiar convergence of competitive ambition and bureaucratic action that is intercollegiate athletics. Whatever power a particular coach may possess — after winning three national titles in 1963, 1969, and 1970, a coach like Royal could amass considerable autonomy in shaping his program’s destiny — that clout exists only in relation to the extent to which an institution is willing to endow him with the freedom to pursue its ambitions without excessive administrative meddling. Yet, in the Jim Crow South, winning, and winning while sustaining white privilege, were entirely different pursuits. Royal may have kept his team lily-white, but he did so with the implicit and explicit sanction of university leaders like Wilson and UT chancellor Harry Ransom, as well as an obsequious Board of Regents,

¹² Darrell Royal with John Wheat, *Coach Royal: Conversations With a Texas Football Legend* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 33 (first quotation); H. Y. McCown to Logan Wilson, memorandum, November 10, 1959, Folder “Negro Students,” Box CDL2/E32, UT Dean of Students Records (second through sixth quotations); Julius Whittier, “The Last Bastion,” in *The Texas Book: Profiles, History, and Reminiscences of the University*, ed. Richard A. Holland (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 241-48, esp. 248 (seventh quotation).

who often behaved as if gridiron glory, not intellectual inquiry, was the lifeblood of their institution. As one alumnus counseled Wilson, “this question” of black participation, “and the related problems of which it is a part, are inextricably interwoven with the aspirations of the University of Texas to take her place with the great universities of the nation and of the Western world. Provincialism, of which total exclusion of Negroes from athletics is an expression, is not the hallmark of a university destined to play a crucial role in the intellectual life of the free world.” But the world beyond the segregated South was of little consequence to administrators frightened by how any step toward the main currents of an ever-diversifying national game might enrage white boosters at home. It was a football-mad region, to be sure, but whites on whose patronage a university depended come gameday expected their teams to manifest an image that best nurtured their prerogative to keep people of color segregated. In that way, then, winning wasn’t everything: race was.¹³

“An educational institution has a responsibility to exemplify what is fair in the community,” argued the historian Broadus Mitchell, in early November 1962. “Surely it does not exist to maintain discrimination until it is forced into compliance with law.” Fairness had nothing at all to do with the practice of segregation: it was, by its very nature, unfair to the African Americans who were left on the outside looking in — and even to those black undergraduates admitted to the university. And this inherent unfairness granted administrators ample license to act as they pleased, when they pleased, particularly if it meant delaying, or at least slowing, the inevitable commingling of the races on their campus. The culture of gameday evinced this principle. Because it was neither expressly academic,

¹³ Eddie Robinson with Richard Lapchick, *Never Before, Never Again: The Stirring Autobiography of Eddie Robinson, the Winningest Coach in the History of College Football* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 144 (first quotation); Sterling Holloway to Logan Wilson, September 13, 1958, Folder “Desegregation,” Box 85, UT Chancellor’s Office Records (second quotation).

nor contributive to the academic mission, nor subject to the prerogatives of the faculty, the football program operated outside of time: while the rest of the campus wrestled with the irrevocable changes wrought by integration, the stadium — on the field and in the stands — appeared as if nothing much had changed. So, administrators at Texas could not only block Marion Ford from trying out for the freshman football team, they could, in their way, halt integration in additional areas of the gameday experience — say, the Longhorn Band. Indeed, around the same time as the meeting in Governor Shivers' office on the Ford matter, in August 1954, one of the African Americans enrolled in the professional programs, J. L. Jewett, expressed interest in playing in the marching band. UT Dean of Student Life Arno Nowotny advised President Wilson that, while the Longhorn Band directors and officers “voted unanimously to permit him to participate,” “I hope we continue to admit Negro students only when we have to do so.” The band, like the football team itself, was one of the most visible ambassadors for the institution and not many Longhorn fans wanted to see UT represented by African Americans. Hence, Nowotny's considerable hand-wringing. “I wish that young Jewett had chose the symphonic band as some other less spectacular student activity,” he confessed. “But I plan to have a conference with him, and stress the importance of his showing real humility in his band participation.” In other words, so that he might play the part of the acceptable Negro, not an uppity one. Although Nowotny asserted that “we do not have the legal right to deny Jewett's participation” — Wilson, the Regents, and even the governor himself were presently engineering the appropriate alternatives — “the entire state is looking to the University of Texas for leadership in this difficult problem.” And what was the university's example? Delay, delay, delay.¹⁴

¹⁴ Broadus Mitchell to Thomas F. Jones, November 9, 1962, Folder “Integration, Monteith,” Box 5 (1962-1963), Records of the Office of the President: Thomas F. Jones Series, USC (first quotation); Arno Nowotny to Logan Wilson, August 25, 1954, Folder “Negroes in Colleges, 1939-1954” (1 of 4), Box VF20/B.a, UT President's

Even those African Americans who eventually enrolled in the university after 1956 found their outlets to gameday blocked. In the same autumn that McCown advocated a plan for chasing off black athletes, like Clinton Givans, he advised Nowotny and band director Vincent DiNino that “we cannot approve” any policy that might allow African Americans to join the Longhorn Band. DiNino had reported that “the overwhelming reaction” of the white band members “was one of including negro personnel” so long as “they meet the playing standards and impress our [band] council with being the type of boy to quietly and efficiently become strong band members.” Nowotny concluded this policy to be “our only course.” McCown said absolutely not. “This matter,” he instructed both men, could be handled “in a diplomatic manner”: “but if it appeared that diplomacy will not work,” he called on them to “advise us” and the administration would supply “further instructions.” Flexing such administrative muscle was, perhaps, the only way to forestall black participation at a moment when enormous pressures, both legal and cultural, were impelling the university otherwise. After all, seven African Americans had inquired about band membership that fall — a sure sign that they were led to believe, like Ford and Givans, that being an enrolled student meant being a student in full.¹⁵

The headline of a December 1960 article in *The Daily Texan*, UT’s student daily, perhaps put it best about the black experience at a white university: “One Big ‘Cannot.’” Being one of the 200 or so black students on the UT campus, the article explained, was like “living in a world of a 24-hour inferiority complex.” Their white classmates treated them with either “indifference,” “perfunctory courtesy,” or “sour looks,” and “nobody talks to you before or after class.” Once classes are finished,

Office Records (second through fifth quotations).

¹⁵ H. Y. McCown to C. P. Boner, memorandum, September 13, 1956 (first, fifth, and sixth quotations); Vincent DiNino to Arno Nowotny, September 12, 1956 (second through fourth quotations; fourth quotation is a handwritten note by Nowotny included at the bottom of DiNino’s letter); both in Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/56-8/31/58,” Box 53, UT Chancellor’s Office Records.

“you go straight back to the (segregated) dorm.” Activities, both social and extracurricular, “are very, very limited.” “You cannot participate in intercollegiate athletics, you cannot have the lead role in a dramatic production (at least no Negro student until now has been allowed to have one), you cannot enter a Drag” — the student village on the west side of campus — “movie theater or night club, you cannot get your hair cut in a Drag shop.” What’s more, “when Negro students finish school here, they just finish. Many fear they won’t be really welcome at alumni meetings.” “No matter how hard you try going to pep rallies and things,” one black student from Houston told *The Daily Texan*, “you can’t get any real school spirit, especially when you think about everything that is denied you.”¹⁶

The writer Calvin Trillin praised those first African Americans who intrepidly broke the color line at the South’s most thoroughly segregated universities — James Meredith at Ole Miss, Harvey Gantt at Clemson, or, the subjects of his 1964 book, *An Education in Georgia*, Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes at Georgia — as “Student Heroes of a strange new kind.” “They were famed for no achievements in athletics or scholarship,” he observed, “but merely for showing up to attend classes.” Courage, yes, but nothing more or less than that which those black students who followed in their immediate wake had to summon in the face of unrelenting racism, be it from a white student sitting in the next desk or a white administrator sitting behind a bigger desk elsewhere on campus. Integration wasn’t merely a process of admitting one black student: rather, it was an intensive project encompassing the duration by which African Americans were brought into the life of the campus. At most TWIs, integration proved a decades-long proposition, with changes in the official attitude of the university administration effected incrementally vis-a-vis more inclusive institutional policies,

¹⁶ Pat Rusch, “One Big ‘Cannot’ — a Negro Student’s Life,” *The Daily Texan*, December 6, 1960, 4 (quotations).

which, in turn, manifested periodic openings in the popular attitudes of the white community that supported and sustained the enterprise of higher education. What these whites were willing to accept in black participation influenced what those whites in power were willing to allow on campus. With time, a black band member at Texas wasn't such a radical notion; indeed, by September 1963, when DiNino reported that yet another black student had "applied for admission to the Band," Chancellor Ransom was sufficiently confident in a shift in attitudes that he instructed him "to admit the Negro immediately, if he was otherwise qualified to be in the Band." In some cases, the university had to move out in front of its public, adopting policies that led rather than followed popular tastes. Just two months after the ostensible integration of the band, the Regents amended their standing rules on extracurricular activities, granting each UT student, regardless of color, the right of "voluntary participation." Accordingly, Royal pledged that "any academically and athletically qualified student . . . would be welcome to come out for any of the intercollegiate teams." And, yet, the power of policy required the power of practice. Universities remain human institutions, after all, and change couldn't take place unless there were administrators willing to implement those policy shifts. As Julius Whittier's signing six year later demonstrated, the athlete — particularly the football player — was amongst the very last African Americans to find his way to campus *precisely* because his presence on the football team compelled TWIs like Texas to reckon with the racial change they had long resisted. At that point, the future couldn't be deferred any longer: the future had arrived.¹⁷

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¹⁷ Calvin Trillin, *An Education in Georgia: Charlayne Hunter, Hamilton Holmes, and the Integration of the University of Georgia* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), 2 (first and second quotations); "AS" to Norman Hackerman, memorandum, September 25, 1963, Folder "Desegregation, 1962-1964," Box VF32/B.b (third and fourth quotations); Meeting of Athletic Council Minutes, November 18, 1963, Folder "Athletic Policies, 1962-1964" (1 of 2), Box VF32/F.a (fifth and sixth quotations); both in UT President's Office Records.

This is a dissertation about how that future came into being. How the integration that occurred on the gridiron manifested the same trends, the same struggles, the same exigencies, first seen elsewhere on campus. How the racial changes witnessed on the field of play and in the classroom complicated the mission of the southern university — to promote and preserve the prerogatives of white privilege. How the rise of the black athlete reconfigured the regional identity and politics of southern football. How the arrival of black students and student-athletes alike impelled these institutions to reconsider their relationship to not only a racially diverse national game, but the main currents of national life.

Most of all, the integration of southern college football is a story of the contest between black access and white privilege, played out more times than not in the ferociously competitive arena of campus politics — more policy than pigskin. Football became a popular enterprise suffused with the dictates of race and region, frequently overwhelmed by concerns which had precious little relevance to the dictates of competition. From the end of the Second World War to the days of desegregation in the mid-seventies, on campuses from College Station to College Park, gridiron ambitions were indissolubly bound by all the same vicissitudes of law, custom, and popular will which governed the relationship between African Americans and the university itself. As such, my gaze is firmly fixed on *the politics of sport* — the game away from the game that shaped institutional policies of race and competition. Situated as it was at the intersection of institutional politics and social revolution, the rise of the black athlete is justly appreciated here as of a piece with the always complicated, ever maddening, and intractably deliberative process through which African Americans were brought into the life of the campus. By drawing upon a rich array of primary source materials — more than 4500 documents, culled from 53 archival repositories — *Fields of Contest* establishes how the dilemmas of race consumed the university, from classroom to locker room, long before, and long after, black

students first enrolled in it. In turn, this dissertation not only lengthens the timetable by which the struggle for civil rights occurred in southern higher education, but widens the scholarly viewfinder, surveying the trends — competitive and commercial, academic and athletic, racial and regional — that ultimately dismantled the segregated culture of gameday.

CHAPTER ONE
“Let’s go south!”

As Bud Wilkinson’s Oklahoma Sooners opened their fall camp in September 1958, expectations for another record-shattering season ran as high as ever. Before even taking a snap, they were tapped as odds-on favorites to end their season rated the nation’s number one team. “Bud Wilkinson’s Sooners have the horses again,” predicted Steve Snider of the UPI wire service, “. . . that can be whipped into a fancy won and lost record.” Being lifted to such dizzying heights was nothing new for a team that suffered only a single defeat in the previous four calendar years. Indeed, no program dominated the college ranks in the first decade after the Second World War quite like Oklahoma. Since 1947, when Wilkinson became both head coach and athletics director, the Sooners accumulated an unparalleled record of success — 104 wins, compared to just nine losses and three ties. Numbered among these victories were a pair of astonishing winning streaks: 31-in-a-row from 1948 to 1951; and 47-straight between 1953 and 1957, a run that still stands as a NCAA record. Winning, it often seemed, was all the Sooners knew how to do, escaping four seasons without either a loss or a tie; posting ten or more victories on seven occasions; and emerging triumphant from all but one of their six post-season bowl appearances. To top it off, they were thrice crowned national champions, in 1950, 1955, and 1956. So singularly invincible did the Sooners become over this decade that, as Snider cracked, “there can be fewer rougher games of football than a scrimmage between Oklahoma’s first and second units.”¹

With few challengers to be found anywhere in the country, OU president George Lynn Cross marveled at how “Oklahoma was in competition with its own winning record.” Not that the Sooners and their fans held themselves apart from the rest of the country: if anything, the Big Red faithful

¹ Steve Snider, “UPI Writer Likes Sooners for No. 1,” *DO*, September 17, 1958, 13 (quotations).

reveled in their team's national preeminence above all else. In advance of the Sooners' season opener later that month versus West Virginia, an Oklahoma City columnist boasted how "the most popular college game, for the present, at least, makes Oklahoma its national capital." That OU should define the mainstream of college football was seen as a striking reversal of fortune for a state that, just two decades earlier, felt itself thoroughly estranged from the patterns of national life. Branded "Okies," its people were derided as a symptom and a symbol of the economic hardships besetting the country as a whole. Now, the Sooners' sustained success — scored, in part, with student-athletes who came of age in Depression-era Oklahoma (or in exile out in California) — convinced OU backers that the Wilkinson era was not only historic on its own terms alone, but a triumph of near-heroic proportions over the humiliations and social stigmas rife within their state's recent past. "There is a man," one fan in Norman observed of Wilkinson, "who has done more to offset the awful injustices caused by that guy who wrote *Grapes of Wrath* than anyone who has lived in Oklahoma." He would have found eager agreement with this assertion in every corner of the state, as well as with the woman in Clinton who declared that "I think that there is nothing that has united our entire state like our football team at OU has done." "To say we, I mean all Oklahomans, are . . . sincerely proud of the OU football team," an Oklahoma City booster swooned, "is expressing it mildly." Where Oklahomans were once almost universally scorned, a Bartlesville supporter opined, nothing tasted sweeter than the universal envy that accompanied each successive victory under Wilkinson. "We Oklahomans are used to the old standard sour grape cries of weak schedules, professionalism, oil wells, Cadillacs, etc., in regard to OU's football success," he exclaimed, "and we just laugh them off as best we can."²

² George Lynn Cross, *Presidents Can't Punt: The OU Football Tradition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 270 (first quotation); Elmer T. Peterson, "Football Is Icumen In," *DO*, September 22, 1958, 18 (second quotation); John Cronley, "Once Over Lightly," *DO*, January 6, 1954, 44 (third quotation);

“Today Oklahomans are proud of their state,” claimed the editors of *Sooner Magazine*, OU’s alumni monthly, thanks to the exploits of “a football team and its coach.” Devoting their September issue to forecasting the season ahead, the editors invited a troupe of “distinguished Oklahomans” to evaluate not only this “new attitude,” but also “the effect O. U. football has had upon the people of Oklahoma” in this decade. In so doing, they blithely exchanged the burdens of one myth for another: Oklahomans felt “a resurging sense of self-confidence,” liberated from “an inferiority complex and a slurring nickname” by the Sooners’ success. “The image of shiftless sharecroppers riding around in jalopies covered with mattresses,” *Tulsa Tribune* editor Jenkin Lloyd Jones submitted, “didn’t tie in well with 11 smart lads running circles around the nation’s great teams.” “As the supreme leader of America’s Number 1 sport,” rejoiced U. S. senator Mike Monroney, Bud’s Boys “seemed to rescue us from the glaring headlines of crime, poverty, and instability” by which life in Oklahoma was so popularly portrayed in the thirties. His Senate colleague Robert Kerr believed the impact was a global one: “Oklahoma is more highly respected in the nation, and, for that matter, in the English speaking world because of the great and sustained success of Oklahoma’s Big Red.” More than anything, argued *Seminole Producer* publisher Milt Phillips, “Oklahoma has benefitted because our state’s name has become known to untold thousands who heretofore would have been unable to pinpoint the geographic location of Oklahoma without searching over a map.”³

Sooner football may well have put the state on the map, but that proved a far easier challenge than mapping the regional pull of their gridiron ambitions. Of course, Oklahoma belonged to the Big

Cronley, “Once Over Lightly,” *DO*, November 20, 1957, 20 (fourth quotation); William L. Sewell, Letter to the Editor, *DO*, November 24, 1957, 24 (fifth quotation); Cronley, “Once Over Lightly,” *DO*, December 11, 1957, 37 (sixth quotation).

³ “One Man, One Team, Pride,” *Sooner Magazine*, September 1958, 14-15, 32 (quotations).

Seven Conference, a largely midwestern league in which it enjoyed few natural rivalries — and even fewer natural affinities. Nebraska and Iowa State, Kansas and Kansas State: these Great Plains universities were so far removed from the lives and interests of Sooner partisans that they might as well have been located on Mars. With what one of its vice presidents called “our semi-confederate traditions,” Missouri was a somewhat closer fit, but the admission of Colorado in 1947 only muddied the picture further. Moreover, none of these institutions fielded particularly strong football teams, a condition evinced by a single statistic: Wilkinson had yet to lose a conference game. Instead, what mattered most to OU fans was how the Sooners performed against teams in their own neighborhood, rivalries built upon regional proximity — and regional identity. Oklahoma’s annual showdown with Texas — traditionally played at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas in October — and its season finale against Oklahoma State (*nee* A&M) were sacrosanct. But, so, too, were series with Southwest Conference foes, like Texas A&M and TCU, allowing OU, in its fans’ minds, to gauge the fitness of its program against opposition which took football as seriously as it did. Furthermore, the Red River running between Oklahoma and Texas acted as a sort of line of scrimmage across which they battled for the best athletic talent in that part of the South — most of which was found in the Lone Star state. “As the migration of Texas boys to Oklahoma has grown,” a *New York Times* profile of Wilkinson noted that November, “so has the bitterness of Texas schools.” After all, ten of OU’s top 22 players in 1958 were native Texans, a fair bit of *schadenfreude* in which every Sooner fan heartily indulged.⁴

The great bugaboo of the Wilkinson era, then, was determining whether Oklahoma should remain in the Big Seven or bolt for the SWC. Writing Cross the day before the West Virginia game,

⁴ Thomas A. Brady to Frederick A. Middlebush, memorandum, September 27, 1948, Folder 3, Box 1, Thomas A. Brady Papers, UMC (first quotation); William Barry Furlong, “Coach With Winning Ways,” *New York Times Magazine*, November 9, 1958, 26 (second quotation).

one Sooner fan, then living in Texarkana, Texas, knew where he thought his team should be playing. “I have always pulled for the Sooners and still do,” he attested, though he increasingly found himself in agreement with “critics down here” that OU’s phenomenal success over the previous decade came at the expense of “weak opposition not only in the Conference but outside” of it. As “the records show Okla. is far better than the rest” of the Big Seven, he asserted, the Sooners were long overdue in searching out more competitive climes — like the SWC. Oklahoma State’s entry into the league that year, making it the Big Eight, did little to dispel his regional anxieties. “I admire the team and the excellent coaching of Bud Wilkinson,” he averred, “but I would like for him to show these boys south of [the] Red River that he is not scared of tough competition win or lose.” For his part, Cross couldn’t help but be amused: “Your Texas friends should be, and probably are, very glad that the University of Oklahoma does not have membership in the Southwest Conference.” But he had heard this argument rehearsed so many times before in his decade-and-a-half as president that his rebuttal was now practically reflexive. “Membership in the Southwest Conference is by invitation,” he explained, so OU couldn’t simply join of its own volition. Nor would it “if we were invited” as “we feel that the overall sports program in the Big Eight Conference is far superior to the program in the Southwestern organization.” Besides, “we have a great deal in common with the institutions of the Big Eight” — namely that “we are all state institutions” and share a “geographic position.”⁵

Yet geography was not destiny for the Sooners. Although the achievements of the Wilkinson era were widely appreciated as lifting the morale of a particular people in a particular place, OU’s state of play was influenced as much by a state of mind as it was a state of place. Not just Sooner

⁵ Marcus E. Locke to George Lynn Cross, September 26, 1958 (first through fifth quotations); George Lynn Cross to Marcus E. Locke, September 29, 1958 (sixth through eleventh quotations); both in Folder “Football — General,” Box 169, George Lynn Cross Presidential Papers, OU-WHC.

partisans but their conference brethren assigned motives to the institutional practices buttressing this sensibility which were decidedly more southern in their fundamental orientation than midwestern. A reactionary defense of white racial privilege, a proclivity for hyperregionalism, a willingness to calibrate the levers of academic bureaucracy to suit gridiron ambitions: the convergence of these values in OU football in the Wilkinson era, especially in its earliest days, supplies a suggestive basis on which to understand what observers both inside and outside the South generally believed the nature of southern college football to be. In many ways, this crisis of association for the OU football program ultimately engulfed the university as a whole, trapping it between the same compulsions: to incorporate itself into the national patterns, or to indulge a popular obligation to predominate in its regional sphere. And, absent any definitive remedies for determining whether the institution was southern or midwestern, the Sooners (to appropriate a formulation by historian Arrell Gibson about the state itself) were variously regarded — and behaved, on the field and off — as the most northerly of the southern teams, or the most southerly of the northern teams.⁶

I

On the Saturday after Thanksgiving, 1944, George Lynn Cross and his wife, Cleo, met Oklahoma A&M president Henry Bennett for a pre-game meal at the Skirvin Hotel in downtown Oklahoma City. Later that day, their Sooners and Aggies would clash at Taft Stadium, playing in the capital city, rather than Norman or Stillwater, because of wartime gasoline rationing. Cross was, by then, rounding out his first season since assuming the OU presidency in August; Bennett, who had led

⁶ Arrell Morgan Gibson, *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries*, 2nd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 7.

A&M since 1928, was an old hand, so, “in his usual kindly way,” Cross recalled, he tried to “prepare me for the disappointment” that surely awaited the outmatched Sooners. “One thing I’ve learned during my years at Oklahoma A&M,” he waxed before lunch arrived, “is that results of athletic contests really have very little to do with the welfare of the institution.” “Winning or losing,” he claimed, registers “very little impact” on the important things — annual giving, enrollment, appropriations. He urged Cross to “remember . . . if our team should happen to defeat yours this afternoon” that, as the old cliché instructed, it was only a game. But Cross was quickly discovering otherwise. Until becoming president, he confessed, “I had not realized how important” the Sooners’ rivalries with A&M and, especially, Texas “were to OU football fans, but I was to learn.” Indeed, the 28-6 drubbing that the Sooners absorbed that afternoon, coupled with a 20-0 humiliation a month earlier in Dallas, resulted in “my first experience of pressure from fans to get rid of a football coach.” “A spate of letters and phone calls” to his office supplied evidence aplenty that results *did* matter.⁷

The world of college football has oftentimes been described as a sort of pressure-cooker. A botanist by trade, Cross might have seen it, at least as his quarter-century presidency began, through the lens of a different metaphor: a hot house, where the fortunes of a football program flowered, or withered, in isolation from any outside elements. Yet, by 1945, as Oklahoma limped through another season without scoring a victory over either of its rivals, all of the metaphors and clichés and maxims one could employ to characterize the peculiar institution of college football could not explain away the incontrovertible fact that losing these games was adversely impacting his university. Nevermind that Oklahoma won Big Six titles in 1943 and 1944, or that it would post yet another respectable

⁷ George Lynn Cross, *The University of Oklahoma and World War II: A Personal Account, 1941-1946* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 141-42. Oklahoma A&M officially changed its name to Oklahoma State on July 1, 1957.

showing against its league brethren in 1945. Conference contests were widely dismissed by OU fans as the least challenging weekends of any Sooner season: scanning the league competition in 1943, *Daily Oklahoman* sports editor Hal Middlesworth breathed easier knowing that the Big Six “doesn’t look too tough.” Getting beaten and bloodied by their rivals, however, didn’t inspire great confidence in, or affection for, OU head coach Dewey “Snorter” Luster, whose 19-4-2 league record over his five-year stint in Norman could never make up for the fact that his teams were winless against Texas and a lackluster 2-2-1 versus the Aggies. Despite never posting a finish lower than second in the Big Six, even Luster knew — as one Longhorn fan boasted — that having “Texas University run the boys from Norman out of the park” year-in and year-out wouldn’t help him keep his job, no matter how ludicrous Cross regarded fan grievances. When the 1945 season ended, with a humbling 47-0 defeat at the hands of the Aggies in Norman, Luster resigned, pleading ill health and “football battle fatigue.” “The ill health,” Cross quipped, “being that he couldn’t beat Texas or [Oklahoma] A&M.”⁸

In the eyes of most observers, the Sooner program was in shambles. “Probably for the first time in the school’s history,” Middlesworth worried, “Oklahoma is running third among Our State’s football powers, trailing Oklahoma A&M and Tulsa both in rounding up players and on the field of action.” In order that the Sooners “regain a dominant position in the state (and certainly the state university ought to at least aspire to that),” he demanded that Cross and the OU Board of Regents “provide the school with a man who can meet the Aggies and Tulsa on even terms.” And that kind of man, to his mind, was not only “someone who gets along well with the people of Our State,” but

⁸ Hal Middlesworth, “On the Level,” *DO*, October 5, 1943, 19 (first quotation); W. L. Stewart to Robert S. Kerr, December 12, 1945, Folder 17, Box 20, Gubernatorial Series, Robert S. Kerr Collection, OU-CAC (second quotation); Middlesworth, “Luster to Retire at the End of Season,” *DO*, November 9, 1945, 19 (third quotation); Berry Wayne Tramel, “The Significance of Sports in Oklahoma,” in *The Culture of Oklahoma*, eds. Howard F. Stein and Robert F. Hill (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 144 (fourth quotation).

“a coach who will take on this schedule: five Big Six games, three Southwest Conference games, the Oklahoma Aggies and Tulsa University” — a schedule, in short, which made Oklahoma’s ability to beat its southern rivals an equal, if not greater, measurement of success than its showing against its midwestern conference mates. “For Sooner fans who are anxious to get on with the rebuilding of Oklahoma’s gridiron fortunes,” success started at home in the South.⁹

Yet regional bragging rights were only the half of it. A winning football program — be it in Norman, Stillwater, or Tulsa — was seen by white Oklahomans as a way to recover a measure of the economic, cultural, and, indeed, racial self-respect they lost through the adversity of the previous two decades. Depression, dust bowl, even the “damnable lie” of John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, compelled them to consistently battle the perception, as one Oklahoman stationed at Fort Sill during wartime lamented, “that nothing good ever came out of Oklahoma.” Bound to a rural identity, white Oklahomans, one scholar explained, generally reacted to the image of their state propagated in *The Grapes of Wrath* by insisting that “we should deny it vigorously; all Oklahomans are not Okies.” “As a citizen of Oklahoma,” U. S. congressman Lyle Boren denounced Steinbeck’s portrait of “Okies” in 1940 as “a black, infernal creation of a twisted, distorted mind,” contending that “there is not a tenant farmer in Oklahoma that Oklahoma needs to apologize for.” But apologize it did. “I have been defending the citizenship of our State from the days of Indian Territory toughs and land-grafters through the days of the wild characters of the oil boom towns,” an Ardmore lawyer advised Boren, “but this attack of Steinbeck’s is the worst slander we have experienced.” For those poor whites who set out for California — the people about whom Steinbeck wrote — the stigma of being

⁹ Middlesworth, “On the Level,” *DO*, January 9, 1946, 66 (first through third and sixth quotations); Middlesworth, “On the Level,” *DO*, December 2, 1945, 23 (fourth and fifth quotations).

from Oklahoma wasn't merely a symbolic crucible; it was one of daily living. The star quarterback for OU from 1947 to 1949 (and future head coach at Texas), Darrell Royal and his family struck out from the southwestern Oklahoma town of Hollis in 1939 in an overloaded Whippet bound for the San Joaquin Valley. Once there, Royal, like most refugees of the Sooner state, found himself subject to class discrimination by locals. "Okies and niggers, go home," he was told. "Get your asses back to Oklahoma." He even quit talking for a short while to conceal the distinct twang of his Oklahoma accent. "It hurt to be called an Okie," he remembered. "I'm sure it's not unlike any minority person with those tags that they get."¹⁰

Now this postwar moment — ripe with possibility and promise — offered white Oklahomans an opportunity to overcome their sense of shame at the "Okie" tag. And, for the editors of *The Daily Oklahoman*, writing in April 1945, the "splash our athletes made in the national puddle . . . last autumn" demonstrated just how far, and how high, football could lift "Our State": the Sooners' back-to-back Big Six titles, as well as wins for A&M in the Cotton Bowl and Tulsa in the Orange Bowl, "have done their part" to "ventilate the odorous 'Okie' tag which followed the 'Grapes of Wrath'" and "restore the sweet-smelling name of Oklahoma to good standing on the national scene." This same talk of football as a curative for "the social and psychological problems of the citizens of the state" (as Cross put it) was still in the air that November, when the seven OU Regents first convened in Cross' office to discuss a replacement for Luster. As their conversation skipped from one name

¹⁰ Lyle H. Boren, "Remarks on *The Grapes of Wrath* in the House of Representatives, Wednesday, January 10, 1940," *Congressional Record*, offprint (first and fourth through sixth quotations); Corp. Lloyd M. Rice, Jr., Letter to the Editor, *DO*, May 9, 1943, 52 (second quotation); Martin Staples Shockley, "The Reception of *The Grapes of Wrath* in Oklahoma," *American Literature* 15 (1944): 351-61, esp. 360 (third quotation); Kenneth Hudson to Lyle H. Boren, January 26, 1940, Folder 49, Box 6, Lyle H. Boren Collection, OU-CAC (seventh quotation); Jim Dent, *The Undefeated: The Oklahoma Sooners and the Greatest Winning Streak in College Football* (New York: St. Martin's Press / Thomas Dunne Books, 2001), 42 (eighth quotation); Royal with Wheat, *Coach Royal*, 5 (ninth quotation).

to another, one Regent “reminded the group” of how Steinbeck’s novel “had all but destroyed the morale of Oklahomans,” making “many of them” feel “a little apologetic about living in Oklahoma.” Instantly, if irrationally, the Regents had their motivation: this wasn’t merely a coaching search; it was a crusade to redeem the soul of their state. Or, as Cross framed it, “what, if anything, could the university do to improve the situation and help develop pride in the state?” From the back of the room, Lloyd Noble spoke up. A “sandy-haired, tan-jacketed” wildcatter from Ardmore, who was far and away the most influential man seated around the table, he leaned back in his chair, as if lost in thought, and mused that Luster’s resignation couldn’t have come at a better time for OU, handing the Regents “an unusual opportunity to help” their state and its (white) people. A tidal wave of veterans was soon to crash upon their campus — by Cross’ own estimates, 2500 would show up for registration that January alone — and, for those who wanted to play football, most would qualify for a full four years of athletic eligibility. “If the university could attract a few of these athletes,” Noble postulated, “it might be possible to produce some outstanding football teams in which the citizens of the state could take pride.” And they could do so sooner than later. “He didn’t use the term instant great football,” Cross noted, “but that’s what he meant.”¹¹

But the priorities were clear: win first, then sort out the meaning of it all later. And wins were what the Regents craved most. In Jim Tatum, a successful service coach at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida, they believed they had found a proven winner who could woo the best athletes being discharged from the military to Norman. Indeed, from day one, he showed himself to be, in

¹¹ “What A Year For Oklahomans,” *DO*, April 1, 1945, 21 (third through seventh quotations); Cross, *Presidents Can’t Punt*, 7 (eighth through thirteenth quotations); “Veterans Swamp OU Offices To Enroll; 2,500 Are Predicted,” *DO*, January 17, 1946, 21; Cross, *The University of Oklahoma and World War II*, 168 (fourteenth quotation); Tramel, “The Significance of Sports in Oklahoma,” 144 (fifteenth quotation). None of the substance of this discussion among the Regents found its way into the minutes of their meeting. See Minutes of the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, December 12, 1945, OUBRO.

Cross' judgment, "unusually effective in persuading returning servicemen to transfer from other universities," assembling a core group of veteran stars and young talent who could realize the quick turnaround the Regents — not to mention the fans — expected. They were not to be disappointed: posting a 7-3 regular season mark, Tatum's team claimed a share of the Big Six crown and, though falling to the Longhorns by a touchdown, closed out their season in high style with a 73-12 thrashing of A&M in Stillwater. "On that last day of the season," Middlesworth contended, "the Sooners might have whipped any team in the country — they were that near perfection."¹²

A Gator Bowl victory over N. C. State only intensified the promise OU fans believed surely awaited their Sooners with Tatum at the helm. Little did they know that he was already negotiating a seven-year contract with Maryland president "Curly" Byrd to take over as head coach and athletics director there. Cross recognized how fans would be "quite upset if he was permitted to leave without a serious effort to keep him," as they were "very enthusiastic about the record he had compiled in his first year." Yet Tatum's reputation as a rainmaker, compounded by a staggering ambivalence toward rules and ethics, convinced Cross that "it would be better for the university" to let him leave. Which was, of course, what Cross and the Regents eventually did in mid-January 1947. On his way out of town, Tatum remarked to a few sportswriters that "OU has been mighty good to me. I hope I have done something good for her." Indeed, he had: his departure cleared the way for the Regents to enthusiastically promote his top assistant — none other than Bud Wilkinson.¹³

A year earlier, Cross reassured skeptical Sooner fans across the state that, between Tatum and

¹² Cross, *Presidents Can't Punt*, 18 (first quotation); Middlesworth, "On the Level," *DO*, December 4, 1946, 24 (second quotation).

¹³ Cross, *Presidents Can't Punt*, 42 (first and second quotation), 49 (third quotation).

Wilkinson, “the university has secured the very best combination possible at the present time.” But Wilkinson joined Tatum in Norman largely as a personal favor. They first coached together on Don Faurot’s staff at the Iowa Pre-flight School in 1943, where they received a first-hand tutorial in the intricacies of the split-T offense, the scheme that became the hallmark of his Oklahoma teams. Long before enlisting in the Navy after Pearl Harbor, Wilkinson carved out a name for himself as an up-and-coming offensive mind while an assistant at Syracuse — so much so that, when the OU Athletic Council settled on Tatum as one of the two finalists to replace Luster, they attempted to make it a condition for hiring him that he secure Wilkinson as his top assistant. When the Regents interviewed both coaches during their January 9, 1946, meeting, Wilkinson’s answers were delivered with such “a great deal of poise” that Noble, for one, “wished the situation had been reversed” — Wilkinson for head coach and Tatum as his assistant. The Regents concurred, even going so far as to seriously consider the idea of offering Wilkinson the top job instead. Cross was nonplused. Not only would this move represent a serious breach of institutional ethics, “but of equal importance, if Wilkinson should be willing to consider such an offer he would not possess the personal ethics I hope to have in a football coach.” Reluctantly, they settled on Tatum, but only “with the condition he bring Bud Wilkinson as Assistant Coach.” When Cross extended the offer over a phone call, Tatum “objected vigorously” from the other end of the line, “pointing out that a head coach should have complete freedom to choose his assistant coaches and that it was a reflection on his judgment and ability to require him to bring with him any specific individual.” But no injury to his pride was too great to keep him from taking the job, so he talked Wilkinson into joining him with the guarantee that, once the 1946 season was finished, he was free to leave. Wilkinson agreed, Cross noted, if only “to help his

friend get the job.”¹⁴

Now, that job was his own. And, by April, when Cross dismissed the sitting athletics director, Wilkinson was handed that responsibility, also. Barely 31 years old, he possessed more day-to-day power than anyone on campus (with the possible exception of Cross himself) and set about subtly recasting the program in the image of his ambitions. “Tatum did a fine job at Oklahoma and it was a pleasure to see him function,” Middlesworth observed. “But Wilkinson was an integral part of that system and I have a hunch you are going to like the way he makes things hum, too.” Yet many fans weren’t sure what to make of their young coach, even after his 1947 team put together a 7-2-1 mark and, for a second year in a row, won the Big Six. While *The Daily Oklahoman* deemed the “football successes” of his squad “another indication that the state is taking off its swaddling clothes and assuming its true role among the nation’s other 47 commonwealths,” Middlesworth attested to how “there was considerable muttering among the Sooner adherents” when Oklahoma dropped a 20-7 decision to TCU in Norman — to say nothing of an eighth consecutive loss to Texas — decrying the “distressing habit of fans and camp followers in this state who insist that a coach ought to win every game.” Indeed, during a Christmas party at the Skirvin Hotel in late December, a few OU boosters cornered Cross, demanding he “better be looking” for a new coach. When the Sooners stumbled out of the starting gate versus Santa Clara to begin the 1948 season, calls for Wilkinson’s head only grew

¹⁴ “Tatum Gets \$27,000, Hired For 3 Years,” *DO*, January 20, 1946, 51 (first quotation); Minutes of the Athletic Council Meeting, December 23, 1945; Minutes of the Athletic Council Meeting, December 26, 1945; both in Folder “Athletic Council (2),” Box 13, Cross Presidential Papers; Cross, *Presidents Can’t Punt*, 9-13 (second through fourth and sixth through eighth quotations); Minutes of a Meeting of the University of Oklahoma Board of Trustees, January 9, 1946, OUBRO (fifth quotation). The timing of the Wilkinson guarantee is no small point: it has long been asserted that it came once the Regents met him and Tatum in January. However, then-athletics director Jap Haskell was worried that the Athletic Council’s efforts to force Tatum into hiring Wilkinson would scare Tatum away. He told the council during its December 26 meeting that the “contingent basis” on which they planned to recommend Tatum to Cross and the Regents “had proven unsatisfactory and perhaps unfair to Mr. Tatum.” The councilmen grudgingly dropped their stipulations, only to see the Regents picked them up days later.

louder. Even Middlesworth had his doubts. Traveling to the Bay Area to play a team like Santa Clara did Oklahoma little good since “you run the risk of losing to a tough but not-highly-regarded football team” — which made this 20-17 defeat appear all the more like “a bad deal all the way round.”¹⁵

But Wilkinson knew better than any sportswriter that the way to build a national program — precisely the goal he was striving toward even at that moment — wasn’t to cycle out one regional opponent for another from year-to-year on the Sooners’ schedules. Sure, regional foes had their place, but national preeminence wouldn’t be achieved by playing Southwest Conference members alone. For the Sooners to be the best team in the country, Wilkinson asserted, they would have to play the best teams in the country — a reality he underscored some three months before the Santa Clara contest, when he approached Cross about a series with Boston College for the 1949 and 1950 seasons. “To my mind,” he wrote, “Boston College represents the best possible type of eastern team, with the exception of Army or Navy.” Contests against “the so-called Ivy League” were “virtually impossible to schedule,” and dates with either of the service academies proved no easier to come by, making Boston College “the only remaining eastern opponent” worth playing. Cross polled the Athletic Council for their thoughts, the majority of which saw no problem scheduling the likes of Boston College. One professor noted that “the publicity that we may gain in the East by playing these games” more than justified them. Athletic Council president Walter Kraft was similarly in favor of playing an eastern opponent as it was “in line” with a more nationalized vision for the program: “the Athletic Council expressed the hope some time ago that it would be possible to work out a schedule

¹⁵ Middlesworth, “On the Level,” *DO*, January 20, 1947, 37 (first quotation); “The State Rejoices,” *DO*, December 1, 1947, 20 (second and third quotations); Middlesworth, “On the Level,” *DO*, January 27, 1948, 13 (fourth and fifth quotations); Cross, *Presidents Can’t Punt*, 69 (sixth quotation); Middlesworth, “On the Level,” *DO*, September 28, 1948, 48 (seventh and eighth quotations).

whereby our team would have an opportunity to play one year in the West and the next year in the East.” A few councilmen, however, weren’t sold on the wisdom of casting a wider net for non-conference foes. “I was critical of the agreement last year to play at Detroit and of this year’s game with Santa Clara,” another professor warned, “so to be consistent I shall have to oppose a game with Boston College.” In regularly reaching beyond the South — “couldn’t we get games with Georgia Tech, Alabama, Louisiana [State], . . . or other similar schools” — he worried OU was opening itself up to protest at home. “We get much criticism from not playing Tulsa University,” he observed, “and they are no more professionals than these other city colleges.”¹⁶

“The problem of scheduling Tulsa is largely political,” Wilkinson confessed in early 1949, and there was no denying that people in northeastern Oklahoma saw the matter that way, too. Indeed, since the early forties, when the Golden Hurricane dropped off the Sooners’ schedules, civic and business leaders in Tulsa desperately sought a resumption of the series: not because they necessarily backed the Tulsa program, but, as loyal Sooner fans, they wanted to see their team play in their own backyard. “The Sooners are as much our team as they are the team of any other section of the State,” one Tulsa businessman pleaded in late 1943, “and we should be just as much entitled to watch them play.” Yet the Regents and the Athletic Council were long “unfavorable” to meeting Tulsa anywhere — a pair of embarrassing losses to the Golden Hurricane in 1942 and 1943 didn’t help matters — and, when the issue reared its head again in the spring of 1949, neither group proved themselves any more eager to authorize a match-up than they were before. Although Cross favored a game, if only

¹⁶ George Lynn Cross to Walter W. Kraft, et al, June 28, 1948 (first through third quotations) [Wilkinson’s letter is quoted verbatim in the text of Cross’ letter; the original was not found]; J. Ray Matlock to George Lynn Cross, July 2, 1948 (fourth quotation); Walter W. Kraft to George Lynn Cross, July 1, 1948 (fifth and sixth quotations); Charles F. Daily to George Lynn Cross, June 30, 1948 (seventh through ninth quotations); all in Folder “Athletics (#2),” Box 38, Cross Presidential Papers.

to put the problem to rest, Wilkinson was rather indifferent. He had already booked up the 1949 and 1950 schedules, and only the first Saturday of the 1951 season remained open. While he preferred a softer opponent for that weekend — “I believe we would be able to schedule William and Mary if we so desired,” he told Cross — he was willing to hold that date open for Tulsa, but only after receiving the Regents’ approval first. Their reaction was tepid, at best. So far as they were concerned, he could go ahead and schedule Tulsa if he wanted, but, as Cross informed him, they would consent to “only one game and not a series.” Moreover, if the Golden Hurricane were added to the 1951 schedule, the Regents demanded that Wilkinson publicly “make clear the fact that additional games are not contemplated and that Tulsa does not appear on our schedule for at least the following two years.” In other words, they didn’t want to shoulder the burden of a Tulsa series. Wilkinson, then, considered it the better part of wisdom to sign that deal with William and Mary.¹⁷

The general feeling amongst OU supporters was that, if the Sooners were to schedule and play an in-state opponent like Tulsa, and then lose, “past accomplishment” under Wilkinson, as one fan wrote Cross, “would be nullified to a large degree.” Besides, by this point, OU’s national profile had risen so high that it outgrew a need for playing teams like Tulsa. After the Santa Clara letdown, the Sooners did not lose another game in 1948 — a winning streak that included their first win over Texas since 1939 — and the 1949 squad proved even better, going undefeated and ending the season ranked second only to Frank Leahy’s formidable Notre Dame Fighting Irish. “We are now in the ‘big-time’ over in Norman,” this same fan asserted, “and in better position to get some of the best football

¹⁷ C. B. Wilkinson to George Lynn Cross, April 2, 1949, Folder “Athletics (#4),” Box 39 (first and fourth quotations); Johnson D. Hill to Joseph A. Brandt, December 2, 1943, Folder “Athletic Council,” Box 1 (second quotation); Minutes of the Athletic Council Meeting, March 23, 1946, Folder “Athletic Council (2),” Box 13 (third quotation); George Lynn Cross to C. B. Wilkinson, April 14, 1949, Folder “Athletics (#4),” Box 39 (fifth and sixth quotations); all in Cross Presidential Papers. See also Minutes of a Meeting of the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents, April 13, 1949, OUBRO.

teams in the country on our schedule and we should use this to cash in on our opportunities to schedule major games through the next few years.” As if heeding such counsel, Wilkinson inked a two-game deal with Notre Dame athletics director “Moose” Krause in January 1950. The Sooners were set to play in South Bend in 1952, and the Irish would travel to Norman in 1953 — a game that, Cross predicted, “should be an unforgettable thrill for Oklahomans.” The mere scheduling of Notre Dame was, once again, interpreted as a sign of just how surely the state itself was entering the main currents of national life. “It is a matter of pride to all reasonable Oklahomans,” the editors of *The Daily Oklahoman* exclaimed, “that their football favorites have won so much acclaim that the No. 1 team of the country has accepted them as a worthy antagonist.” Indeed, “to win the privilege of playing in such a contest is the next [best] thing to winning the contest itself.”¹⁸

Yet some Tulsans, like *Tulsa Tribune* editor Jenkin Lloyd Jones, wouldn’t let the issue die. He implored the Athletic Council — to no avail — to reject Wilkinson’s nationalized schedule and contract a series with Tulsa at the earliest possible date. But the Sooners’ extended winning streak, and their highest national ranking ever, only ratified Wilkinson’s national ambitions, making true believers out of nearly everyone associated with the program. About a month-and-a-half after the public announcement of the deal with Notre Dame, Athletic Council secretary Ronald B. Shuman responded to Jones’ entreaties, cementing Wilkinson’s national scheme in his outright rejection of a Tulsa series. “Of our ten games” each season, he noted, “six are Conference ‘musts.’ Two more” — Texas and Oklahoma A&M — “represent traditional rivalries of some forty years standing,” leaving

¹⁸ H. B. Dowell to George Lynn Cross, May 27, 1949, Folder “Athletics (#4),” Box 39, Cross Presidential Papers (first and second quotations); “Notre Dame to Oppose Oklahoma In 1952-53 Football Seasons,” *NYT*, January 18, 1950, 43 (third quotation); “But Three Years To Go,” *DO*, January 19, 1950, 16 (fourth and fifth quotations).

“opportunity to schedule other teams only for two games.” Moreover, as OU was concluding “our friendly rivalry” with Texas A&M in favor of playing Boston College, the councilmen were of the same mind as Wilkinson on this score: “football games with teams from outside this general area offer players a chance to match themselves with the best from other regions and produce favorable publicity both for the state and the School.” “We feel fortunate in having scheduled . . . Notre Dame,” an opponent “which will offer our players and loyal supporters the intersectional competition which lends variety.” With these “limited schedule possibilities” in mind, Shuman maintained, it “does not appear practicable for the University to meet an additional sectional team in the next few years.” Oklahoma football now belonged to a nation and not a region alone.¹⁹

The curious part of all this talk about intersectional opposition was how Shuman never quite grounded the Sooners in any particular region: their southern rivals and Big Seven conference mates were nearly indistinguishable. Perhaps such a lack of differentiation was reflexive — a consequence of functioning perpetually within that liminal space separating South from Midwest. Yet this issue was more problematic than a tricky rhetorical construction. If the Sooners aligned themselves with their Big Seven brethren, then Texas and Oklahoma A&M (*and* Tulsa) became intersectional foes; if OU positioned itself as a southern team, then it undercut its own rationale for holding membership in the Big Seven. Rather, by following Wilkinson’s national strategy, Oklahoma transformed itself into a kind of transregional powerhouse — in the mold of Notre Dame and the service academies — that blended readily into any section yet defied any ready association. A national championship in 1950 seemed to confirm, once and for all, that the Sooners could transcend regional ties, from whatever

¹⁹ Ronald B. Shuman to Jenkin Lloyd Jones, March 2, 1950, Folder “Football 1950,” Box 77, Cross Presidential Papers (quotations).

direction they came, and compete as a truly national team. Some supporters believed OU should take a page from Notre Dame's playbook and recast itself as a major independent. "O. U. can be a great team as a free lance, like Notre Dame," a fan from Durant conjectured. And why not? After all, "we have the best team in the nation and the very best coach."²⁰

Wilkinson could do no wrong in the eyes of most fans — the best thing to happen to the state since statehood. Singing his praises in a resolution in honor of the national title, Oklahoma's House of Representatives lauded how "these historical accomplishments brought great publicity, praise, fame, and respect from the whole nation upon all of Oklahoma." An Oklahoma City ad man, who professed to "know nothing about football," lobbied Cross to "give Wilkinson a boost in salary" since "he deserves it and he has more than repaid in kind through advertising this state." There was likewise a sense that Wilkinson — who one of his players, a part-Cherokee guard named Joe Henderson, privately dubbed "The Great White Father" — and the success of his teams not only allowed white Oklahomans to take renewed pride in a more robust state identity, but assume their place in a white American mainstream. "Not too many years ago," an Oklahoma City banker wrote Wilkinson, "on a national basis, Oklahoma was regarded as an oil field and filled with tenant cotton farmers and blanket Indians." "In changing the national reputation of Oklahoma," Wilkinson and his players vouched for the rest of white America that whites in Oklahoma were much more than the lowest-of-the-low "Okies." Indeed, with each successive victory, the Sooners embodied an idealized whiteness, both on and off the field. It was accepted as the gospel truth by Sooner fans that, in the words of an Oklahoma City businessman, "Wilkinson selects clean-cut, high-class boys who are keen-minded,

²⁰ Richard C. Smith to Roy Turner, March 5, 1950, Folder 6, Box 26, Roy Turner Papers, OSA (fourth and fifth quotations).

alert, quick, fast, ambitious and honorable” — not “a bunch of low mentality ruffians.” Or, as another fan recounted of a Nebraska woman’s response to the seeming wholesomeness of the Sooner squad, “they looked like fine young Americans that she would be glad to have in her home.” To a former head of OU’s alumni association, they were “genuine 100 percent American boys” who were destined to “become fine citizens in a clean section of the country.” Clean as a whistle and white as could be: the perfect picture of middle America.²¹

At the same time that Wilkinson was building Oklahoma into a national powerhouse, both the university and his program would mutually discover that playing the nation’s best teams, and being able to relate to that nation, weren’t the same thing. In the eyes of its Big Seven brethren, OU’s insistence upon the racial segregation of black athletes in the late forties evinced how futile its efforts had been to scrub its program clean of the vestiges of southern racism. The Sooners scored national dominance, yes, but on their terms alone. A permanent place on the national stage, however, would require a much greater feat than posting one win after another.

II

While a handful of black athletes had appeared in segregated Oklahoma before the early fifties, none of them were as good, or as universally acclaimed, as Drake’s All-American halfback Johnny Bright. The nation’s top rusher in 1949, as a sophomore, no less, Bright duplicated this feat in 1950, and, five

²¹ Enrolled House Concurrent Resolution, No. 1, January 9, 1951, Folder “Football 1950,” Box 77 (first quotation); Middlesworth, “On the Level,” *DO*, January 6, 1949, 44 (second and third quotations); Dent, *The Undefeated*, 62 (fourth quotation); W. D. Grisso to C. B. Wilkinson, November 25, 1955, Folder “Athletic Dept. — General,” Box 33 (fifth and sixth quotations); L. C. Mersfelder to George Lynn Cross, November 30, 1955 (seventh and eighth quotations); Errett Newby to George Lynn Cross, November 28, 1955 (ninth quotation); both in Folder “Football — General,” Box 134; all in Cross Presidential Papers; John Cronley, “Once Over Lightly,” *DO*, December 28, 1951, 27 (tenth and eleventh quotations).

games into the 1951 season, he was ready to do it again when the undefeated Bulldogs traveled to Stillwater on October 20 to take on their Missouri Valley Conference rival, Oklahoma A&M. His skill and versatility in directing Drake's single-wing attack would have naturally made him a target of any opponent's defensive gameplan; the color of his skin, particularly in a place as segregated as A&M, simply made him a target. Indeed, on Drake's first play from scrimmage, Bright lined up over center at quarterback. Taking the snap, he faked to his right, handing the ball off to halfback Gene Macomber, who ran off left tackle for a 19-yard gain. Everyone on the field — even Bright himself, pausing in the backfield — watched Macomber scamper forward, taking no notice of the headlong charge of A&M lineman Wilbanks Smith. Recklessly pursuing the Drake star, Smith blindsided him from his right, smashing a forearm into his jaw — delivering this blow with such force that Bright's helmet rattled forward over his eyes as he slumped back on the turf. Laying motionless for a few moments, Bright staggered to his feet, went back over center, and tossed a 61-yard touchdown strike to the Bulldogs' other halfback, Jim Pilkington, before exiting the contest with a broken jaw. "After Johnny left the game," Drake co-captain Bob Binette observed, "Smith quit rushing. He'd drop on his knees at the line of scrimmage almost every time." Bright believed the Aggies intended to knock him out of the game: "No matter what I did, somebody hit me. I remember getting fists in the face on the first two plays we had the ball." A few A&M students even informed a Des Moines journalist that Aggie head coach J. B. Whitworth exhorted his team in practice all week to "get that nigger."²²

Get him they did. And, minus its best player, Drake's offense sputtered, falling 27-14. Had *Des Moines Register* photographers Don Ultang and John Robinson not shot the opening minutes

²² "Injury to Johnny Bright Draws Protest from Drake," *CT*, October 22, 1951, C1 (first and second quotations); Dave Hanson, "Bright not bitter: Blow helped clean up sports," *Des Moines Tribune*, November 13, 1980, 21, 24 (third quotation).

of the contest, Smith's assault on Bright would have been dismissed as just another dirty play. Their machine gun sequence ran above the fold on the *Register's* front page the following morning, which was promptly picked up by wire services and appeared in almost every paper in the country. A few weeks later, *Life* magazine republished their photos, giving this incident still wider notice. With this evidence in hand, there was no doubt in the minds of Drake officials that Bright had been a victim of "vicious, malicious, and intentional attacks." "I'll be very interested," head coach Warren Gaer declared, "in seeing what Coach Whitworth will do about Smith after he sees pictures like this." But, Whitworth insisted, "our boys didn't gang up on anyone." His denials further fueled the outrage that swept the nation: the A&M campus was overwhelmed with letters and telegrams from every corner of the country — North, South, East, and West — denouncing what, from the looks of it, was a deliberate and coordinated act of racial violence. "If a Negro was unwelcome," a *New Yorker* wrote, "your school should have had the courage to say so. That in itself would have been scarcely American in attitude, but would be far less shameful than the maiming attack." A Des Moines couple called it "a travesty on our way of life that officials should have to watch your players and players of other schools which practice racial discrimination, just because they are playing against a star who happens to be a negro." A writer from San Francisco asserted that "this incident is just one more reason why the rest of the Nation regards 'Okies' as less than trash." "The thoroughly disgusting exhibition of barbaric cruelty" illustrated by Smith's hit, he claimed, "is a serious blow to American sportsmanship, as well as a black mark on Oklahoma."²³

²³ "Board Awaits Oklahoma A.M. Bright Defense," *CT*, October 29, 1951, C4 (first quotation); "Injury to Johnny Bright Draws Protest from Drake," C1 (second quotation); "Coach to Watch Movies Tuesday," *DO*, October 22, 1951, 25 (third quotation); Lewis B. Wollman to Henry G. Bennett, November 2, 1951, Folder 11 (fourth quotation); Mr. and Mrs. L. W. Matthews to Henry G. Bennett, October 21, 1951, Folder 9 (fifth quotation); N. Herr to Henry G. Bennett, November 7, 1951, Folder 10 (sixth and seventh quotations); all in Box 18, OSU President's Papers, OSU.

Most white Oklahomans feared as much. Smith's action not only shattered Bright's jaw, but their hopeful myth of national convergence. "Oklahoma's attitude on color has long been a disgrace to the decent parts of America," a man in Los Angeles railed, and many whites worried that Smith's behavior would serve as a reminder of their state's ties to southern racism. It was "a matter of real concern" for the editors of *The Daily Oklahoman* that "the country at large" should regard the state's football fortunes as "tainted with thuggery." "If it shall be established that Oklahoma athletes have disregarded the rules of true sportsmanship," they declared, then "the whole state will suffer." In turn, that old pang of shame flared up once again. A native Oklahoman, then living in Larondale, California, told Whitworth that "Okla. residents and former residents are ashamed to have a coach in their state who would deny such actions by a player under him in [the] face of the evidence at hand." Despite being "a staunch dyed-in-the-wool-Southerner who believes strongly in segregation," one A&M fan characterized Smith's attack on Bright as both "the sorriest brand of football [and] the saddest sportsmanship I've ever seen evidenced in the field of sports." A Tulsan appealed to Bright directly. "Please don't judge all Oklahomans by the actions of one man," he implored. "We feel the incident can be blamed on one player or one coach — you can take your choice, but I just wanted to let you know that as a humble Oklahoman I am very sorry that it happened and please do not carry hate in your heart for all of us as a result of the wrong doing of one person." After all, "the citizens of our state are incapable of condoning this type of despicable sportsmanship." Another group of Aggie "sympathizers" hammered A&M with the ultimate indictment: "we have never heard of a Bud Wilkerson [*sic*] coached team using the disgraceful tactics of Smith."²⁴

²⁴ F. J. Ryan to Henry G. Bennett, postcard, November 3, 1951 (first quotation); H. L. Rosenbluth, et al, to Henry G. Bennett, November 8, 1951 (ninth and tenth quotations); both in Folder 1, Box 19; "This Hurts All Oklahoma," *DO*, October 26, 1951, 12 (second and third quotations); Roy Fulwinder to J. B. Whitworth, undated

It was justly inconceivable that Wilkinson — whose sense of “sportsmanship and fair play,” one OU undergraduate later asserted, acted as “a guide for youngsters all over the nation” — would ever authorize such aggressive tactics be used against an opposing player, regardless of their color. But his program was not without sin on matters of race. In May 1946, five months after Wilkinson became Tatum’s top assistant, Athletic Council president Walter Kraft attended the Big Six spring meetings in Lincoln, Nebraska, with one objective in mind: preventing a wave of recently-discharged black veterans from flooding onto conference teams. Aided by Sam Shirky, his Missouri counterpart, Kraft browbeat the four other faculty representatives, whose institutions each admitted African Americans, until they caved to Oklahoma’s will. The bylaw they approved, *unanimously*, was buried deep inside the Big Six rule book, written in such a way as to obscure its intent. “The personnel of athletic squads,” it stated, “shall be determined in accordance with the laws of the sovereign state,” with “the personnel of visiting squads . . . selected as to conform with any restrictions imposed upon a host institution by the sovereign authority.” With such “intense interest . . . in the negro question,” Kraft advised Cross, “we all agreed” that, in games scheduled for Ames, Lawrence, Lincoln, and Manhattan, African Americans could play; but, in Norman and Columbia, where *de jure* segregation prevailed, they were out. This boldly drawn color line had its effect: why recruit black athletes if they couldn’t play in every game or in every venue? It might not have been a blow to the jaw, but this bylaw knocked African Americans out of conference contests all the same.²⁵

[circa October 1951], Folder 9 (fourth quotation); Herbert M. Jones to Henry G. Bennett, November 2, 1951, Folder 11 (fifth and sixth quotations); J. M. Slack to Johnny Bright, October 25, 1951, Folder 10 (seventh and eighth quotations); all in Box 18; all in OSU President’s Papers.

²⁵ This rule was found in Article III, Section 5, of the Big Six bylaws. Hugh R. Taylor, Letter to the Editor, *DO*, April 17, 1955, 26 (first and second quotations); *Rules and Regulations Governing Athletics and All Participation of the Missouri Valley Intercollegiate Athletic Association*, 1948, Folder “Athletics (#2),” Box 38 (third quotation); Walter W. Kraft to George Lynn Cross, May 20, 1946, Folder “Athletics,” Box 13 (fourth and

Kraft had plenty of reason to worry that some among OU's Big Six brethren were already contemplating the day when black athletes would join their teams. Nearly a month before the Lincoln meeting, Kansas athletics director E. C. Quigley announced, to overwhelming opposition, that a "gentleman's agreement" between Big Six members would prohibit a black runner named Wesley Elliott from competing in the annual Kansas Relays on campus. KU's All-Student Council, as well as a petition signed by more than 1000 undergraduates, decried the league's practice of "racial exclusion." Similar protest against this prohibition on black participation rippled across the student bodies at Iowa State, K-State, and Nebraska, focusing considerable public attention upon a practice that had hitherto gone unnoticed. To a certain degree, then, Kraft simply persuaded his fellow faculty representatives to formally encode this color bar into the conference rules, giving it an air of legitimacy that, to his mind, lifted it above the unseemly depths of a "gentleman's agreement." And, for him, there was a real distinction. Calling it a "gentleman's agreement" proved a "complete misstatement" about what it intended to do; and, since no one in the press understood it, he instructed Cross huffily, "it would be well to make no statements about this question."²⁶

Any way one sliced it, the basic purpose of this bylaw — to prevent the Sooners from facing black players — was a repudiation of the university's past practice. After all, as Hal Middlesworth told his *Daily Oklahoman* readers days after the Lincoln meeting, "it won't be exactly a novelty" for

fifth quotations); both in Cross Presidential Papers.

²⁶ "Kansas Negro Athlete Barred From Relays," *DO*, April 20, 1946, 23; "Kansas Students Advocate Negroes in Big Six Sports," *DO*, April 12, 1946, 51 (first quotation); "Writes Rule on Negroes," *NYT*, May 19, 1946, S2; Walter W. Kraft to George Lynn Cross, May 20, 1946, Folder "Athletics," Box 13, Cross Presidential Papers (second and third quotations). On the characterization of the rule as a "gentleman's agreement," see, for instance, "Big Six Negro Rule Is Aired," *DO*, May 19, 1946, 25. On Elliott and the Kansas Relays, see Kristine M. McCusker, "Interracial Communities and Civil Rights Activism in Lawrence, Kansas, 1945-1948," *The Historian* 61 (1999): 783-800, esp. 793.

an Oklahoma team “to crouch down before a Negro lineman.” On October 7, 1939, for instance, OU traveled to Chicago to meet Northwestern, whose left end, Jim Smith, would torch the Sooners for a 38-yard reception right before the half. “Coaches say the boys confess they never faced a finer, more sportsmanlike performer than Smith,” Middlesworth reported. But that was in Illinois. A Smith couldn’t appear at Owen Field in Norman or, for that matter, any other major venue in Oklahoma — the postwar era had already proven this point. Opening up its 1945 season at home at Skelley Stadium, Tulsa hosted a talented but shorthanded Wichita squad that was forced to leave “two Negro halfbacks who might have helped them at home.” In advance of their October 12, 1946, tilt, Mose Sims, athletics director at Oklahoma City University, demanded that Fresno State bench its two black stars, Millard Mitchell and Jack Kelley, when the Bulldogs visited Taft Stadium. Both athletes made the trip to the capital city, and suited up, but they watched helplessly from the sideline as “the Chiefs opened their merciless parade of touchdowns,” marching their way to a 46-7 win. While Fresno State officials claimed that they were led to believe that Mitchell and Kelley could play as late as the week of the game, Sims countered that their participation was never anything but non-negotiable. “Colored boys are not allowed to play south of the Mason-Dixon line,” he insisted.²⁷

Of course, it depended on which color those boys were. Black athletes were forbidden, but, this being the old Indian Territory, the appearance of red ones was positively prosaic. On Sims’ own team, one of the offensive linemen clearing a path for this “parade of touchdowns” was a towering

²⁷ Middlesworth, “On the Level,” *DO*, May 22, 1946, 32 (first and second quotations); Middlesworth, “On the Level,” *DO*, September 25, 1945, 15 (third quotation); Laymond Crump, “Chiefs Wallop Fresno, 46-7, For Fifth Win,” *DO*, October 13, 1946, 27 (fourth quotation); “Misunderstanding Over Negroes Denied,” *DO*, October 10, 1946, 47 (fifth quotation). On the OU-Northwestern game, see Wilfrid Smith, “Northwestern, Wisconsin, Minnesota Lose,” *CT*, October 8, 1939, B1, B6. It did not escape anyone’s notice at the time that Smith was “probably the first colored man an Oklahoma team ever opposed in football action.” See Harold Keith, “Our Sooners Must Be Ready, Long John Is In A Sour Mood,” *DO*, October 7, 1939, 10.

Osage from Fairfax named Tommy Tallchief — who, just one month before the Fresno State game, transferred to OCU from OU, where he anchored the Sooner line in 1945. Looking back still further, to that Northwestern game of 1939, starting at quarterback that afternoon for the Sooners was Jack Jacobs, a Creek from Muskogee, who was OU's last gridiron star before the war. Indeed, Jacobs and Tallchief were but two in a long line of Native Americans who, since 1899, were invited to "avail themselves" of "the benefits and advantages of a first class education" by studying at the university. As the 1940s drew to a close, nine percent of OU's 12,000 enrolled students — 1024 undergraduates, representing 15 different tribes — could claim Indian ancestry.²⁸

Such hospitality (as patronizing as it might have been) was altogether absent when, after the war, the first African American applicants began their legal struggle to enter the university. Kraft's frantic bid to keep black athletes off conference teams might well have been motivated by a similar desperation to avoid any embarrassment that could diminish the state's defense of separate but equal. Straddling a politically perilous line, many OU leaders felt that the basic functions of their institution — to provide both education and opportunity — were held hostage by white segregationists in the state legislature. While OU "realizes its obligation to serve all interests in the State impartially within the law," Cross protested to state attorney general Mac Q. Williamson in February 1946, "it does not wish to curtail possible services to citizens in the State merely on the grounds of prejudice." While pledging his "desire to adhere strictly" to "the letter of the Oklahoma law and to the spirit of the policy back of the law," he nevertheless believed that OU was being placed in an untenable position:

²⁸ Harold Keith, "Sooner Tackle Wields Mighty Pen on Either Friend or Foe," *DO*, November 15, 1945, 15; "Two Sooners Join Chiefs," *DO*, September 18, 1946, 35; Minutes of the Regents of the University of Oklahoma, August 1, 1899, OUBRO (quotations); "OU Enrolment Includes 1,024 Indian Students," *DO*, April 2, 1949, 26; "Record Enrolment Of 45,000 Seen At State Colleges," *DO*, September 12, 1948, 96. These enrollment figures are based upon the numbers supplied for the 1948-49 academic year — the last full term of the decade.

to serve as standard bearer and rallying post for the racial politics of white Oklahoma — essentially, the same aspirational investment made in the fortunes of Sooner football. The university, much like its football program, *belonged* to whites. Sending a petition in defense of “*our* Oklahoma University” to U. S. congressman Lyle Boren, a group of white citizens in Seminole asked for his “wholehearted and earnest endeavor to keep the Negroes out of our schools and universities.” “We do not mean to keep the Negro race in ignorance,” they assured Boren, “but rather to keep them segregated from the Caucasian Race.” Ineffably, indulging these racial attitudes wasn’t without consequence for OU. One prospective freshman from Bartlesville was stricken with a “sudden realization of its incapability to give a modern, American education.” “When our own educational institutions are governed by a prejudice and nazi-like tradition,” he wrote Oklahoma governor Robert Kerr, “how can we expect them to give a full, liberal, broad-minded education to students in attendance?”²⁹

“Oklahoma has been a progressive state since the date of its inception,” this student asserted, “but now it would seem we are becoming decadent upon certain issues.” Indeed, at the very moment white Oklahomans so feverishly sought to inject themselves and their state back into the patterns of national life, he argued, “what a poor example the State of Oklahoma is setting” for a nation that was “so earnestly endeavoring to achieve freedom throughout the world” by denying it to its own black citizens. An example, in truth, that caused students at the four integrated Big Six institutions, as well as Colorado, which was invited to join in March 1947, to regard Oklahoma as a university that was thoroughly out of step with their own values. By championing this bylaw, OU, in their estimation,

²⁹ George Lynn Cross to Mac Q. Williamson, February 11, 1946, Folder “Negroes,” Box 16, Cross Presidential Papers (first and second quotations); Mrs. C. L. Thompson, et al, to Lyle H. Boren, January 19, 1946, Folder 8, Box 11, Boren Collection (third through fifth quotations; emphasis added to third quotation); Winston Weathers to Robert S. Kerr, January 15, 1946, Folder 22, Box 14, Gubernatorial Series, Kerr Collection (sixth and seventh quotations).

wittingly advanced an image of its state as a place blithely complicit with the vicissitudes of white supremacy universally associated with the South. “If we are to have a university worthy of the name,” an editorial in CU’s campus daily, *Silver and Gold*, declared shortly after the invitation, “it means that when a hand is extended for a ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ — a white gentlemen’s agreement — we say, ‘No, thanks. We’re not having any.’” Projecting upon this bylaw the specter of southern racism, then, student organizations at Kansas persuaded conference leaders, in that same spring of 1947, to reject a bid to further expand their league to include Oklahoma A&M “on the ground that the school discriminates against Negroes in intercollegiate athletics.” In Oklahoma City, Middlesworth was incredulous that the Big Six would “ignore the school which could do it a great deal of good” on account of a few students’ opposition to segregation. “There are Negro students in school at Kansas. There are none in school at Oklahoma A&M. But there are no Negroes on Kansas’ athletic teams? Now, who is discriminating?” Their own university agreed to these rules, he noted, and they could push to reverse them. But A&M represented one southern member too many for the recently-enlarged Big Seven. Although “the color question had no bearing on our decision,” KU faculty representative W. W. Davis explained, a majority of the membership felt that “we should go slow in expanding all over the map” — like, say, pushing any deeper south.³⁰

The cultural geography which defined the association of these six institutions always proved complicated, confused, conflicted. Shoving its borders further west, to the very foothills of the Rocky Mountains, the addition of Colorado only exacerbated the issue. But an abortive play to rename the

³⁰ Winston Weathers to Robert S. Kerr, January 15, 1946, Folder 22, Box 14, Gubernatorial Series, Kerr Collection (first and second quotations); “A Tempest in the Big Six Teapot,” *Silver and Gold*, undated clipping [circa March 1947], Folder 1, Box 29, Central Administrative Records: President’s Office, UCB (third quotation); “Big Six Delays Action on Bid By Cowboys,” *DO*, March 30, 1947, 53 (fourth quotation); Middlesworth, “On the Level,” *DO*, April 12, 1947, 17 (fifth and sixth quotations); “Kansas Throws Block at Aggies,” *DO*, April 12, 1947, 17 (seventh and eighth quotations).

league the Midwest Conference in the wake of this expansion manifested a deeper truth about its core membership: Iowa State, Kansas, K-State, Nebraska — they were, to one degree or another, as convinced that their conference was *midwestern* as the seven members of the Southwest Conference were that theirs was *southern*. This amounted to a real problem for OU. “Geographically,” Kraft told Cross, “we would be better located in the Southwest Conference.” He pleaded with Cross to support Oklahoma A&M’s application from “a selfish standpoint”: “it would further strengthen the University of Oklahoma’s position in the conference voting and would tend to offset the affect of Colorado’s recent admission.” The Aggies would vote like the Sooners, it was assumed, particularly on race, which might, with Missouri’s continued assistance, establish a voting bloc powerful enough to counterbalance any changes caused by one more integrated university joining the fold.³¹

Yet the immediate threat didn’t emanate from the newest member, but one of the oldest. By the fall, with the faculty representatives’ winter meetings looming on the horizon in mid-December, the Cardinal Guild, an honor fraternity at Iowa State, “reopened the question of discrimination,” the *Daily Nebraskan* reported breathlessly in November, “by passing a resolution at their last meeting favoring equal opportunity for individuals, regardless of race, color, or creed to participate in the athletic contests” sponsored by the conference. H. D. Bergman, Iowa State’s faculty athletic chair, pledged that he would present their resolution at the upcoming league meeting. His promise sparked the interest of student leaders at Nebraska. Harold Mozer, NU’s student council president, lauded the Iowa State proposal, but noted how his organization passed a similar resolution the previous academic year to no avail. What was necessary for such a motion to finally succeed, in his mind, was

³¹ “Colorado is Admitted to the Big Six,” *DO*, March 2, 1947, 47; “Big Six To Try Again in May for New Label,” *DO*, March 6, 1947, 33; Walter W. Kraft to George Lynn Cross, November 15, 1948, Folder “Football 1948 (#1),” Box 45, Cross Presidential Papers (quotations).

a strategy “for actually eliminating the current practices rather than merely pass[ing] resolutions year after year.” Accordingly, he called a summit of all the student governments in the Big Six and at Colorado for November 29 and 30 in Lincoln to “discuss Big Six racial discrimination.” In so doing, Mozer refashioned Nebraska as the primary locus for protesting this bylaw — a place where students throughout Big Six could “work out the controversial issue.” And the determination with which he and the student government dealt with this matter won them real support on campus. NU’s own faculty representative, Earl Fullbrook, proclaimed that “I would like to see the whole thing worked out to see that there is no discrimination against any student.” A *Daily Nebraskan* poll found that 90 percent of the student body “generally favor[ed]” overturning the rule. And several football players even informed the student daily that “there is a great deal of sentiment on the football team against the current discriminatory practices.”³²

Ten days before representatives from league institutions — Missouri, yes; Oklahoma, no — arrived on campus, Mozer upped the ante. By a vote of 17-5, he shepherded a resolution through the student government that advocated Nebraska’s “withdrawal from the Big Six unless the clause which prohibits a visiting team playing Negroes at southern fields is removed from conference regulations.” At *southern* fields: with this move, Nebraska drew a proverbial line in the sand, dividing the conference between those members that favored integration and those that did not. Never did Mozer intend for the Cornhuskers to abandon the Big Six, but, rather, to halt the “barring of Negroes from varsity athletics at Missouri and Oklahoma.” The problem for Oklahoma was that, by the time of this

³² “Iowa State For Big Six Rule Change,” *DN*, November 14, 1947, 1 (first quotation), 4 (second quotation); “Big 6 Leaders to Confer On Racial Discrimination,” *DN*, November 16, 1947, 1 (third quotation), 2 (fourth and sixth quotations); “Students Support Council’s Stand on Discrimination,” *DN*, November 23, 1947, 1 (fifth quotation).

summit in Lincoln, it stood alone on the side of segregation: Missouri's own student government cast its lot with the league's integration forces, calling on its administration to allow "any student in good standing" at a Big Six institution "to participate in competitive events at the University of Missouri." *Daily Nebraskan* editor Jack Hill, who had once expressed skepticism that Mozer might move either Mizzou or OU representatives to a change of heart, happily conceded that the meeting "has partially achieved its goal" before it was even called to order. "While this does not completely eliminate discrimination," the news out of Columbia was "a big step in the right direction." "Oklahoma," he beamed, "now stands as the only school in the Big Six which remains silent on the racial question."³³

That silence wouldn't last long. Irritated by student foment across the league, Kraft peevishly called Mozer's actions, in particular, "unfair." "No racial discrimination rules exist in the Big Six," he brayed in an Associated Press interview. "Missouri and Oklahoma are the only schools that do not allow Negroes to play on their athletic teams, and that is something that is out of the hands of both schools' officials — since the states themselves enforce segregation laws." Rather, the bylaw represented "an understanding . . . between sister schools" in which those members "which allow Negroes to play on their teams agree to respect the laws which prohibit another school using them." For his part, Cross, who harbored "little sympathy" with the idea of segregation, agreed with Kraft that their institution was being targeted as a source and symbol of southern racism within the league. "Unfortunately for the university," he observed, "only a relatively few people appeared to have an understanding of the complicated legal aspects of the struggle" that kept OU segregated. "Blame was

³³ "Council Adopts Resolution On Racial Discrimination," *DN*, November 20, 1947, 1 (first quotation); "Racial Issue Irks Husker Students," *DO*, November 20, 1947, 22 (second quotation); "Missouri Supports Stand of Council," *DN*, November 25, 1947, 1 (third quotation); Jack Hill, "End of Jim Crow?," *DN*, November 26, 1947, 2 (fourth through sixth quotations). On Hill's skepticism, see "Sleeping Dog . . .," *DN*, November 19, 1947, 2. On the Mizzou student government action, see "SGA Will Poll Racial Question," *Missouri Student*, December 17, 1947, 1.

seldom placed where it belonged — on the Oklahoma legislature for not rescinding the offending state laws” that sustained the practice “and the Supreme Court of the United States for not declaring them unconstitutional.” And, yet, for Mozer and the other student leaders gathered in Lincoln in late November, they knew precisely where the blame should fall — as loudly and humiliatingly on OU as possible. Their summit produced few results, aside from another high-profile resolution calling for an end to this rule that no less than the *New York Times* praised as one of “the straws in the wind showing that we are making progress in breaking down the barriers of racial bias in this country.” Filled with the spirit of this political crusade, Nebraska chancellor Reuben Gustavson proclaimed that it was “quite possible that the Big Six athletic representatives might vote to drop Oklahoma from the conference if that school declines to go along with the expressed opinion of the other member institutions in abolishing all rules which bar Negroes from participation in athletic events.”³⁴

Gustavson couldn’t have been more wrong. In their reactions to this growing controversy, Kraft’s fellow faculty representatives — who were the center of gravity in league politics — signaled that segregated teams were a concession they were still only too happy to make in order to keep a giant like OU docile. “Negro students should be permitted to play the same as any other qualified students,” H. H. King of K-State argued, “except against the Universities of Missouri and Oklahoma on their home grounds.” Those who had encouraged past student action, like Bergman at Iowa State, now demurred: “these are matters for discussion in executive session of the faculty representatives.” And Walter Franklin refused to tip his hand before Colorado became a voting member on December

³⁴ “Kraft Comes To Sooners Defense,” *DO*, November 21, 1947, 26 (first through third quotations); George Lynn Cross, *Blacks in White Colleges: Oklahoma’s Landmark Cases* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 78 (fourth quotation), 122 (fifth and sixth quotations); “Against Racial Bias,” *NYT*, November 21, 1947, 26 (seventh quotation); “Athletic Board To Meet Tonite,” *DN*, December 9, 1947, 1 (eighth quotation).

1. The matter, he wired the *Daily Nebraskan* staff, “involves a policy in which the U of C will make no comment except in a conference fac[ulty] meet[ing].” Yet, when he arrived in Kansas City to take his place among his new colleagues, he would quickly discover that, as the newest member, he was practically alone in opposing this bylaw, joined only by Earl Fullbrook of Nebraska in voting against the permanent tabling of any discussion of the resolution produced by Mozer’s summit. Bergman and King, as well as W. W. Davis of Kansas and Sam Shirky of Missouri, each sided with Kraft in stanching any challenge to the racial status quo. This small bit of parliamentary intrigue prepared the ground for the encompassing drama that was about to unfold in league circles over the next decade: the battle lines between Nebraska and Colorado, on one side, and Oklahoma, on the other, were now officially drawn, leaving the other four members to shuttle back and forth at will between doing what was in the best interests of the Big Seven (keeping the highly successful — and profitable — Sooners in the fold) and what was morally right (ending these discriminatory practices). Here, in this instance, they sided decisively with Oklahoma.³⁵

The alliance of Nebraska and Colorado was also built on the strong personal affinity between its respective institution heads: when Colorado president Robert Stearns temporarily left his post in 1943 for a civilian position in the Army Air Force, Gustavson, then a vice president at CU, became acting president until his return in 1945. (Stearns also knew a thing or two about football: his son-in-law was Colorado’s gridiron great, and future U. S. Supreme Court justice, Byron “Whizzer” White.) These two old friends now turned to one another for support. Seeing how “the only two men favoring

³⁵ “Big Six Faculty Delegates Decline to State Race Policy,” *DN*, November 21, 1947, 1 (first and second quotations); Walter Franklin to *Daily Nebraskan* staff, telegram, November 20, 1947 (third quotation); Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty Representatives of the M. V. I. A. A., December 12, 1947; both in Folder “Big 6 — Admission of Colorado Univ.,” Box 1, William H. Baughn Papers, UCB.

such a resolution” at the Kansas City meeting “were your representative and ours,” Stearns appealed to “my dear Gus” in mid-January 1948 that “I think you feel as strongly as I do” that “the present rule” should be repealed — especially “before next fall” when the Buffaloes would enter the league as a full-time member, playing regularly in Norman and Columbia. He was highly conscious that “it will become the youngest member of the Conference to initiate action which might disturb the present alignment,” but he didn’t care. Change needed to happen and, if the faculty representatives wouldn’t do something about it, then perhaps it fell to the institution heads — not only he and Gustavson, but Kansas chancellor Deane Malott, K-State president Milton Eisenhower, and Iowa State president Charles Friley — “to do some persuading” that would “convince the University of Missouri and the University of Oklahoma of the desirability of change.” For his part, Gustavson agreed, urging Stearns to “do everything that we can to get the rest of the boys to go along with us.” He even believed that they might be able to turn Missouri chancellor Frederick Middlebush: “I think that all we need to do is put a little pressure on and we will get there.” He began, instead, with Eisenhower, the general’s younger brother, an easier mark. “We ought to put our heads together,” he lobbied Eisenhower, “and see if something can’t be done” about “these things in our own backyard.” For his part, Eisenhower pledged “complete cooperation in trying to eliminate racial discrimination in athletics.” The problem was one which was to have a pressing urgency for K-State football. While “two colored boys on our freshman football squad” were “unfortunately . . . not good enough to make the varsity,” he confided that “we are prepared here to add colored boys to our varsity just as soon as we find ones who can meet the competition” — perhaps as soon as the 1949 season.³⁶

³⁶ Robert L. Stearns to R. G. Gustavson, January 12, 1948 (first through sixth quotations); R. G. Gustavson to Robert L. Stearns, January 15, 1948 (seventh and eighth quotations); both in Folder 2, Box 72, Central Administration Records: President’s Office; R. G. Gustavson to Milton S. Eisenhower, January 16, 1948

By early March, the institution heads of four of the five integrated league members met in Lawrence — Friley couldn't attend — to, in Stearns' words, "discuss matters of common concern." Middlebush was asked to attend, which he did, but Stearns did not extend his hand to Cross. Franklin worried what this symbolized, especially as an invitation might make Cross "much less apt to resent a meeting called for the consideration of this important and touchy problem." But Stearns "[did] not see how" Cross "could take exception," especially since word of the meeting was made public. These talks did produce a new proposed resolution — one that called for "each institution [to] determine for itself what players are qualified . . . irrespective of the place of competition." When the matter was brought before the faculty representatives for a vote that May, they again tabled any discussion. In fact, Gustavson vented to Stearns, Fullbrook informed him that "a number of the representatives indicated that this was the first time that they had heard anything about the problem" — particularly those from both Kansas institutions. "This amazes me," he railed to Malott. "Who's kidding who?"³⁷

The inability to affect any change supplied further evidence of Oklahoma's insurmountable influence over the faculty representatives. Since any and all rule changes had to go through them, the chance for a meaningful alteration in the racial status quo was hopeless. Some members felt bold enough to entertain the idea of playing black athletes against those members that allowed interracial competition. "If we have any Negro boys come out, and they're good enough, we'll play them," Iowa

(ninth and tenth quotations); Milton S. Eisenhower to R. G. Gustavson, January 21, 1948 (eleventh through thirteenth quotations); both in Folder "Intercollegiate Athletics, 1947-48," Box 3, Office of the Chancellor Records: Reuben G. Gustavson Series, UNL.

³⁷ Robert L. Stearns to Walter Franklin, February 19, 1948 (first and third quotations); Walter Franklin to Robert L. Stearns, February 18, 1948 (second quotation); Robert L. Stearns to Milton S. Eisenhower, et al, March 8, 1948 (fourth quotation); R. G. Gustavson to Robert L. Stearns, May 29, 1948 (fifth quotation); all in Folder, Box 72, Central Administration Records: President's Office; R. G. Gustavson to Deane W. Malott, May 29, 1948, Folder "Intercollegiate Athletics, 1947-1948," Box 3, Gustavson Series (sixth quotation). The minutes of this meeting of the faculty representatives has not survived.

State athletics director Louis Menze promised, “but not at Missouri and Oklahoma.” Even the small, internal signs of a thaw at OU came to naught. Its student government voted in January that “Negro athletes on other teams be allowed to compete against OU teams here.” In May, while the league’s faculty representatives were playing possum, the OU university senate followed suit, recommending that “any restrictions due to race in the participation of athletics at the University of Oklahoma be removed.” When Cross laid the matter the before the Regents, they “considered the recommendation but took no action.” No one, it seemed, wanted to touch the issue. Fullbrook brought the topic up once again amid the faculty representatives’ winter meetings in Kansas City in December, eliciting some tepid discussion this time around, but the result remained the same: “no action was taken.”³⁸

Nearly two months after these discussions, however, in February 1949, Oklahoma received its first application from an African American seeking to enter the university as an undergraduate. Mary Thelma Motley, the daughter of a prominent and affluent black family in Oklahoma City, made her application in person to the registrar’s office, on the ground that the state’s all-black institution, Langston, had neither equal facilities nor courses in her chosen major field of study, Pharmacy. Cross himself responded that her application presented “a new question” since all previous black applicants sought admission to graduate programs. In fact, the Regents had only days earlier decided to admit black graduate students whose areas of study weren’t available at Langston. These sudden shifts in the segregation practices at OU suggested an opening to some in the Big Seven. By April, K-State head coach Ralph Graham was willing to test the waters. Making good on Eisenhower’s predictions,

³⁸ “Students Poll Big Seven On Racial Ban,” *CD*, March 20, 1948, 10 (first quotation); “Lifting of Negro Ban to Aid Sooner Teams, Drake Asserts,” *DO*, January 10, 1948, 31 (second quotation); E. E. Hatfield to George Lynn Cross, May 17, 1948, Folder “Negroes,” Box 34 (third quotation); George Lynn Cross to E. E. Hatfield, May 28, 1948, Folder “Senate, University,” Box 36 (fourth quotation); both in Cross Presidential Papers; Minutes of the Meeting of Faculty Representatives of the M. V. I. A. A., December 3-4, 1948, Folder “Big 8 Minutes, 1948-1960,” Box 1, Baughn Papers (fifth quotation).

he announced at the end of spring practice that he expected to start a sophomore, Harold Robinson, at center during the upcoming season. “Until the Big Seven makes a definite ruling against it,” he declared, “Kansas State will use Negroes providing they are able to make the teams.” Moreover, he was confident Robinson would participate in every game, even on the road. And K-State’s schedule offered a real chance to break, or even erase, the color line in the states of Missouri and Oklahoma. Closing out their season with a two-game road stand, the Wildcats were slated to play at Tulsa on November 19; and, the next week, in Columbia against Missouri. In both cases, Graham admitted, “if Robinson is on our squad, it will be up to the home team to decide the matter.” But recent history was on his side in Tulsa: just a season earlier, on October 23, 1948, its officials allowed Nevada to suit up its four black players when it came to town — confirmation, Graham claimed, that “we can expect little interference with our team personnel.” Indeed, Robinson appeared without incident at Skelley Stadium, though his play was overshadowed by another athlete of color. The five touchdown passes hurled by the Golden Hurricane’s diminutive quarterback, Pete Annex, in a 48-27 victory elicited praise in the sports pages of *The Daily Oklahoman* the next morning. Unleashing “a brilliant aerial circus,” this “stout-hearted little Mexican” proved “as great as any” of the “current pro aces.”³⁹

There was no such distraction in Columbia, where, on Thanksgiving Day, Robinson became “the first man of his race” to face Missouri on its home field. The bylaw — and the racial segregation it sustained within the Big Seven — appeared to be a thing of the past as soon as he trotted out onto the field there at Memorial Stadium. *Perhaps*. Robinson played at Missouri, not OU; in Columbia,

³⁹ Motley was eventually denied admission on the ground that she had turned in her application too late to enroll for that academic year. “New Twist at OU: Negro Asks to Study as Undergraduate,” *DO*, February 1, 1949, 20 (first quotation); “Board Recommends End to Segregation in Graduate Schools,” *DO*, January 30, 1949, 1; “Kansas State May Use Negro Gridiron Star,” *DO*, April 13, 1949, 46 (second through fourth quotations); Laymond Crump, “Annex Throws to Five Scores As Hurricane Posts Fifth Win,” *DO*, November 20, 1949, 107 (fifth quotations).

not Norman. Until officials like Kraft finally relented, Oklahoma was regarded by the Big Seven brethren, Stearns explained in October 1949, as a place where “it would be difficult if not impossible to play colored members of our varsity teams.” Despite being “very hopeful that in a short time the laws of Oklahoma . . . will be amended to remove this discrimination against visiting teams,” there was some grumbling even on his own campus that not enough pressure was being applied on OU. Colorado, for one, continued to take “the evolutionary approach” of “doing everything in our power to help remove this discrimination against students of this and other conference universities.” But the mere fact that, on November 5, in Manhattan, the Sooners squared off against Robinson and his teammates without the slightest hint of protest at home in Oklahoma showed Cross that something had been stirring in “the minds of Oklahomans” since Motley’s application in February: “the state would need to adjust to the idea of having Negroes in previously all-white colleges and universities.” And, for that matter, on previously all-white teams in the Big Seven, too.⁴⁰

The Wilkinson era had come to a crossroads. In its first three seasons, at least, this epoch in Sooner football had been about redeeming white Oklahomans within the nation’s racial caste system — restoring their very whiteness — as well as reasserting their racial privilege at home in Oklahoma. So there was no limit to the irony that their godhead — Wilkinson himself — would, in June 1950, unravel this tapestry of pretense for gridiron greatness. Just days after the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that African Americans possessed a constitutional right to equally access the university’s educational facilities, thereby ending segregation in the state’s colleges and universities, Wilkinson was asked

⁴⁰ “Tiger Muzzles Wildcat, 34-27; Atkins is Star,” *DO*, November 25, 1949, 41 (first quotation); Robert L. Stearns, “Statement to be used by Don Shasteen in his editorial on race discrimination in Big Seven,” October 20, 1949, Folder 2, Box 72, Central Administration Records: President’s Office (second through fourth quotations); Cross, *Blacks in White Colleges*, 108 (fifth and sixth quotations).

about the potential repercussions for Sooner football. Boldly, frankly, he declared that it meant that black athletes would wear the Sooner uniform the same as white ones soon enough. When black undergraduates arrived on campus, any of them who wanted a try out would receive a free and fair shot at a place on his team “just like any other student.” The Great White Father would welcome athletes of color into his brood: word of this news was hailed in the black media from coast-to-coast as a sign that “jimcrow walls are generally tumbling.” It was suppressed by Oklahoma’s white press, where it might be considered sheer apostasy. No one wanted to think their God had betrayed them.⁴¹

If there were any lingering doubts about Wilkinson’s intentions, he dispelled them all that October, when K-State visited Norman. Never before had an integrated team been allowed to play inside Owen Field — a fact which made the sight of Robinson at center and another black athlete, a backup halfback named Hoyt Givens, all the more jarring. Whatever challenges their race posed that afternoon soon fell by the wayside when the Sooner defense began its relentless attack, limiting the Wildcats to a paltry 89 offensive yards. That was compared to their own jaw-dropping 555 — a lopsided margin matched only by the final score: 58-0. The game, declared *The Daily Oklahoman*, proved “nothing more than a good scrimmage for Bud Wilkinson’s fearsome warriors,” their 25th consecutive victory in a stretch of 31-straight. It was also a practice run for the future of Big Seven football, where, almost overnight, opposition coaches were trying to sign every athlete of color they could find to combat the speed of Wilkinson’s teams. When K-State returned to Norman on October 25, 1952, for instance, its secondary was anchored by Veryl Switzer, who, as a sophomore in 1951,

⁴¹ “Oklahoma Coach To Welcome Negro Athletes To Team,” *CD*, June 17, 1950, 16 (first quotation); “Oklahoma University Would Use Negro Players — If,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 15, 1950, B8; Marion E. Jackson, “Deep South Athletic Policies Affected By U. S. Court Rulings,” *ADW*, June 11, 1950, 7 (second quotation).

was named a second-team All-American by the Associated Press. “The greatest colored football player ever developed in the Big Seven” was how the pregame coverage described him; a dubious distinction, considering how he was just the third such athlete in conference history since the bylaw had been dispensed with. In spite of another miserable outing against the Sooners — 49-6 — K-State fans could cheer, individually, Switzer’s “defensive brilliance,” which “time after time kept OU’s wide game breaking all the way by refusing to let the ball-carrier outrun him to the sidelines.”⁴²

In many ways, the league brethren were caught trying to play OU — both on the field and off — like Switzer had: outmatched, desperate to keep pace, but doing all they could to prevent the Sooners from simply pulling away from them. And, as the lugubrious results of their encounters with the Big Red demonstrated — a 60-7 win over Kansas in 1948; a 55-14 romp versus Colorado in 1951; a 41-0 thrashing of Iowa State in 1952 — they couldn’t compete. *It wasn’t even close.* So they flexed the only competitive muscle left at their disposal: rule-making. Just as OU had once pushed segregation on them, they would now press upon the Sooners a series of reform-minded regulations that sought to clip their wings. No post-season bowl games, no direct recruiting, no games at neutral sites — there was seemingly no bylaw entered into the Big Seven rule book in the early fifties which failed to carry with it a decisively anti-Oklahoma purpose. In turn, the Sooner faithful cast their eyes southward once more. “It has seemed to me on many occasions that the Big Seven Conference has repeatedly ruled against O. U.,” an Oklahoma City insurance salesman wrote Cross just weeks after Switzer’s appearance at Owen Field, “and I think this largely due to jealousy.” Life in the Big Seven became so unbearable for OU that “I would rather be in the Southwest Conference.” Even the student

⁴² Jack Murphy, “Sooner Juggernaut Routs Hapless Wildcats, 58 to 0,” *DO*, October 22, 1950, 29 (first quotation); Harold Keith, “K-State Tussle At Norman Pits Crack Safeties,” *DO*, October 25, 1952, 23 (second quotation); Volney Meece, “Big Red Batters K-State 49 to 6,” *DO*, October 26, 1952, 113 (third quotation).

body made it clear where they wanted their team: in the fourth-quarter of the Missouri game, three weeks after the K-State date, they began chanting, “Let’s go south! Let’s go south!” But going south to the SWC involved a thicket of institutional issues that far outstripped mere competition, striking at regional affiliations which defined the very basis of the university’s academic mission. Besides, what did going south mean anyway at a time when the Sooner program already surrendered its racial privileges? The insular world of southern football paled in comparison, in more ways than just one.⁴³

III

Oklahoma christened the fifties — the decade it would come to define and dominate — with its most impressive performance to date: a 35-0 demolition of the LSU Tigers in the 1950 Sugar Bowl, its 21st win-in-a-row. Racking up more points than any previous participant in this New Year’s classic, Wilkinson’s “magnificent marching machine” trampled a Southeastern Conference foe considered one of the best the South had to offer that season, tallying its first score in the second quarter off an “eye-popping” 34-yard halfback pass from Lindell Pearson to George Thomas. The rout, as they say, was on from there. “On that day,” Hal Middlesworth attested, “I believe the Sooners could have beaten any football team in the country, short of the pro leagues.” Zipp Newman of the *Birmingham News* wasn’t so sure. A longtime observer of the rough-and-tumble of SEC football, he cornered Middlesworth in the press box right before the half. “Take that team back to Oklahoma and play the Chicago Bears,” he pleaded. “They’re entirely too good for our conference.”⁴⁴

⁴³ Wilbur Vandegrift to George Lynn Cross, November 19, 1952, Folder “Football — General,” Box 100, Cross Presidential Papers (first and second quotations); Cross, *Presidents Can’t Punt*, 187 (third quotation).

⁴⁴ Middlesworth, “Sooners Rip LSU, 35-0: Records Fall,” *DO*, January 3, 1950, 14 (first and second quotations); Middlesworth, “On the Level,” *DO*, January 5, 1950, 15 (third and fourth quotations).

The Sooners were entirely too good for their *own* conference. And insinuating that their only challengers were a bunch of professionals did them no favors with their Big Seven brethren, either. Profoundly suspicious of OU's success, they searched out any bit of leverage that they could deploy against this juggernaut. Competitive, political, financial — it didn't matter. Anything to slacken the Sooners' steady march to greatness. They believed that some small salvation could be found in the staggering attrition which was to grip the Sooner offense in 1950: Wilkinson would lose ten of the eleven starters off his 1949 team, including five All-Americans. The membership, then, trained their fire on that one returning starter — Lindell Pearson. An Oklahoma City native, Pearson opted for Arkansas over OU in 1947, one of the few in-state stars who ever got away from Wilkinson. He languished in Fayetteville a matter of weeks before being dragged back home to OU by a group of boosters with what Cross called "some extraordinary inducements." In his brief stint as a Razorback, though, he played on a "combined" squad of freshmen and varsity backups — an exception in the Southwest Conference rules permitted every entering freshman to do so that season. One of these games was against Missouri's JV team. Hence, the rub: a freshman transfer normally received three years of varsity eligibility, but, because "combined" teams were prohibited under Big Seven rules, Pearson's limited playing time in this Missouri JV game equaled a full season of varsity competition. Or, at least, that's how the faculty representatives fudged the rules. So, after playing just two varsity seasons at OU, the conference notified him a month after the Sugar Bowl that his eligibility was up. An appeal in March simply drew the plot against him further out into the light, with the faculty representatives voting six-to-one to uphold their ruling. Cross was incensed. "Possibly never in the history of college sports has greater injustice been done to a young man by a group supposedly interested in the welfare of youth." Opining that the 1950 season "would have been my best," Pearson

was bright enough to see what was afoot. Asked if he thought he had violated any rules, he answered no, “and I don’t think anyone else thinks so, except the faculty group that voted me ineligible.”⁴⁵

There was a strong note of hypocrisy in OU charging the rest of the Big Seven with prejudice, even injustice, in determining which of its student-athletes could and could not compete on its team. Wasn’t this what a prohibition on black participation had been all about? A fate Oklahoma visited upon its league brethren in the late forties was now being exacted on its own program in the earliest days of the fifties. Turnabout was fair play — or was it? After all, the faculty representatives cooked up a scenario whereby Pearson was disqualified from further competition, in contradiction of every past practice and precedent, for no better reason than that he was a Sooner. It was an ugly act of revenge, stoking the age-old resentments of Sooner partisans for the Big Seven itself. “The vote of the faculty representatives,” one fan protested to Nebraska chancellor Reuben Gustavson, “was one of member interest, rather than an expression of a rational or wise determination of the issue on the undisputed facts.” “Pearson’s interest conflicted with the interest of those member schools,” he fumed, rendering their vote “biased, unfair, and discriminatory.”⁴⁶

It was unfair, but, in its earliest returns, this scheme panned out just as the league hoped. In their annual spring game in late April, the returning Sooners squared off against a team of “alumni” whose eligibility had just expired — among which was now Pearson himself. A crowd of more than 11,000 “football-hungry fans” packed Taft Stadium in Oklahoma City to watch Pearson and the other 1949 stars defeat the nucleus of Wilkinson’s 1950 squad, 20-14, in a result that severely unsettled

⁴⁵ “Pearson Voted Ineligible For Final OU Year,” *DO*, February 16, 1950, 34; Cross, *Presidents Can’t Punt*, 74 (first quotation); “Cross Calls It ‘An Injustice,’” *DO*, March 4, 1950, 9 (second quotation); “Whither Pearson: He Doesn’t Know,” *DO*, March 5, 1950, 25-26 (third and fourth quotations).

⁴⁶ Ram Morrison to R. G. Gustavson, May 16, 1950, Folder “Intercollegiate Athletics, 1949-1951,” Box 3, Gustavson Series (quotations).

Sooner fans about their prospects for the season ahead. “If you don’t believe that experience counts,” one local wag quipped, “just ask next year’s edition of the University of Oklahoma football team.” Wilkinson himself didn’t know what to expect. “I think we will have a hustling, interesting team that should get better as we go along,” he alerted *Sooner Magazine* that May. “We could lose one or two games by from three to four touchdowns each, but all the others should be close.” As for the league race, “frankly, I don’t know who will win the Big Seven in 1950. It could be anybody.” He was just a little wrong: for all the despair about their lack of depth, the Sooners not only won the Big Seven for the fifth straight season, but their first national championship. Not that it was easy going, at least not against their SWC rivals. After two consecutive come-from-behind wins over Texas A&M and Texas, there was an overwhelming sense among OU supporters that Big Seven dates would be mere breathers. “Boy,” one fan exclaimed after the victory over Texas, “after this game and that Texas A&M game last week, let’s stay in our own conference until we get our nerves steadied again.”⁴⁷

Yet the Pearson incident brought to crest the impatience of Sooner loyalists for staying in the Big Seven. Some had been itching for years to align their team’s fortunes with their SWC rivals. A few overzealous OU boosters, as early as September 1948, were sending back-channel entreaties to contacts in the SWC that their university wanted to discuss membership; one even went so far as to reach out to Robert Leflar, dean of the School of Law at Arkansas, who replied that his university was “very strong” on the addition of OU to its cohort. A committee of SWC leaders, charged with exploring expansion, noted how they received from other OU sources “a confidential expression of

⁴⁷ Pete Rice, “Alumni Squeezes Varsity With Fourth-Period Score,” *DO*, April 22, 1950, 11 (first quotation); Wally Wallis, “Experience Is Top Grid Factor But Lend-Lease Sooner Is Hero,” *DO*, April 22, 1950, 11 (second quotation); “A Hustling, Interesting Team,” *Sooner Magazine*, May 1950, 12 (third and fourth quotations); Roy P. Stewart, “Those Storybook Heroes Do It Again!,” *DO*, October 15, 1950, 104 (fifth quotation).

interest,” likely originating with some of the big money men in Oklahoma City who couldn’t, for the life of them, understand what the Sooners were doing in the Big Seven. “The SW Conference plays the brand of athletics that Oklahoma plays,” one such booster wrote Cross. “We play Texas, SMU, TCU, and Texas Aggies, so why not be in that Conference and be among the best.” Cross disagreed. Sure, the Big Seven was “not as strong athletically” as the SWC, but, in what mattered most — academics — it was “considered by many to be much better.” He had it on good authority, too, that there was “considerable opposition” among the omnibus Texas constituency for extending an invitation to OU, none of which had any appetite for playing the Sooners annually — especially with a conference title and bowl bid potentially at stake. Besides, OU could “scarcely afford to be placed in a position of applying for membership in this Conference and then find that membership has been refused”: “this would put us in a most embarrassing position with other institutions in the Big Seven.” Wilkinson, too, bridled at the notion of jumping ship. “In our present conference,” he noted, “we are the competition whereas we would be just another team in the Southwest Conference.” Competitively and academically, Big Seven membership remained “advantageous to us” — “so long as that group is willing to let us operate our Athletic Department to compete with the schools in this area and in Texas.” However, he suspected, even then, these faculty representatives wanted nothing more than to meddle in how OU football operated. “If our Conference will not let us compete on an equal basis with the schools in this area, I believe it would be wise for us to change our conference affiliation, if possible, and become a member of the Southwest group.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Jim Warram to George Lynn Cross, October 30, 1948, Folder “Football 1948 (#1),” Box 45 (first quotation); Report of the Conference Expansion Committee, undated [November 1948], Folder “Southwest Athletic Conference,” Box VF17/A.a, UT President’s Office Records (first quotation); Fox Wood to George Lynn Cross, September 9, 1948 (second quotation); George Lynn Cross to Fox Wood, September 15, 1948 (third through seventh quotations); both in Folder “Athletics (#2),” Box 38; C. B. Wilkinson to George Lynn Cross, November 18, 1948, Folder “Football 1948 (#1),” Box 45 (eighth through eleventh quotations); all in Cross Presidential

His doubts came to pass, not only in how the faculty representatives forced Pearson out, but in other areas of the inviolable conflux between OU's outsized gridiron ambitions and its obsessive southern rivalries. Walter Kraft fretted throughout late 1948 and early 1949 that the six members would implement a bylaw prohibiting games at neutral sites after the 1950 season — just in time for the expiration of OU's current contracts with Texas for its annual games at the Cotton Bowl. That, for him, offered “an additional incentive” for “cast[ing] our lot with the Southwest Conference.” The faculty representatives repeatedly rejected Oklahoma A&M's application to the league, not on racial grounds but that it was “not practicable or feasible to admit them”: code words for their irrepressible anxieties about what potential advantages membership for the Aggies might well supply OU. When, in mid-March 1951, a senator from Oklahoma City, George Mishovsky, introduced a bill in the state legislature to make the broadcasting of all OU games mandatory, in open defiance of NCAA rules, the faculty representatives promised to cancel their scheduled contests with the Sooners that fall “if the university decides or is compelled to televise its football games.” Mishovsky was enraged. “Are we going to sit here and say we are for a half million people seeing the games, or are we afraid of the Big Seven Conference?” Tough talk, to be sure, but his proposal still died, with both Cross and Wilkinson frantically advocating its demise. Even the president pro tempore of the state senate, who killed the bill, couldn't help getting a few shots of his own in. “It's a dictatorial attitude the members of the conference are assuming,” he grouched.⁴⁹

Papers.

⁴⁹ Walter W. Kraft to George Lynn Cross, November 15, 1948, Folder “Football 1948 (#1),” Box 45, Cross Presidential Papers (first quotation); Minutes of the Meeting of Faculty Representatives of the M. V. I. A. A., May 19-21, 1949, Folder 14, Box 8, Director of Athletics Administrative Papers, UMC (second quotation); Cross, *Presidents Can't Punt*, 157 (third quotation), 158 (fifth quotation); Otis Sullivant, “TV Order Beaten as State Senate Bow to Big Seven,” *DO*, March 20, 1951, 39 (fourth quotation). Obviously, the OU-Texas game remained in Dallas, with the Big Seven perpetually dangling the threat of prohibiting neutral site games over Oklahoma's

Most OU fans and boosters heartily agreed. The Big Seven was now as unpopular as ever. A move by the faculty representatives, in December 1951, to ban all post-season competition — meaning that the Sooners wouldn't appear in any bowl games for the foreseeable future — was the final straw. “I am aware of the fact that it perhaps has been very discouraging to the other members of the Big Seven, going season after season without any of them winning football games from Oklahoma,” one fan complained in a letter to *The Daily Oklahoman*, “but for them to seek a cure to such a situation as to ramrod through a set of regulations, such as were adopted [by the faculty representatives], is the most underhanded method of winning football games.” The time had arrived to “make immediate and forceful application to that highly regarded conference” — read: the SWC — “for admission.” “I have had occasion to meet and talk to a number of OU alumni, and some Oklahomans who are not alumni,” another letter writer reported, and, “without exception, all are in favor of OU severing connection with the Big Seven.” If “the members of the Big Seven either cannot or will not choose to play our class of football,” then OU needed to glance south, to the far shore of the Red River, for a solution to its mounting crisis of association. The Sooners, for many of their supporters, deserved an authentic challenge — an authentic *southern* challenge, that is.⁵⁰

But what did playing “our class of football” — presumably southern football — even mean? For the institution itself, southern football was an operational concept: balancing the win-at-all-costs

head. But, in the spring of 1951, the faculty representatives relented and allowed Kraft to instruct Wilkinson to sign a new contract through 1956. See “Big Seven Representatives Approve Freshman Eligibility,” *DO*, March 4, 1951, 115.

⁵⁰ Minutes of the Meeting of Faculty Representatives of the M. V. I. A. A., December 7-9, 1951, Folder “Big 8 Minutes, 1948-1960,” Box 1, Baughn Papers; “Big Seven Bans Postseason Play,” *DO*, December 10, 1951, 28; “Big 7 Bans Post-Season Play,” *Rocky Mountain News*, December 10, 1951, 64, 67; Cronley, “Once Over Lightly,” *DO*, December 18, 1951, 16 (first and second quotations); Cronley, “Once Over Lightly,” *DO*, December 28, 1951, 27 (third and fourth quotations).

expectations of its fans; a no-holds-barred attitude of SWC members on the recruiting trail and the field of play; and a deep ambivalence that both these SWC rivals and Oklahoma A&M felt about the necessity of rules in the first place. Kraft reasoned that “the relationships between members of the Southwest Conference are much better than they are in our own,” with “less bickering and quarreling” in large part because their “interpretation of the NCAA rules are somewhat more liberal.” In shackling OU to a new set of regulations, which Wilkinson dismissed as “unrealistic,” the faculty representatives bound it ever tighter to the Big Seven (and, ostensibly, the Midwest) at precisely the moment this colossus was thrashing about, fighting its way out of their limited conception of competition. Most objectionable, in Wilkinson’s eyes, was a new provision that barred any direct contact by university officials — administrators *and* coaches — in recruiting athletic prospects. “We have adhered to these rules since they have become effective,” he advised Cross in February 1952, “but if we continue to follow them our competitive situation with the other schools of Oklahoma and those of the Southwest Conference will be materially weakened.” The man who believed more than anyone else in the merits of a national program was now preoccupied with region and regional foes, especially in the SWC, which, he conceded, were “our chief competitors.”⁵¹

This wasn’t any news to dyed-in-the-wool Sooner supporters. When this band of diehards — from the booster with the deepest pockets to the average Joe who scrimped and saved for his pair of nosebleed seats — looked south, they beheld a brand of football strikingly, clearly, *irrevocably* similar to that which their own team played. It wasn’t simply the kinship of race and region which

⁵¹ Walter W. Kraft to George Lynn Cross, November 15, 1948, Folder “Football 1948 (#1),” Box 45, Cross Presidential Papers (first and second quotations); C. B. Wilkinson to George Lynn Cross, February 12, 1952, Folder “Athletic Correspondence, 1946-52,” Box 1, George Lynn Cross Presidential Emeritus Papers, OU-WHC (third through fifth quotations).

caught their eye, but a big, bold, unabashed fixation on winning. The style of competition trumped the politics of culture and geography: *being southern* meant taking football seriously. As serious, say, as their counterparts at Alabama, at LSU, indeed, even at hated Texas. This earnestness of purpose became a common currency for the competitive exchange between OU and the South. An Anadarko native, who moved west in the forties, wrote Cross about his pride, in October 1950, in witnessing his Sooners beat Texas in person — “the first time I had the privilege of standing up and cheering a victorious O. U. team at Dallas.” More than anything else about that afternoon at the Cotton Bowl, observing this rivalry at close range persuaded him, finally, that “the Southwestern Conference was where O. U. belonged.” As it stood, football just didn’t seem to matter as much to the Big Seven as it did the Sooners. “If the Big Seven frowns on O. U.” for playing big-time football, he insisted, “then I say there is something wrong with the Big Seven.” Big-time football — big-time athletics, in general — had been designated the vehicle of their state’s very salvation, so, naturally, it wasn’t that surprising that many in the Sooner camp would judge it (as did one alum) “a great asset to the university, and also to the state.” OU’s “high caliber of play,” a local observer noted, signposted “a transfer to faster, tougher company” inside the southern game — “a natural and just reward” for its success. Membership in the SWC, then, proved the ultimate prize: as much a return to OU’s natural competitive habitat as the restoration of the state and its white people to the national mainstream.⁵²

“A well-rounded program of sports conducted in a sportsman-like manner is the objective of every major institution”: this was the debt Cross believed his university owed to itself and its fans.

⁵² C. R. Cooper to George Lynn Cross, December 23, 1952 (first through third quotations); A. D. Johnson to George Lynn Cross, December 10, 1952 (fourth quotation); both in Folder “Football — General,” Box 100, Cross Presidential Papers; Cronley, “Once Over Lightly,” *DO*, December 18, 1951, 16 (fifth through seventh quotations).

To a considerable degree, however, his university remade its institutional mission — on his watch — to satisfy the dictates of popular will. “I would like to build a university of which the football team can be proud,” was how he facetiously described it, in February 1951. In many ways, he wasn’t far off. Sooner supporters demanded big-time football; big-time football they received. They craved the cultural uplift that a winning team could bring; a winner raised them up. They expected a whites-only squad in a conference of otherwise integrated universities; segregation ruled the roost. Only, now, as they clapped hands with OU’s southern rivals — in opposition not so much to the regional positioning of the program as the stultifying competitive posture assumed by the Big Seven — Cross and his associates found themselves incapable of granting this wish. Putting the genie back into the bottle wasn’t an issue of wresting control of the Sooners’ gridiron ambitions from their fans’ iron grip, but, rather, convincing them Oklahoma’s best interests — academically, if not athletically — rest in strengthening ties to the Big Seven. “Although the Southwest Conference may have developed football to a higher level,” Cross reasoned with a fan from Pryor, “the Big Seven Conference has developed such a well-rounded program to a much greater extent than has the Southwest Conference.” In other words, OU was better off where it already was than where its fans wanted to take it. This was, needless to say, a tough sell: for the first time since Lloyd Noble’s modest proposal in late 1945, the university was attempting to scrape its gridiron ambitions clean of the patina of identity politics which colored its fans’ conception of, and support for, Sooner football.⁵³

Cross would be forced to begin his sales pitch with the Regents, who, as miffed with the Big Seven as the fans, authorized a study in their February 1952 meeting about “going into the Southwest

⁵³ George Lynn Cross to Houston H. Holland, December 17, 1952, Folder “Football — General,” Box 100, Cross Presidential Papers (first and third quotations); Cross, *Presidents Can’t Punt*, 145 (second quotation).

Conference” on one Regent’s claim “that’s what Bud wants.” Giving Bud his heart’s desire — if a move to the SWC was what he really even wanted; Wilkinson was *always* a convenient symbol — wasn’t something Cross believed OU could afford to do. “It seemed to me,” he observed, “that OU should not jeopardize its position in the academic world by refusing to abide by conference regulations, however distasteful they might be.” Over the next three months, he lobbied each Regent individually to preserve OU’s competitive edge while abiding this surfeit of regulatory idiosyncrasies inscribed into the Big Seven rule book. “The University of Oklahoma has protested some of these regulations,” he argued, “but without effect.” Now, the Regents had to decide for themselves whether OU should “comply with the regulations completely” or “withdraw from the Big Seven” — or, more radically, “offer to disqualify itself in regard to eligibility for Big Seven Conference championships.” But, he counseled them, Oklahoma, above all others in the league, needed to buy into these rules, for “I see nothing to be gained and much to be lost if the University does not remain in the Big Seven Conference and comply with its regulations completely.” By May, he coyly allowed, “evidently the Regents . . . had second thoughts.” Sufficiently persuaded that drastic action in the near-term would impair the university’s longterm gridiron interests, the seven Regents sided with Cross, *unanimously*, pledging in their monthly meeting that OU would “immediately comply” with all Big Seven rules.⁵⁴

What looked best for the Sooners in May, by November, was another thing. Winning, as the proverb would have it, has an odor all its own — especially when a bowl bid could be sniffed out. Cross informed the Regents in their session that month that “there were indications we could play in any one of the bowls except the Rose Bowl” if the Sooners secured the Big Seven title and beat

⁵⁴ Minutes of the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, February 13, 1952 (first and second quotations); Minutes of the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, May 14, 1952 (fourth, fifth, and seventh quotations); both in OUBRO; Cross, *Presidents Can’t Punt*, 175 (third and sixth quotations).

Oklahoma A&M (which they did). This prospect ushered in a nettlesome choice for the Regents: on one hand, Cross reported, “the boys would like to play in a bowl game”; on the other, he reminded them, the Big Seven forbade post-season play. Giving the team what it wanted meant that OU would place itself in decided opposition to the same rules every one of the Regents promised to respect just six months earlier. Incredulously, the president looked on as the governing body of his university lost its mind — rules be damned — with the “consensus” arguing that “if the boys and the coaches want to play in a bowl game we should let them play.” Cross once again pressed the issue: did the Regents “want to play regardless of whether the Big Seven would drop Oklahoma from the Conference”? After all, he warned, “it would take 5 votes to discipline a member school”: the recent past showed that votes against OU were easy to come by — Colorado, Iowa State, Kansas, K-State, and Nebraska would certainly act as a bloc; and Missouri, whose relations with OU had long soured, might join them. Scarcely a moment passed before one Regent demanded that “the playing of a bowl game be left to Coach Wilkinson and his staff and the boys.” All but one of their number concurred. “I was surprised and depressed by the action,” Cross would later write. “It seemed dangerously close to permitting a football program to determine basic university policy. If that could happen in this situation, it could happen in the determination of other policy.”⁵⁵

The situation, at least with the team itself, didn’t turn out to be as dire as Cross feared. To their credit, the players, regardless of how “unanimously” they wanted to play in a bowl, declined, in the words of team captain Eddie Crowder, “to make an important decision involving university policy-making,” voting to forego all post-season invitations. “We don’t want to take any action that

⁵⁵ Minutes of the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, November 13, 1952, OUBRO (first through seventh quotations); Cross, *Presidents Can’t Punt*, 186 (eighth quotation).

would make trouble for the university,” he noted. But this statement came with a caveat: “if the Big Seven Conference could be persuaded to change its mind, we’d still like very much to go.”⁵⁶

“To be at the very door of national prominence and find the door locked and barred,” *The Daily Oklahoman* observed, “is extremely hard to take.” And, yet, “if this ban upon bowl games is indefensible, effective protest should be made at the beginning of the season and not at its close”: “no threat of rebellion was heard until an outstanding team found that ambitions were being thwarted by the rule’s application.” This was a minority opinion. For most Sooner loyalists, the bowl ban was final confirmation that Oklahoma needed not only a new conference but new associates — *southern* associates — who understood its ambitions. “Recall[ing] the Lindell Pearson incident,” an Oklahoma City politician protested that midwestern interests had aligned against the university, that “all these things have been directed at Oklahoma since Bud Wilkinson and the Sooners have become a power in football.” A supporter in Ardmore speculated that, in leaving the Big Seven, OU “would not have any trouble securing games” with southern opponents like “Georgia Tech, Louisiana State, Alabama, and any team in the Southwestern Conference.” A Lexington alum contended that, geographically, “Oklahoma has always been considered a Southwestern State,” with OU’s “mighty Split-T offense . . . adapted for a mild, dry climate as in the Southwest Conference.” “More fans would rather travel South than north to see a game,” he buttonholed Cross, “and more than that our Texan friends to the south will keep our stadium well filled.” He urged the president, then, “Let’s Go Southwestern.”⁵⁷

The slogan, as it developed in the days and weeks after the players announced there wouldn’t

⁵⁶ Keith, “Sooners Sidestep Decision, Focus on Husker Game,” *DO*, November 11, 1952, 39 (quotations).

⁵⁷ “Abide By the Rule,” *DO*, November 22, 1952, 4 (first and second quotations); Cronley, “Once Over Lightly,” *DO*, November 25, 1952, 4 (third through sixth quotations); Bill Hardwick to George Lynn Cross, postcard, November 19, 1952, Folder “Football — General,” Box 100, Cross Presidential Papers (seventh through ninth quotations; emphasis in all three quotations in original document).

be any bowl appearance that season, was actually, “Let’s go south!” Students chanted it in the fourth quarter of the Missouri game; they chanted it again in a torchlight parade, streaming through campus to the president’s front lawn, where Cross quelled “two hours of student agitation” by declaring that “I would be perfectly willing” to see the Sooners play on New Year’s Day, most likely in the Orange Bowl in Miami, as long as “all hands agreed with full knowledge of probable Big Seven disciplinary action.” For students, going south wasn’t simply a winter getaway to sunny Florida, but a wholesale endorsement of membership in the SWC for their Sooners — akin to what fans and boosters pleaded. “Bowl or bolt” became the battle-cry sounded by Big Red backers, summing up their university’s dilemma: if it didn’t play in a bowl, its fans would believe it surrendered to the powers that be within the Big Seven, who they hated; if it didn’t bolt from the Big Seven into the arms of the South — particularly the SWC — it faced a crippling malaise as fans came to grips with the idea of playing as a *midwestern* team for ever and always. Somehow, someway, a brouhaha over a bowl bid erupted as a full-scale referendum on OU’s regional alignment. Once and for all, Sooner fans demanded, *are we or aren’t we a southern team?*⁵⁸

The South, then, was both a direction *and* a desire through which these supporters channeled their aspirations and frustrations. Standing pat in the Big Seven appeared, for them, a refutation of what the state of Oklahoma was — and wanted to be. “I know that this [state] pride cannot be built and maintained on sports alone,” a booster in Pryor insisted, “but our eminence in sports can and will be a pillar upon which to build,” making OU’s “entrance into the Southwest Conference . . . more compatible to Oklahoma sports.” One of “literally thousands of Oklahoma people” living in Dallas,

⁵⁸ Mary Goddard, “Cross to Consider Student Demands For Big Seven Bolt,” *DO*, November 19, 1952, 29 (quotations).

another fan pleaded with Cross to consider the “geographical, economic, and other reasons that the great state of Oklahoma would stand to gain” by a more southerly alignment of Sooner football. An enterprising Oklahoma City backer pushed the president to “form a new conference” of southern gridiron powers: “the Southern and Southeastern Conferences have by far too many teams in them and no doubt some would like to get out.” In-state adversaries Oklahoma A&M and Tulsa; Southern Conference powerhouses Maryland and Clemson; SEC stalwarts Alabama, Georgia, Georgia Tech, Kentucky, and Tulane; as well as an up-and-coming independent like Houston — these universities could, in his view, be “moulded [*sic*] into a strong conference,” with Sooner disaffection for the Big Seven galvanizing their alliance.⁵⁹

A pipe dream, if ever there was one. But the SWC remained Oklahoma’s life raft (or escape hatch, depending on the circumstances) by which it might traverse the liminal politics of identity and competition demarcating Midwest from South. And a window for migration came that December. Over Cross and Wilkinson’s objections, the Regents ordered Kraft to Dallas, where they expected him to represent the university’s interests at the SWC winter meetings — or, more officially, as he explained his mission to a reporter, “to make a preliminary investigation of the possibility” of entering the conference “sometime in the near future.” What he didn’t dare say was that he knew better than most that his was a fool’s errand: although each fan might have believed, to the very core of their being, that SWC members were eagerly awaiting the day when OU arrived at their door so that they might take this prodigal into their bosom and welcome it home to the South, Kraft wasn’t sure that

⁵⁹ Houston H. Holland to George Lynn Cross, December 11, 1952 (first and second quotations); Lee V. Williams, Jr., to George Lynn Cross, October 24, 1952 (third and fourth quotations); E. S. Woolsey to George Lynn Cross, December 1, 1952 (fifth through seventh quotations); all in Folder “Football — General,” Box 11, Cross Presidential Papers.

anyone would answer the door if his program were to knock on it. As it turned out, when he did land on their doorstep, they “courteously” asked him inside, only then to inform him that their conference expanded by *invitation* only — and there was none in the offing. “The Texans,” Cross mused, “were not likely to respond favorably to pressure exerted by OU alumni living in their state.” This rebuke — splashed across sports pages in both Texas and Oklahoma — left OU officials scrambling to clarify the Regents’ intentions for Kraft’s appearance. One of the Regents who most vigorously advocated an OU presence at this meeting laughed off any suggestion that his university was considering a switch. “We are not to leave the Big Seven,” he informed the Associated Press. “That would be silly.” Kraft waved off any speculation by stating that “it would be foolish for us to leave one conference for another governed by different rules.” For his part, Cross refused to be left holding the bag, loudly professing that Kraft “didn’t go down there at my request.” Wilkinson, too, distanced himself from the whole affair: “I honestly don’t know anything about it except what I read in the papers.” The humiliation of the SWC’s rejection soon ripened into ridicule. “Today the Sooners are no nearer admission to the Southwest Conference than ever,” sneered *Daily Oklahoman* sports columnist John Cronley, “and that never has been close to realization.”⁶⁰

Many Sooner fans did realize a somewhat strange sensation, at least since Wilkinson arrived on the scene in Norman: *defeat*. Just who — or what — defeated them was open to debate. For most, the Big Seven hadn’t bested them: there, the faithful believed OU’s power indomitable, even as the vultures circled overhead. Nor did they blame the Regents’ desperate bid to pry the doors of the SWC

⁶⁰ “Sooners Bid For Invitation From Southwest Conference,” *DO*, December 13, 1952, 1 (first quotation); Cross, *Presidents Can’t Punt*, 189 (second quotation), 190 (third quotation); “Comments Vary On Kraft’s Trip to Dallas Meet,” *DO*, December 14, 1952, 54 (fourth through seventh quotations); Cronley, “Once Over Lightly,” *DO*, December 14, 1952, 53 (eighth quotation).

open for Sooner ambition, for they had indulged the rabble's own calls. Least of all did their own excessive passions deal OU's competitive interests a blow — so they would contend — as their aggressive push to leave the Big Seven was judged a help, not a hindrance. Rather, blame was laid bitterly at the feet of the SWC, that vessel into which white Oklahomans had placed all their hopes and dreams for a competitive reunion with the South. In stunning succession, their delusions of grandeur toppled one right after another, leaving Wilkinson the godhead to regale them with a sunny revision of how embarrassingly their reach exceeded their grasp. Delivering the news with winsome grace, he advised them that OU would remain in the Big Seven, redoubling its efforts to master the thin ranks of midwestern football. It wasn't all their fault, though. "I understand why so many of our alumni want us in the Southwest Conference," he conceded in a rare off-season *Football Letter* — a direct mailing sent to Alumni Association members after each Sooner game — in February 1953. "We have strong geographical ties with the Southwest and most of our alumni have located within its territory." That said, fans had to reconcile their aspirations with the newfound reality the SWC was "unalterably opposed to receiving new members." This avenue shut, he proclaimed that moving forward with a "strong, stable" Big Seven was the only path to travel. Just consider the benefits. "All of its member schools are tax-supported state institutions with similar problems and objectives. All are comparable in size and enrolments. A natural rivalry exists among most of them." And "we have always liked our association" with the league brethren; "our only major disagreement has been over bowl games and I think we must honestly admit that we ourselves are somewhat to blame for the confusion that has arisen." Ambition, then, couldn't sever the Sooners' ties to the league. Oklahoma

needed the Big Seven every bit as much as the Big Seven needed Oklahoma. Maybe even more so.⁶¹

In the Wilkinson era, no one could halt the tides of popular will quite like Wilkinson himself. His utterances proved positively sacerdotal: just as his statements on black participation effectively ended the practice of segregating Big Seven football, so, too, would a word from him here settle the overwrought contest for OU's regional identity. And the struggle to recast the Sooners as a southern team was waged over such ephemeral notions of regionalism — competition over culture; ambition over association; privilege over principle — that the idea of *southernness* was practically shorthand for the public's desire to do whatever it took to win. If Bud believed that OU would ultimately fair better as a midwestern team, then, by God, the fans accepted it as much. Wins remained the coin of the realm: the Big Seven brethren might not have been tough competition, but, for supporters who wanted to win above all else, the short work the Sooners made of these foes satiated at least this one craving. Having “just read your football letter,” one alumnus wrote him that “this is the answer. Even some of our most rabid fans should be able to understand your explanation. The important fact, however, is that it comes from you rather than anyone else.” Indeed, there was hardly any serious talk thereafter of bolting the Big Seven — though many fans clung to a healthy contempt for the league. As this same alumnus confided, “the people of this state . . . think you are much more than a football coach, that you have a greater aim than just winning games.” But winning games helped. Seven-and-a-half months after drafting this letter, Bud's Boys lost to Notre Dame — their last defeat until November 1957 (again to the Fighting Irish). By the time this skein of 47-straight victories ended, his indefatigable national vision was realized: it was taken as an article of faith that Oklahoma was

⁶¹ *Bud Wilkinson's Football Letter*, February 12, 1953, Folder “Football — General,” Box 100, Cross Presidential Papers (quotations).

the nation's best college team, be it in the east or the west, the north or the south.⁶²

IV

The distance that Wilkinson's letter placed between his Sooners and the South was merely rhetorical until an event, in June 1954, foreshadowed the shape of things to come for his team. A notice in the sports pages of *The Daily Oklahoman* reported that the capital city's best black high school player, Douglass High's star quarterback Andy Dement, was "seeking an interview" with him "to discuss . . . going out for the freshman team." Running the same split-T offense that proved the hallmark of OU's successes, Dement's statistics revealed an obvious mastery of the system: 29 touchdowns in 1953, off nearly 1900 yards passing. More important, he steered Douglass to its second-straight state Negro title — so, he, like the Sooners, understood a thing or two about winning championships. "I certainly want to try and make the team," he declared, "and like anyone else, I'll do my best." Of that, Wilkinson had no doubt, particularly after meeting with him and his father later that month. On the basis of this personal visit, the coach informed him, he "would be glad" to have him "try his hand with the Big Red." There was only one catch: all the scholarships were already taken, meaning that Dement would likely spend his freshman year, if he did come to Oklahoma, without any financial assistance (although he, like most freshmen players, could earn a grant-in-aid through his academic and athletic performance). Without aid, Dement conceded, he couldn't swing a full year in Norman. Instead, he took an offer from all-black Maryland State, passing up a chance (as a local sportswriter put it) at "filling an historic role in Big Red football."⁶³

⁶² George D. Hann to C. B. Wilkinson, February 24, 1953, Folder "Football — General," Box 100, Cross Presidential Papers (quotations).

⁶³ "Negro Star Eyes OU Football Berth," *DO*, June 12, 1954, 23 (first through third quotations); Cronley, "Once Over Lightly," *DO*, July 27, 1954, 13 (fourth and fifth quotations).

The very next June, 1955, as the Regents lifted their ban on black undergraduates — the last vestige of segregation at the university — one state politician cracked that the best way to calm white Oklahoma’s racial anxieties was for Wilkinson to “recruit a good Negro fullback.” One of Dement’s Douglass teammates, Frank Wilson, hoped they might settle for a good black end instead. In the dry, late summer heat of September, he joined three other African Americans — end George Farmer, guard Charles Parker, and halfback Sylvester Norwood — in reporting to the Sooners’ pre-season camp, where they battled alongside 83 freshmen (all white) for a coveted spot on the best team in the country. Wilson survived the cut, as did Farmer and Parker, but none of them would survive the season, done in, like Dement, by a lack of finances. Nonetheless, their participation in the fall drills, like the influx of African Americans to the OU campus that autumn, marked an honorable start for integration, one that received high praise in the black media all over America. “Oklahoma’s latest decision probably will not set well with the Deep South,” argued an editorial in the pages of the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, “and it leaves the ‘it-won’t-work-here’ crowd throughout the South crying ‘traitor,’ but we don’t think sensible Oklahomans will mind carrying the label.”⁶⁴

Yet one label OU’s southern counterparts were hellbent to deny it — be it by ulterior motive or the singular power of perception — was “southern.” After Wilkinson gave the first scholarship to an African American, another Douglass High star named Prentice Gautt, in 1956, the stranglehold of white privilege on the Sooner program was released, leaving the region’s traditionally white institutions to regard Bud’s Boys as precisely the sort of team it wouldn’t face on the field of play.

⁶⁴ “Negroes May Join Oklahoma U. Teams,” *NYT*, June 9, 1955, 31; “Oklahoma Gives Formula For Easy School Segregation,” *CD*, June 11, 1955, 1 (first quotation); “Four Negroes Report for OU Freshman Team,” *DO*, September 13, 1955, 36; Keith, *Forty-seven Straight*, 217-18; “The Right Attitude,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 9, 1955, A9 (second quotation). On the 1955 Freshman team, see also “65 Practicing With Sooner Yearling Team,” *DO*, September 24, 1955, 24.

The irony here being, of course, that, a decade earlier, OU was judged too southern in its racial habits for the Big Seven; now, integrated, it wasn't southern enough for the white South. Even black sportswriters couldn't arrive at any consensus when framing Gault's ascendance to the OU varsity in 1957: *Los Angeles Sentinel* sports editor Brad Pye, Jr., lauded the university "for being the first major southern school to list a Negro in its ranks"; by contrast, William A. Brower of the *Chicago Defender* situated Gault amongst those "outstanding tan performers" who had "come into prominence in that geographical gridiron territory known as the Midlands." For his own part, Gault, who played out the 1957 season mostly as a second-stringer, was briefly sent into the season opener at Pittsburgh, discreetly erasing the color line in Sooner football. "I was much more worried about learning to play defense," he said to reporters outside the locker room, "than I was about breaking the color barrier." For a team that spent practically the entire decade of the fifties atop the college rankings, establishing the standard by which every program in the country was compared — not the least of which were those in the football-mad South — the fall of this barrier was a harbinger of the decade ahead for the national game.⁶⁵

Which was, naturally, what frightened the white South most. That, and the fact that OU's white fans grudgingly accepted Gault's presence on the Sooner team. Wilkinson may have persuaded his legion of admirers throughout the state to regard their Sooners as a midwestern power, but he was powerless over their racial attitudes when Gault rose to the varsity. The coach kept his player in the dark about the large bundles of hate mail that daily crossed his desk, afraid that, if the slightest whiff of this vehemence got back to Gault, it would decimate the young man's wavering will about staying

⁶⁵ Brad Pye, Jr., "Prying Pye," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 3, 1957, B2 (first and third quotations); William A. Brower, "Tan Gridders Sparkling In Midlands Conferences," *CD*, December 7, 1957, 24 (second quotation).

in Norman. “My respect for him deepened,” Gault noted of Wilkinson’s protectiveness. “Oklahoma then was flushed with national championships. He didn’t need me, or any kind of a controversy.” Of course, much of the protest and recrimination about Gault’s integration took root before he came into his own as a star in 1958. In the second game of that season, against Oregon, his extraordinary defensive action on a single play led to a curious sort of racial breakthrough for white Oklahomans. Late in the third quarter, with the ball at the Ducks’ 11 yardline, Willie West, their black halfback, broke into the clear off the right side of the line, galloping 53 yards before Gault, in hot pursuit, ran him down at the Sooner 37. Matching speed with speed, Gault saved a touchdown in the Ducks’ only serious scoring threat all afternoon, preserving a 6-0 victory; as *The Daily Oklahoman* admitted, he “probably saved the Sooners in this one.” Watching West slip through the line and out into the open, groans of horror gave way to stark silence as many fans struggled to comprehend Gault’s quickness. Wilkinson’s clubs were always noted for their team speed, but no one at Owen Field ever witnessed anything like this. Suddenly, their dumbfounded hush broke as a spectator loudly exclaimed, “Look at our colored boy catch that Oregon nigger from behind.” A few mutters of agreement evolved into a hearty cheer of appreciation that swept the stands. Gault “enjoyed the remark” as “my toleration of the black-white relationship in our state had grown so greatly.” Something else was growing amongst Sooner supporters for Gault himself: respect. “I have no doubt,” Cross confidently told Texas chancellor Harry Ransom three years later, in October 1961, “that his ability and performance had something to do with the fact that there was little or no murmuring of disappointment” thereafter “on the part of the alumni or anybody else.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Dent, *The Undefeated*, 233; Keith, *Forty-seven Straight*, 220 (first quotation), 246 (second and third quotations); Cronley, “Sooners Nudge Oregon, 6-0,” *DO*, October 5, 1958, 45; Meece, “Grim OU Players Praise Oregon,” *DO*, October 5, 1958, 47 (fourth quotation); George Lynn Cross to Harry Ransom, October 26, 1961,

Yet, as Gautt would wistfully acknowledge years later, “many people said that allowing me to play football at the University of Oklahoma was the beginning of the downfall” for the Wilkinson era. If that downfall could be traced to any one game, it would have been the next week, in Dallas, versus Texas, whose head coach, Darrell Royal, was a former Sooner star himself. Dropping a 15-14 decision, in what was the first major college football game decided by a two-point conversion, the pupil schooled the teacher, handing OU its first loss to this hated rival since 1951— only its second since Wilkinson landed in Norman. Longhorn fans rushed the field, tearing down the goalposts, and attacking any Sooner supporter they could find hanging around the stands. “Man, this is one of the greatest days in Texas history,” one Texan declared. “This ought to be put in the history books along with the Alamo.” Another yelled, “That’ll send those damned Okies back across the river with their tails between their legs, and it sure is time.” Betraying the reality that the Sooners’ ties to the South died hard, one of those Okies forlornly stated, “If we have to lose, let it be anybody but Texas or the Aggies. We’ll never hear the end of this.” Richer still for Longhorns was how a segregated team had triumphed over an integrated one — demonstrating, to most fans’ satisfaction, that the traditions of southern football remained far superior to those of the nation at large. But there were some in the Lone Star state who thought the Longhorns might learn a thing or two from the Sooners. Before this game, in fact, Gautt’s presence on the OU roster was a powerful symbol for those who advocated social change. One alum pointed to him — “an outstanding Negro backfield man” — as a reminder to UT president Logan Wilson that “our teams have in the past competed, and will increasingly in the

Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/60-8/31/62,” Box 85, UT Chancellor’s Office Records (fifth quotation). I might add that Wilkinson likely destroyed these letters; an exhaustive search of the Cross Presidential Papers turned up no letters of protest or threat to Cross — though, in Donald Rumsfeld’s inimitable phrase, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

future compete, in all forms of athletics with teams having Negro players.”⁶⁷

A year later, in October 1959, Gault racked up 135 yards in yet another slim Texas victory. Mitchell Doke, who, as a UT guard, had a rough day handling Gault’s relentless pounding, advised the press gaggle clustered underneath the Cotton Bowl that the OU halfback was “terrific.” In a rare show of respect for the achievements of a man of color in the fifties, Doke confessed, “we figured Gault would be our main problem and he was. I kept mixing our defenses, trying to stop him at the middle and off tackle, and sometimes [he] caught us in the wrong place.” A useful metaphor for his university’s harried stand against recruiting black players — despite being an integrated institution like OU. “Last Saturday,” student body president Frank Cooksey lobbied Wilson, “a Negro football player from the University of Oklahoma made 135 yards rushing against the University of Texas football team. I dare say that the coaches on the Longhorn staff would be quite ready to accept the services of any one who could play football as well as Mr. Prentice Gault did.” Still, Texas clung to the color line, standing sentry over white racial privilege in southern football. Some two years later, in November 1961, when its Board of Regents instructed Ransom to investigate athletic integration at other comparable public universities in both the South and the West, the chancellor lumped OU — which “among these institutions . . . is the most significant for comparison with Texas” — into the latter group. By then, this old rival resembled, to his eyes, those “more westerly colleges and universities in New Mexico, Arizona, [and] Colorado” which “profess ‘complete integration’ — a condition that undoubtedly has been made possible by general social custom, very small Negro populations, and an academic orientation toward the West Coast.” Academically and athletically,

⁶⁷ Dent, *The Undefeated*, 279 (first quotation); Gene Campbell, “Big D Goes Wild After Longhorns Whip OU, 15-14,” *DO*, October 12, 1958, 1 (second through fourth quotations); Sterling Holloway to Logan Wilson, September 13, 1958, Folder “Desegregation,” Box 85, UT Chancellor’s Office Records (fifth quotation).

then, Oklahoma had demonstrated that it was very definitely *not* a southern institution.⁶⁸

Wilkinson's decision to open the OU varsity to black participation — first with Gautt, then Wallace Johnson in 1959, and Ed McQuarters in 1962 — coincided with a dramatic downturn in the Sooners' fortunes. The air of invincibility evaporated as OU lost an unheard of three games in 1959, including a 29-24 catastrophe at Nebraska — its first conference defeat with Wilkinson at the helm. A 3-6-1 record in 1960, as Cross described it, "was something of a nightmare"; a middling 5-5 mark in 1961 was no easier to stomach. For the South's traditionally white institutions, most of which were fighting off the enrollment of African American students, Oklahoma's fading glory offered "an object lesson" in the pitfalls of integration: by disturbing the natural order of things, Wilkinson had, in their judgment, brought the temple down on his head (nevermind that his 1960 and 1961 squads were lily-white). In November 1961, for instance, the LSU Board of Supervisors decided the Tigers could meet integrated Colorado — Big Eight champions — in the Orange Bowl on New Year's Day. W. M. Shaw, the lawyer who represented LSU in its integration crisis of 1958, asked "if the Board considered the price the University would pay for such a questionable honor?" "I would like to remind you," he railed to Board chairman John Doles, "that the football teams of LSU achieved their greatest glory under a policy of strict separation of the races. This was done when the enemies of our way of life were loudly proclaiming that LSU could never achieve any national recognition because of its strict policy on this very matter." By comparison, he warned, "the University of Oklahoma, which completely abandoned its historic policy of segregation, has, since that time, fallen from the

⁶⁸ Sam Blair, "It's a Great Day in the Longhorn Corral," *DO*, October 11, 1959, 72 (first and second quotations); Frank C. Cooksey to Logan Wilson, October 15, 1959, Folder "Negro Students," Box CDL2/E32, UT Dean of Students Records, CAH (third quotation); Harry Ransom to Board of Regents, memorandum, November 3, 1961, Folder "Desegregation, 9/1/60-8/31/62," Box 85, UT Chancellor's Office Records (fourth and fifth quotations).

ranks of greatness and become a second rate football power.”⁶⁹

The Orange Bowl Committee had long explored pitting the Big Eight champion against a top opponent from the Southeastern Conference — precisely what happened in this instance, with LSU topping Colorado, 25-7 — though SEC commissioner Bernie Moore gazed warily upon such a deal. “As we all know,” he advised the SEC brethren, “the racial question may possibly keep some of our teams out of the Orange Bowl.”⁷⁰ When Wilkinson brought his much-improved 1962 Sooners to Miami for a New Year’s Day 1963 showdown with Paul “Bear” Bryant’s Alabama Crimson Tide — the defending national champions — any questions that this SEC foe harbored about McQuarters’ participation were muted by the prospect that President John F. Kennedy promised to be on hand. He wasn’t coming, however, as an impartial spectator: a year-and-a-half earlier, he had appointed Wilkinson as his special consultant on physical fitness; in the process, the two became chummy, so much so that, vacationing in Florida that winter, the president announced that he wanted to watch his friend’s team in person. His attendance, too, was viewed in Alabama and the South as yet another sideshow for the political psychodrama that gripped the relationship between his administration and Alabama’s bombastic governor, George C. Wallace — who would, six months later, defy a federal order to integrate the university, causing Kennedy to federalize the Alabama National Guard so that Vivian Malone and James Hood might enroll. Many on the Alabama side of the stadium, including Bryant himself, believed that the president came if only to merrily root *against* the Crimson Tide.

Not that Bryant or his fans were engaging in paranoid supposition. Before the game, Kennedy

⁶⁹ Cross, *Presidents Can’t Punt*, 322 (first quotation); W. M. Shaw to John Doles, November 27, 1961, Folder 4, Box 28, Board of Supervisors Records, LSU (second through fourth quotations).

⁷⁰ Minutes of Annual Meeting of Southeastern Conference, January 16, 1959, Folder “Southeastern Conference, 1959,” Box 23, Ralph Brown Draughon Presidential Papers, AU (quotation).

paid a visit to the Sooner locker room, joking with the players, checking on Wilkinson's gameplan, giving them all some encouragement against the heavily-favored Crimson Tide. Cross later observed that the sight of the Commander-in-Chief in the locker room "caused speculation" in the OU camp "about the impact that the presidential visit had on a football squad about to start an Orange Bowl contest — to what extent it might have influenced the team's ability to concentrate." If anything, the fact that Kennedy didn't make a similar pre-game trip to the Tide's locker room strongly influenced their play. "When President Kennedy went to their dressing room and didn't bother to come visit us," the great Alabama linebacker Lee Roy Jordan confessed, "it gave us a little incentive." Indeed it did. Jordan and his teammates quickly disposed of the Sooners — the game "was a shambles," in Cross' view — soaring past Bud's Boys, 17-0, on the strength of sophomore quarterback Joe Namath's arm. There wasn't much for the president to cheer. Just one play brought him to his feet — a 56-yard pass completion that landed the Sooners only seven yards from Alabama's goalline. "When the scoring chance ended in a fumble," one sportswriter reported of Kennedy, "he slumped noticeably."⁷¹

On this day, at least, OU was America's team. After all, few events could have fulfilled white Oklahoma's desire for national convergence more than the sight of the President of the United States pulling for their team. Then, again, few events crystalized just how alienated the white South was from that same nation than the sight of the President of the United States openly pulling against its best football team. Yet the Crimson Tide, like many of their fellow SEC members, had scrupulously cultivated such a separation from the national game *precisely* because their opponents were likely to field integrated teams. Where Oklahoma rushed straight toward the nation after the war, Alabama ran

⁷¹ Cross, *Presidents Can't Punt*, 335 (first and third quotations); Allen Barra, *The Last Coach: A Life of Paul 'Bear' Bryant* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2005), 268 (second quotation); Keith, *Forty-seven Straight*, 333 (fourth quotation).

from it, cloistering itself in the intramural solace of the white South: in fact, Wilkinson's team was just the second racially integrated ball club that Alabama played since the Second World War. In ways large and small, then, both the geographical and cultural territory of southern football was surveyed by how far its white powerhouses — like Alabama or Texas — fled from any engagement with their counterparts throughout the rest of the nation, trapping their gridiron ambitions in a white-only cell that denied it light and growth. Southern football, in their definition of it, was the reflex to segregate: from blacks, from the nation, indeed from the currents of history. The monochromatic continuity of race and region were reality enough for them. Yet, as we shall see in the chapters ahead, their retreat was also a retreat from reality, until the reality of racial change at last commanded their attention.

CHAPTER TWO “One big problem”

Unlike the Big Seven, the Southeastern Conference never adopted a rule against black participation. It didn't need to. “At the present time,” SEC commissioner Bernie Moore explained in March 1956, “there are no negro athletes enrolled in any of the member institutions of the Conference. In fact, only one member institution” — Kentucky — “has negro undergraduates enrolled.” Segregation reigned supreme within the SEC and would for many years to come. Elsewhere, though, the pace of integration had quickened such that some believed the league would benefit from inscribing a set of racial prohibitions into its bylaws. Addressing Moore on “a matter that is very close to my (and so many others) heart these days,” a Florida fan claimed that “such a rule would discourage many coons from desiring to attend our fine white institutions.” “The negro is a good athlete,” he ventured, but “there would be decidedly less of them attending colleges if they didn't participate in intercollegiate sports.” What's more, there was a political imperative to consider: “the U. S. Supreme Court has made vicious decisions against the South and we should show them that they cannot rule our Southeastern Conference.” Yet without a foreseeable end to the practice of segregation — no matter what the federal courts ruled — Moore publicly dismissed any suggestion that the conference itself should take steps to ensure it. “I do not believe that the official representatives” from any of these twelve universities, he advised this fan, “would care to discuss this subject at the present time.”¹

¹ Bernie Moore to Edgar S. Anderson, March 27, 1956 (first and sixth quotations); Edgar S. Anderson to Bernie Moore, February 27, 1956 (second through fourth quotations); Edgar S. Anderson to Bernie Moore, March 26, 1956 (fifth quotation); all in Folder 1, Box 138, Porter L. Fortune, Jr., Collection, UM.

Behind closed doors, however, he and these representatives had barely spoken of anything else for the better part of a decade. In a sporting age dominated by the visage of Jackie Robinson, could there really have been any other topic for discussion than the unchallenged right of competition the black athlete lately enjoyed from coast-to-coast? The SEC brethren had trundled their way into this postwar era armed with the untested assumption that the “gentleman’s agreements” of the interwar period would still be in place to protect against any circumstance in which a black player might find his way into a game with a southern opponent. Promptly proven wrong by their northern counterparts, which no longer had any appetite for provisos and equivocations, the peculiar calculus of racial politics soon figured prominently in each and every decision which the members made about slating non-conference series, crowding out the customary considerations of competitive ambition and commercial interest served on any given Saturday. Some proceeded, albeit cautiously, with intersectional dates; others, in their blind panic, contracted schedules comprised exclusively of southern teams. Regardless the decision, their choices all radiated from the same white-hot problem of race that bedeviled the business of football in the SEC at even its most fundamental level: the simple, *intercollegiate* transaction of one program agreeing to play another.

These differences in the spirit of scheduling intersectional opposition had, by the mid-fifties, spawned differences in fact. The SEC was inexorably partitioned into two factions: one that was willing to play African Americans and one that wasn’t. Just five months after Moore’s exchange with this fan, Kentucky president Frank Dickey — whose institution was firmly ensconced amongst those members which advocated a so-called “national schedule” — told one fan that, on account of these sharp divisions over interracial play, “the next few years are going to be difficult ones” as “we shall find ourselves on the opposite side of the fence on a good number of occasions from our Southern

neighbors.” Transgressing the color line was a lonesome endeavor, complicated still further in that “we are required to play a certain number of games” against SEC members each season, “otherwise we lose our membership in this conference.” In a league that was choosing up sides, any decision that flouted the organizational power of gridiron segregation marked a member institution for the enduring opprobrium of those on the other side of fence. And, in a league that resisted any and all efforts to adopt a rotating conference schedule, leaving members to their own devices when contracting intraleague series, these kinds of decisions had real consequences — something that Kentucky would discover a full seven years later when it elected to integrate its athletics program. Then, and only then, did the SEC brethren recognize that the problem of race wasn’t visited upon them by forces outside the conference. It was, and always had been, a problem of their own making.²

I

In early November 1958, Cincinnati president Walter C. Langsam approached Frank Rose, his counterpart at Alabama, with “an item of special interest” to his football program. “We should like very much to play a team from the South,” he declared, “and are especially eager to meet your fine team.” The business of arranging football games was customarily the province of athletics directors, not presidents. Yet, for whatever reason, securing a date on Alabama’s future schedules was a matter of such consequence for Cincinnati that Langsam felt he must take a “direct interest” and reach out to Rose himself. The broad, solicitous terms of his offer only punctuated the enthusiastic lengths to which his program was willing to proceed in order to play the Crimson Tide. In this vein, then, he

² Frank G. Dickey to Herschel Weil, August 8, 1956, Folder “Athletics Association 1957,” Box 33, Frank G. Dickey Papers, UK.

made an uncommonly generous pledge. “If Alabama does not wish to travel to Cincinnati,” he told Rose, “then we would be willing to forego a home-and-home arrangement and play on your field in successive years.” An attractive proposition, no doubt, but one which was blithely indifferent to the stark political realities governing life in the state of Alabama. Law, custom, and popular opinion precluded the Crimson Tide from scheduling a non-conference opponent, like Cincinnati, whose roster featured black student-athletes — a fact of life which Rose identified as his university’s “one big problem regarding our playing northern teams.” However agreeable he and first-year athletics director and head coach, Paul “Bear” Bryant, were to “work things out on a future basis,” Rose insisted, with fatalistic detachment, that their hands were simply tied for the time being. “We are embarrassed about this,” he confessed to Langsam a few weeks later, “but I am sure you understand some of the difficult problems that we are going through these days. We are hopeful of getting some change on this in the near future.”³

But change didn’t loom anywhere on the horizon. If anything, the future held more of the same for the Crimson Tide: a continued pattern of playing schedules which kept them comfortably garrisoned behind the cultural ramparts of the Mason-Dixon line. Indeed, by the time Langsam’s offer crossed Rose’s desk, seven full seasons had come and gone since Alabama last squared off against an opponent from outside the South. Another eleven — all on Rose and Bryant’s watch — were still to be played before the Bear finally reached beyond regional borders to slate USC for the 1970 season opener. “We were in a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don’t situation,” he claimed in his 1974 memoir. “Our SEC opponents were as tough as any in the country, no matter what color the players

³ Walter C. Langsam to Frank A. Rose, November 5, 1958 (first through fourth quotations); Frank A. Rose to Walter C. Langsam, November 17, 1958 (fifth through seventh quotations); both in Folder “Athletic Department, 1/6/58,” Box 21, 089-104, Frank Anthony Rose Papers, UA.

were, but when we looked around for a team to play outside the conference it had to be from the South.” Consequently, “because we didn’t . . . play against teams that had black players, we were criticized around the country for having an ‘insulated schedule.’” To him, these criticisms were only cruel aspersions cast on the competitive rigor of schedules which led to three national championships in the first half of the sixties. Though “I would have much preferred to play Michigan State or Illinois” to the likes of Southern Mississippi and Louisiana Tech, he contended that the latter were differentiated from the former only in terms of “prestige.” He couldn’t have been more wrong. For his detractors, the conspicuous absence of games with comparable powers in the Big Ten, such as Michigan State and Illinois, whose teams were amply stocked with southern blacks, was exhibit number one for the racism that tempered Alabama’s considerable gridiron aspirations. Decrying its string of “Front-of-the-Bus championship[s],” *Los Angeles Times* sports columnist Jim Murray, one of Bryant’s fiercest critics, demanded that “Alabama roll its 7 right out on the carpet where everyone can see — say, against Ohio State in Columbus. Or Michigan in Ann Arbor. Or Notre Dame — anywhere.” When the Crimson Tide captured their second national title under Bryant, in December 1964, Murray grouched that “this team [which] hasn’t poked its head above the Mason-Dixon line since Appomattox” was voted best in the nation. “How can you win a ‘national’ championship playing in a closet? How can you get to be ‘No. 1’ if you don’t play anybody but your kinfolks? How do you know whether these guys are kicking over baby-carriages or slaying dragons?”⁴

All the more troubling to Murray’s mind was how Alabama’s ten regular-season opponents in 1964 — eight of whom were fellow SEC members — “didn’t play anybody you couldn’t invite to

⁴ Paul W. Bryant and John Underwood, *Bear: The Hard Life and Good Times of Alabama’s Coach Bryant* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), 299-301 (first through fifth quotations); Jim Murray, “‘Bama in Balkans,” *LAT*, December 4, 1964, B1 (sixth through ninth quotations).

the Cotillion either.” It was an easy assumption to make about a league in which Alabama was the competitive bellwether: the other eleven SEC programs surely followed suit in mastering the not-so-subtle art of ducking and dodging integrated teams. And many did, although this practice found its most ardent devotees in a bloc of Deep South members — not only Alabama, but Auburn, LSU, Ole Miss, and Mississippi State — whose regionally-minded schedules scrupulously ensured that the only athletes their teams ever encountered were other white boys. Their schedules stood as bulwarks against change, safeguarding the racial homogeneity of each and every game, while buttressing a world view that, as LSU president Troy Middleton explained it, “does not favor whites and Negroes participating together on athletic teams.” Compromise on racial values was out of the question. If, as Ole Miss chancellor J. D. Williams once explained, “the agreements and contracts” preceding any series “require a meeting of the minds,” then the rise of the black athlete after the Second World War made intersectional dates altogether unthinkable. Scheduling became for them a cynical game in and of itself, played out as a fundamental retreat from the national ranks into the intramural solace of all-white, all-southern series. Between them, they slated a mere 23 intersectional contests following the postwar resumption of league play in 1946 — none of which came after the 1954 season (table 2.1). (In fact, Auburn went so far as not contracting a single regular season game with a non-southern opponent from 1946 to 1973.) With time, their unyielding stand against interracial play embodied what was popularly thought to be the competitive spirit of SEC football. “It’s not a real conference,” Murray concluded. “It is, so to speak, a Gentleman’s Agreement. They don’t want any you-know-what in there cluttering up the color scheme.”⁵

⁵ Murray, “Bama in Balkans,” B1 (first and fourth quotations); Troy H. Middleton to Harry H. Ransom, October 27, 1961, Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/60-8/31/62,” Box 85, UT Chancellor’s Office Records (second quotation); J. D. Williams to J. B. Woods, December 2, 1960, Folder 1, Box 130, Fortune Collection (third

These five institutions were, in essence, living out this twilight age of gridiron segregation as though it was still high noon. But not all among the SEC brethren were quite so desperate to deny that times were changing. In December 1961, Frank Dickey forecasted that it was “just a matter of time” before a league member began recruiting athletes of color. “It is inevitable,” he asserted, “that we integrate our teams.” A year-and-a-half later, in April 1963, his university’s Athletic Association Board of Directors felt the time had finally arrived to do just that — boldly declaring Kentucky athletics “open to any student regardless of race.” So far as they were concerned, black participation proved “a matter of principle and policy” in need of no further deliberation. Taking another look around the SEC, Dickey was now not so sure. His own optimistic projections that there was “reason to expect a favorable reaction from a majority of SEC members” plainly belied the fact that the Deep South Five were unlikely to accept the prospect of an integrated team competing within the SEC without a bruising fight. After all, he had recently been sternly warned by Auburn’s Faculty Athletic Committee that “we feel we are not in position to offer any solution to the problem at the University of Kentucky.” What worried him, as well as his athletics director, Bernie Shively, was the game of shadows unfolding within the circle of the Deep South Five, where both men believed plans were being hatched to deliberately compound these problems for Kentucky — especially with regard to scheduling. “There is a good chance,” predicted Shively, “that some of the football teams in the Southeastern Conference will refuse to play us.”⁶

quotation).

⁶ “Kentucky Willing to Play Negroes,” *WP*, December 16, 1961, A16 (first quotation); University of Kentucky Athletics Association Statement of Policy, April 29, 1963, Folder “Southeastern Conference, 1962-63,” Box 30, Dean Wallace Colvard Presidential Files, MSU (second quotation); Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Kentucky Athletic Association, April 29, 1963, Folder “Board of Directors – Minutes, 1962-1963,” Box 34, Dickey Papers (third quotation); “Kentucky to Set Date For Athletic Integration,” *AC*, May 24, 1963, 49 (fourth quotation); “UK Desegregation of Athletics Could Have Far-Reaching Effects,” *SSN*,

Hence, the fundamental idiosyncrasy of SEC football. Unlike every other major conference in the country, in which league schedules were set by its commissioner's office, SEC members jealously reserved this power for themselves, independently contracting intraleague series in the same pell-mell fashion as their non-conference dates. Jesse Outlar of the *Atlanta Constitution* once observed with astonishment how the SEC brethren were not only "guilty of sidestepping games with teams in their own league," but of "go[ing] to extremes to avoid meeting a full slate of fellow conference members." With each institution required to play a minimum of six conference games per season, or see their membership rendered inactive, the Deep South Five were prepared to go to the greatest of extremes in order to eliminate the threat of integration: squeezing Kentucky out of the SEC by refusing to renew existing game contracts or negotiate any new ones.⁷

The contours of this ploy were laid bare amid the spring meetings of the SEC's athletics directors and head coaches, which convened just three weeks after news of Kentucky's integration push went public. Midway through one session, LSU athletics director Jim Corbett raised concerns about his program's series with Kentucky — a staple of its schedules since 1949. Renewed annually on nothing more than a verbal agreement between him and Shively, the series was only guaranteed through 1966. "Now there may be some question," he informed the group, as to whether the two universities should continue playing one another given the changes to come in Wildcat football. As if to show Shively how truly outnumbered Kentucky was on this matter, Corbett asked each of the members to make an honest declaration of their individual positions on interracial play. Could they,

May 1963, 12 (fifth quotation); Minutes of a Meeting of the Faculty Athletic Committee, May 20, 1963, Folder "Athletic Committee, 1947-65," Box 7, Draughton Presidential Papers (sixth quotation); Bernie A. Shively to Polk Robinson, May 1, 1963, Folder "June 1962-April 1963," Box 34, Dickey Papers (seventh quotation).

⁷ Jesse Outlar, "The Unround Robin," *AC*, January 25, 1967, 31.

would they, schedule games with integrated teams? To his surprise, however, nearly half the league — Georgia interim athletics director Howell T. Hollis, Georgia Tech athletics director and head coach Bobby Dodd, Tulane head coach Tommy O’Boyle, and Vanderbilt head coach Jack Green — joined Shively in stating that their programs would meet athletes of color on the road *and* on their own home fields. “We would not only play Kentucky at home or away,” Dodd later declared to the press, “but any other team that uses Negroes on the same basis.” Florida athletics director and head coach Ray Graves indicated a similar willingness to face integrated opposition, but only in contests played away from Gainesville. Inexplicably, Tennessee athletics director Bob Woodruff sided with the Deep South Five, even though his program had adopted a non-discriminatory policy of its own just two years earlier.⁸

If this power play demonstrated anything — besides a textbook overreach — it was how thoroughly the SEC’s racial consensus had eroded. “A conference is compatible,” Tulane’s Athletic Advisory Committee asserted in the summer after these meetings, “when it is made up of institutions with roughly similar organizations, purposes, and goals.” If judged by this standard, the committee warned, “the common ground for the Southeastern Conference is disappearing.” “Some schools object to the athletic practices and procedures employed by some of the conference members,” and “differences in academic programs and aims” endured, but “integration” was the one and only issue,

⁸ Of course, these discussions were strictly off the record. Like the official minutes of all SEC meetings, the record of this session does not even hint at the fact that a discussion about integration took place. Indeed, if one were to read through the entire set of league minutes from 1946 to 1966, as I have, one would come away — albeit skeptically — with an impression that matters of race never came up. My account here is based on a memorandum prepared by O’Boyle and his assistant, Bill Arnsparger, for outgoing athletics director Horace Renegar detailing the proceedings of these meetings and the positions of the twelve members on various matters of league business. See Minutes of the Meeting of the Southeastern Conference, May 23-25, 1963, Folder “Southeastern Conference, 1962-63,” Box 29, Draughon Presidential Papers; Tommy O’Boyle and Bill Arnsparger to Horace Renegar, memorandum, May 28, 1963, Folder “Athletics – Southeastern Conference, 1959-65,” Herbert E. Longenecker Papers, TU. For Dodd’s quotation, see “Tech to Host Rivals’ Biracial Teams,” *SSN*, May 1963, 7.

in their opinion, with the power to limn the incompatibility of the SEC brethren. The go-along-to-get-along spirit of league politics on matters of race, which had carried the day since war's end, was now seen by all sides as utterly fraudulent, papering over the fault lines dividing those members willing to meet the rising tide of integration from those that would vigilantly protect against it. Hardly a band of racial progressives, the leaders at Tulane and the six "eastern" members could nevertheless be seen as racial realists, subtly yet steadfastly insisting that black participation was the cost of doing business if their programs were to continue playing a so-called "national schedule." Their combined 92 intersectional dates from 1946 to Dickey's 1961 prediction signified a sustained engagement with the mainstream of college football, utilizing racial accommodation to good effect as a competitive logic for building strong non-conference schedules. Deftly calibrating their gridiron ambitions to satisfy *and* transcend the dictates of segregation, their higher frequency of intersectional play only emphasized their diminishing bonds of unity and mutuality with the Deep South Five. Despite Moore's public sanguinity about the race question — "I believe our league is too strongly knit for any single issue to break it up" — the SEC, to Outlar's eye, looked increasingly like "12 independent teams waving a league banner."⁹

Could a conference comprised of universities which didn't want to associate with, let alone play, one another really be considered a conference? This was the essential crisis of league politics by the time Bryant's team was crowned national champions in late 1964. Both Georgia Tech and Tulane resigned their membership that year rather than brook such hostilities any further. Besides,

⁹ "Summary and Findings: Survey of Intercollegiate Athletics Conducted by the Athletic Advisory Committee, Tulane University," Summer 1963, Folder "Athletics Dept. Miscellaneous, 1969-71," Box 1, A. Kenneth Pye Records, Duke (first through fifth quotations); "Desegregating College Sports Creates Scheduling Problems," *SSN*, May 1962, 15 (sixth quotation); Jesse Outlar, "Advance Notice," *AC*, January 24, 1962, 29 (seventh quotation).

neither saw much future for a progressively factious SEC. “The purposes of the university,” argued Tulane president Herbert Longenecker, “will be better served by scheduling intersectional games.” Dodd advised his president, Edwin Harrison, that “it would be to our advantage to play more schools nearer our academic level and in particular schools like the Naval Academy, Notre Dame, Army, and even possibly the Air Force Academy.” Some Kentucky fans felt their team should likewise bolt the SEC. Demanding they “attempt to change the Southeastern Conference ruling in regard to Negroes,” one UK booster wrote the Board of Trustees that anything short of this should lead to “withdrawal from the conference.” Another SEC enthusiast from Louisville, who was “against integration in our schools,” nevertheless sensed how “this issue will eventually break up the conference.” Speculation swept the region that the league would split up into two semi-autonomous divisions; or, wilder still, that Tulane and the six “eastern” members were privately planning their own rival — *and* integrated — football conference. With suspicion, rumor, and partisan dissonance irreparably fracturing the competitive landscape, Auburn president Ralph Draughon, who assumed the league presidency in late 1964, lamented to Longenecker that “it does look like I am going to have to preside over the decomposition of the Southeastern Conference.”¹⁰

II

¹⁰ News Release on Tulane’s Withdrawal from Southeastern Conference, December 31, 1964, Folder “Correspondence, SEC, 1964-65,” Box 54, J. Wayne Reitz Presidential Papers, UF (first quotations); R. L. Dodd to Edwin D. Harrison, December 6, 1962, Folder 7, Box 33, Edwin D. Harrison Papers, GT (second quotation); Charles F. Morton to UK Board of Trustees, April 1, 1963, Folder “June 1962-April 1963,” Box 34, Dickey Papers (third and fourth quotations); Maj. John W. Dundon to Ben Hilbun, March 25, 1960, Folder “Athletics Department, 7-1-57 to 7-1-60,” Drawer 1, Ben Hilbun Presidential Files, MSU (fifth quotation); Jim Minter, “Rotating Slate May Cause Eventual Break Up of SEC,” *AJ*, January 30, 1965, 4, 6; Ralph Draughon to Herbert E. Longenecker, January 5, 1965, Folder “Southeastern Conference, Jan-Feb 1965,” Box 23, Draughon Presidential Papers (sixth quotation).

From the league's founding in 1933 onward, the SEC brethren left no doubt that they considered the act of scheduling more than a process of arranging games: it was an annunciation of ambition. And theirs was quite clear — undisputed national preeminence. Trumpeting this collective desire through their individual schedules, each of the thirteen charter members (Sewanee withdrew in 1940) brought to their fledgling confederacy an already robust engagement with the powerhouse programs of the East and Midwest. In his three volume *History of Southern Football* (1928), Fuzzy Woodruff explained that, by the early twenties, “no Southern team believed it was playing football unless it had at least one game in the North or East” lined up each season. Indeed, between 1919 and 1942, these thirteen universities fueled this popular craze with a steady supply of games, contracting 232 regular-season contests with non-southern opposition — 118 alone from 1933 to the wartime suspension of league play following the 1942 season (table 2.2). Playing northern teams “gave the Southern collegians a chance to see some of the rest of the country” while offering them “intimate insight into college traditions the nation over.” Most important, in his view, these series “taught them a good deal about football, not least important of these teachings being that the Southern game was just about as good as any other game and that larger universities won simply through superior reserves rather than through superior football knowledge or technique.”¹¹

There were some lessons the SEC brethren refused to learn — chiefly, the skill and ability of the black athlete. Thus, the extraordinary breadth of their engagement with the national game was facilitated by the equally extraordinary lengths to which they pushed segregation through informal yet rigorously enforced “gentleman's agreements.” Editorializing against the “shenanigans” which

¹¹ Fuzzy Woodruff, *A History of Southern Football, 1908-1928*, Vol. II (Atlanta: Georgia Southern Publishing Co., 1928), 185.

undergirded this practice, future NAACP secretary Roy Wilkins asserted in October 1936 that a southern team took “unfair and unsportsmanlike advantage of its rival” when drawing the color line since they “forc[ed] him to enter the contest at less than his full strength.” “Like a spoiled child,” he railed, “the South has insisted on having its way, on forcing its home town rules and traditions on its northern hosts.” Every invitation north was followed by a set of racist demands from the South: Georgia stipulated NYU bench quarterback Dave Meyers in their 1929 meeting at Yankee Stadium; Vanderbilt specified that Ohio State sideline tackle William Bell for their tilt in Columbus in 1931; Georgia Tech insisted that Michigan disqualify end Willis Ward when they played in Ann Arbor in 1934. But this practice wasn’t one-sided. The perverse success of these “gentleman’s agreements” required a willing accomplice — a role that universities across the country happily accepted in order to secure these series. “Northerners,” protested Charles P. Howard of the Atlanta *Daily World*, “are so afraid they will offend some southerner that they bend over backwards to insult the whole Negro race.” Walter White, Wilkins’ predecessor at the NAACP, called for “a more courageous and uncompromising attitude” that would “hasten the day when all reputable schools, wherever located, would be ashamed to attempt to dictate to another school who shall or shall not play in any given contest.” Most athletics directors acquiesced all the same, noted Harry Carlson at Colorado, even though they knew the practice proved “embarrassing to the negro.” He pleaded neither he nor anyone else could fill a schedule otherwise. “Some schools we oppose do not permit negroes to play on their teams,” he confessed, “nor will they play against a team which is represented by a negro student.”¹²

¹² Roy Wilkins, “Watchtower,” *NYAN*, October 24, 1936, 14 (first through fourth quotations); Charles P. Howard, “The Observer,” *ADW*, December 28, 1939, 6 (fifth quotation); Walter White to Bernie Bierman, November 30, 1936, Folder “Negroes: NYU Football Team, 1936-1941,” Box 13, Records of the Office of the President of the UNC System: Frank Porter Graham Files, 1932-1949, UNC-CH (sixth quotation); Harry Carlson to Carl Eckhardt, March 16, 1942, Folder 1, Box 29, Central Administration Records (seventh and eighth quotations).

Which was how Boston College head coach Frank Leahy explained the situation to his star fullback, Lou Montgomery, before their 1939 season began. On the Eagles' schedule that year were a pair of home games with SEC opponents — an October 12 match-up with Florida and, three weeks later, on November 4, a meeting against Auburn — and, already, Montgomery knew he wouldn't be allowed to play in either of them. "Coach Leahy told me of the condition in the spring," he informed the *New York Amsterdam News* that fall, "and worked hard to get the southern schools to reverse their decisions not to play against a Negro." His coach even went so far as to promise that "no-Negro clauses in contracts with southern schools are a thing of the past." Little good that did Montgomery, or his team, in the here-and-now. Only 5 feet, 8 inches tall, this "swivelhipped back," the Associated Negro Press raved, "is subject to break up anybody's ball game when he wraps his mitts around that leather." In fact, "it's well nigh impossible" to tackle him, "which may be what Florida suspected — and Auburn knows." Indispensable to BC's ground game — "when they hand him the pigskin," this ANP stringer quipped, "they stamp it 'special delivery' because he doesn't miss" — he watched forlornly as his teammates were "outplayed at every other turn" by their guests from the Sunshine state, losing their only regular-season game of the year, 7-0. The same indignity was repeated during the Auburn contest, when the Eagles struggled their way to a 13-7 victory. As bad as this was, Leahy agreed to bench him for a third time in the Cotton Bowl, on New Year's Day, against Clemson, at the request of the bowl organizers. Even worse, he reneged on his pre-season pledge to Montgomery, agreeing well in advance to sit him in BC's game at Tulane in September 1940. "The Boston College authorities," fumed the *Boston Globe*, "have chosen to sacrifice whatever rights he [Montgomery]

had in the matter for the sake of prestige and gate receipts.”¹³

How routinely SEC members drew the color line against those like Montgomery was directly related to how routine black participation became in these interwar years. “During the twenties and the thirties and the forties,” observed Atlanta University president Rufus Clement in 1954, “Negro football players in the nonsegregated colleges of the nation came to be accepted, praised, and/or criticized on the basis of their individual merits and their performances. By the middle of the century it was no longer an oddity to see a Negro athlete trotting out on the gridiron, being cheered, second-guessed, booed, criticized, hoisted upon shoulders, just as any other athlete of the period was treated.” These circumstances grew only more commonplace after the Second World War. Whether a genuine article of faith in the democratic principles that Americans fought to defend, or a pragmatic bid to bolster the quality of their football programs, universities outside the South resolved not to willfully accede to institutionalized racism. Such symbolic shows of racial progressivism effectively invalidated all prewar prohibitions, asserting a newfound leverage over their southern opposition. They were also in sharp disproportion to these institutions’ enrollment practices. While the Selective Service Readjustment Act of 1944 — more commonly known as the G. I. Bill of Rights — prompted exponential increases in college enrollment, the total number of black students matriculating in non-southern institutions by the end of the forties never exceeded 5,000. President Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights noted in its 1948 report that “in many of our northern educational institutions . . .

¹³ “Lou Montgomery, Backfield Ace of Boston College, Isn’t At All Upset Over Being Benched Twice in Dixie Tilts,” *NYAN*, November 11, 1939, 18 (first and second quotations); “Boston College to Bench Crack Players in Dixie,” *NYAN*, October 21, 1939, 18 (third through seventh quotations); “Florida Defeats Boston College on First-Period Touchdown,” *NYT*, October 13, 1939, 31 (eighth quotation); “Lou Montgomery to Feel Force of Grid Jim Crow Even in 1940,” *NYAN*, March 2, 1940, 18 (ninth quotation). Boston College not only played Tulane in 1940, but Auburn; Montgomery was benched for the Eagles’ 1941 Sugar Bowl game against Tennessee.

there is never more than a token enrollment of Negroes.” The token integration of their football programs, on the other hand, bestowed these universities with a measure of moral transcendence — high profile gestures aimed at clearly differentiating themselves from their racist counterparts in the South. Eager to snatch up those recently discharged African Americans G. I.’s who distinguished themselves in service ball, administrators and coaches from Cambridge to Corvallis now vowed that the ability of their black talent to play in each and every game was a non-negotiable proposition. As Penn State athletics director Carl Schott put it in November 1946: “It is the policy of the College to compete only under circumstances which will permit the playing of any or all members of its athletic teams.” Northern compliance with southern prerogative was finished.¹⁴

But old habits die hard. Regulating their opponents’ rosters with a free hand for more than a quarter-century conditioned the SEC membership to believe their power unchallengeable. They learned otherwise in 1946. Earlier that year, Mississippi State hastily arranged a November 16 home date with Nevada, conceived as the public centerpiece of the inaugural festivities honoring its new president, Fred Tom Mitchell, at which John O. Moseley, Nevada’s president, Mitchell’s friend, and a native southerner, would deliver the keynote address. Although the match-up was something of a curiosity, as the Maroons rarely played intersectional opponents at home, the celebratory air allayed any misgivings which athletics director “Dudy” Noble felt about bringing the Wolfpack to Starkville. Novelty proved the root of distraction. After all, any scouting report would surely have noted that

¹⁴ Rufus E. Clement, “Racial Integration in the Field of Sports,” *Journal of Negro Education* 23 (1954): 222-230, esp. 224 (first quotation); Charles H. Thompson, “The Critical Situation in Negro Higher and Professional Education,” *Journal of Negro Education* 25 (Fall 1946): 590; President’s Committee on Civil Rights, *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947), 66 (second quotation); “Yale Elects First Negro Captain As Jackson Heads Football Team,” *NYT*, November 23, 1948, 1, 41; “Miami Agrees To Cancel Game,” *Daily Collegian*, November 6, 1946, 1 (third quotation).

hard-charging running back Bill Bass and skilled end and punter Horace Gillom were without a doubt Nevada's best players; in fact, Dick Friendlich of the *San Francisco Chronicle* went so far as to judge Gillom "the best punter and pass-catcher on the [West] Coast." He and Bass also happened to be black — a fact Maroon head coach Allyn McKeen and his staff first discovered from their scouts no more than two-and-a-half weeks before the game was set to be played. "It is not the custom in the South," Noble anxiously wired Nevada athletics director and head coach Jim Aiken on November 1, "for members of the Negro race to compete against members of the white race nor members of the white race to compete with or against members of the Negro race in athletic contests." This "traditional custom" proved a bright line that Mississippi State "cannot under any circumstances violate." Calling on Aiken to heed these traditions, he insisted that Bass and Gillom stay behind in Reno, lest their appearance in Starkville cause "an unfortunate commotion."¹⁵

Customarily, such a demand elicited reflexive compliance. Past experience showed Noble that the principal concerns for most non-southern universities in these situations were that the game went on as planned and the guarantee check cleared the bank. Not so with Nevada. His wire was met there on its campus with overwhelming incredulity and unanimous outrage. The university's public relations director announced that "if Mississippi State insists we leave our two colored stars [at] home, the remainder of the Wolfpack will keep them company in Reno." Its student body not only saw this matter through the prism of race, but also in terms of military service; Bass and Gillom were ex-servicemen playing football at an institution where nearly half of the 1700 undergraduates were

¹⁵ Dick Friendlich, "Attell Wishes His Boy Gets Belted," *SFC*, November 3, 1946, H4; "Nevada Board Refuses To Bow to Southern 'Jimcro,'" *ADW*, November 6, 1946, 5; "Nevada Silent on Racial Issue," *SFC*, October 30, 1946, H1; Friendlich, "Seems No Team Stands, Fights," *SFC*, October 16, 1946, H3 (first quotation); "Nevada Contest Cancelled," *The Reflector*, November 6, 1946, 1 (second through fourth quotations); "Nevada Cancels Game At Mississippi State," *SFC*, November 5, 1946, H1 (fifth quotation).

veterans. The intensity of their reaction, “reported to be 100 per cent” against submitting to Noble’s demands, persuaded the university’s Board of Athletic Control to cancel the game rather than bench Bass and Gillom. “After due consideration of your letter and wire and after receiving legal advice,” board members wired Noble on November 4, they were “of the opinion that it is impossible for us to reach any mutual agreement.” Mississippi State was thus released from all contractual obligations and the \$3000 cancellation fee was waived without penalty. And while some in the press speculated that Moseley might impede any move to cancel the game on account of his southern background — Friendlich declared that “his attitude on the race question involved will decide the problem of whether Nevada bows to Jim Crow or maintains its dignity by staying home” — he heralded the Board’s action as a victory for “the interests of racial fair play.” “It is the duty of the University,” he argued, “to keep its doors open forever to all citizens, regardless of race, economic status, political views or religious convictions, and that intolerance, in all its forms, should be foresworn.”¹⁶

His sentiments neatly framed the moral terms by which most observers interpreted what was at stake in the cancellation. Like those veterans on the Nevada campus itself, the war shaded how they interpreted Bass and Gillom’s right to participate. It was “outrageous,” in the view of a veterans’ group in Sacramento, “that Negro veterans would return from a fight against Fascism and intolerance overseas only to find these shameful conditions at home.” Both athletes, the *Nevada State Journal* asserted, “are Americans who were good enough to wear the uniform of their country in time of need.” In canceling the game, then, the university “upheld” the “concept of Americanism.” Two

¹⁶ “Color Line May Halt Grid Game,” *LAT*, October 29, 1946, 7 (first quotation); “Biggest Enrollment Strains University,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 11, 1946, 6; “Nevada Cancels Game At Mississippi State,” H1 (second through fourth quotations); Friendlich, “Attell Wishes His Boy Gets Belted,” H4 (fifth quotation); John O. Moseley to Maceo Crutcher, November 9, 1946, Folder 4, no box, John O. Moseley Papers, UNR (sixth and seventh quotations).

students at the University of California at Berkeley wrote Mitchell to ask “how can you possibly teach democracy when apparently you do not understand its fundamentals?” “These 2 ‘Nigger’ Ex-G. I.’s,” mocked another letter writer to Mitchell, “are better Americans and better human beings than your kind will ever be.” A survivor of the Battle of the Bulge lodged perhaps the most poignant protest of all. “I would not be here today, Mr. President, to write this letter,” he informed Mitchell, “had it not been for a Negro American Soldier, who carried me to safety . . . after I had had my right foot torn off by shrapnel.” Upon hearing about Mississippi State’s efforts to draw the color line, “I am obliged to hang my head in shame.” “Is this the measure of gratitude,” he wondered, “we choose to mete to [a] race who so gallantly accepted the challenge to march shoulder to shoulder with us to save the world for Democracy?”¹⁷

Saving democratic values was precisely what officials in Starkville believed they were doing: preserving the ability of whites to impose their will through the ruse of states’ rights. Admitting he was “sorry” the contest was cancelled, Noble nevertheless stood firm in his contention that “it would be impossible to play the game if Nevada used their two Negro players.” To his mind, competition could not be permitted to overwhelm conscience: “we simply couldn’t violate Southern tradition by going ahead on that basis.” Even though racial attitudes were evolving in other parts of the country, Noble, as well as Mitchell, believed it their duty to defend segregation in all its forms. “This matter,” Mitchell confided to one well-wisher, “has not been a debatable one for us because there has been

¹⁷ Ty Cobb, “Inside Stuff,” *Nevada State Journal*, November 8, 1946 12 (first quotation); “Proper and Decent,” *Nevada State Journal*, November 5, 1946, 4 (second and third quotations); Jack Thompson and Joseph Henriksen to Fred Tom Mitchell, November 5, 1946 (fourth quotation); Daniel Webster Caulfield to Fred Tom Mitchell, undated [mailed November 6, 1946] (fifth quotation); both in Folder “Commendations and Criticisms – Folder 1”; Harvey Doggett to Fred Tom Mitchell, undated [circa November 1946], Folder “Commendations and Criticisms – Folder 3” (sixth and seventh quotations); all in Drawer 2, Fred Tom Mitchell Presidential Files, MSU.

only one answer — namely, that we would not play teams composed of negro players in part.”¹⁸

While Mississippi State officials reveled in a moral victory for the cause of segregation, Nevada’s outright rejection of their demands signaled an irretrievable loss of their power to exert their will upon starting lineups. “Let ‘em play in their own Bigotry Conference,” Friendlich cried, since situations like these “can’t be corrected until the Jim Crow states are left severely alone to play football among themselves.” Many in the SEC were keen to take him up on the offer. The desperate defense of the racial status quo — what Mitchell majestically extolled as “the tradition which is so common in the Southland” — emerged as the league’s default position on intersectional play by the late forties. The exigencies of this new postwar world eluded them: none of these institutions had as yet determined how to cut a clear channel through the color line to meet northern opposition on less contentious ground than their own home fields. Nor had they found the proper balance between honoring the legal and cultural dictates of segregation, mitigating this newfound self-assertiveness among their intersectional foes, and living up to that basic impulse of competitive sport — the willingness to take on all comers. Nor did they feel particularly compelled to do so, especially after hearing from their fans. One “staunch Miss. Stater” called it “an honor to know” that her team was “all white and does not wish to come in close contact with the negro players.” Another fan praised Mitchell “on [your] stand in not letting your football team lower its prestige by permitting its athletes to engage in any sport with negroes.” “We can get a negro team somewhere to play [Nevada] if that is what they desire,” an Alabama booster from Tuscaloosa proposed to Mitchell, “and if it means a

¹⁸ “Maroons Can’t Break Custom,” *SFC*, November 5, 1946, H1 (first through third quotations); Fred T. Mitchell to Samuel G. Swain, November 4, 1946, Folder “Commendations and Criticisms – Folder 1,” Drawer 2 (146), Mitchell Presidential Files (fourth quotation).

sacrifice, or guarantee, just pay it and pass the hat over here . . . and you can collect it back.”¹⁹

Acutely preoccupied with preserving the racial status quo, the cumulative opposition of meddlesome public supporters — fans and boosters, students and alumni, members of institutional boards of trust, state and local politicians, and, in some cases, even the media — sought to stamp out any willingness among institution heads and athletics directors alike to schedule integrated teams. Needless to say, popular will has always been the single most irrepressible force in college football — a force, to be sure, for universities to alternately attract and resist. Athletics departments need the general public to purchase season tickets, supply financial contributions, and sustain the program through their abiding (if not always rational) support. In return, the general public expects just one thing: a winner. Oftentimes such expectations impel supporters to demand a program cast in the image of their desires — a proposition which ineluctably complicates the ability of institutional leaders to make independent choices about the direction of their program. Regardless of the issue — be it coaching, recruiting, or even scheduling — there is no area of athletics department affairs which the public believes it cannot somehow influence. When a matter as viscerally opposed as the participation of black student-athletes was introduced into this dynamic in the Jim Crow South, institutional autonomy readily succumbed to the vicissitudes of popular outrage. As a result, intersectional series supplicated ramifications whose reach extended far beyond wins and losses: the appearance of an athlete of color in such a contest held the potential to strike at the very well being of the university itself. In this climate, institutional prerogative was little match for public desire.

¹⁹ Friendlich, “Seems No Team Stands, Fights,” H3 (first and second quotations); Fred T. Mitchell to Samuel G. Swain, November 4, 1946 (third quotation); Mrs. H. W. Greer to Fred T. Mitchell, November 6, 1946 (fourth and fifth quotations); W. B. Dickson to Fred T. Mitchell, November 7, 1946 (sixth quotation); Samuel G. Swain to Fred T. Mitchell, November 2, 1946 (seventh quotation); all in Folder “Commendations and Criticisms – Folder 1,” Drawer 2 (146), Mitchell Presidential Files.

III

Those SEC members which pushed forward with intersectional play struggled to find a competitive rationale that allowed them to circumnavigate popular will. It was a challenge Vanderbilt chancellor Harvie Branscomb faced when a steady stream of protests poured in from alumni concerning their alma mater's October 23, 1948, game at Yale. These letters crossed his desk more than a month after the fact — a delayed reaction made all the more peculiar for how these alumni trained their fire on a game that the Commodores won in convincing fashion, 35-0. Such a decisive victory was typically cause for celebration, not consternation, at a university as unaccustomed to winning as Vanderbilt. Yet these alumni were less concerned with *how* the Commodores played than *who* they played against: lining up quite conspicuously at halfback for Yale was Levi Jackson, an African American. With his speed and skill held in check by the Commodores' relentless backfield penetration, the Elis' star player registered a far greater impact on racial sensibilities that afternoon than on the conduct of the game itself. As dismaying as they found his participation, what rankled these alumni most was their alma mater's seeming complicity in it. No public or private objections were voiced by the Vanderbilt side prior to the game — a silence for which they all felt Branscomb must answer. One alumnus informed the chancellor that he was "delighted" by the victory, but "after hearing that our boys had to play against a negro, I felt disgraced along with many another old grad." "Are we so hard up for teams to play," he grouched, "that we have to descend to such depths? We have no objections to negro colleges, grocery stores, taxi cab companies, ice plants, or anything else. But we think they should confine their activities to their own race, especially the social aspects of the same."²⁰

²⁰ S. M. McMurray to Harvie Branscomb, November 15, 1948, Folder 11, Box 212, Chancellor's Papers, VU.

Another alum counseled Branscomb that he needn't look to an increasingly integrated North for non-conference opponents when "there are plenty of good teams in the South, our natural rivals, for Vanderbilt to meet." To his mind, there was "no logic against refusing to play against Negroes in the South and then playing them in the North." "When I went to Vanderbilt," he reminisced, "it was unthinkable that our athletic teams would go North and play against colleges with Negroes in their line-up." By flouting racial provisos so deliberately, this game heralded an unequivocal shift in Vanderbilt's competitive — and institutional — values. "The movement of certain groups in this country to break down segregation is being pressed on all fronts," he charged, and Branscomb's own acquiescence to pressure from liberal-minded Yale officials needlessly opened up a new one. "Once we proceed to break down the barriers of segregation," he warned, "the South is moving towards its inevitable ruin." Determined as they were to prevent such a calamity, these alumni were perfectly content — and absolutely insistent — that their alma mater seek sanctuary from changing times in regional series. Increased, if not exclusive, interaction with the members of the South's major conferences could prove competitively and culturally beneficial for Commodore football. "In the Southern, Southeastern, and Southwestern [*sic*] conferences," this same alumnus argued in a follow-up letter, "we can secure all the good games and more than we shall ever need."²¹

Branscomb had other ideas in mind. Even though "I don't think any of us enjoyed the experience of playing against Levi Jackson," he encouraged dissident alums to "work out a formula which will enable us to meet this problem in the way we would all prefer, without being compelled to pull ourselves into an increasingly limited area, not only in football games but in a number of other

²¹ Norman Farrell to Harvie Branscomb, December 28, 1948 (first through fifth quotations); Norman Farrell to Harvie Branscomb, January 4, 1949 (sixth quotation); both in Folder 11, Box 212, Chancellor's Papers.

respects.” This was precisely what he was doing at the very moment they were taking aim at Jackson’s participation — actively working (unsuccessfully) to arrange a second meeting with the Elis in 1949. “I suspect that ‘the worst beating since 1940’ may have eliminated our chances of continuing the games,” he noted wryly to athletics director and head coach Red Sanders, “but no doubt we should make a try.” Jackson would have been a senior in 1949, team captain no less, and a rematch only promised to rekindle similar indignation. No matter to Branscomb. He took the highly unusual step of contracting the game in New Haven himself with the idea that “a growing number of other Ivy League games” would follow; not only did he want to extend the Yale series beyond 1948, he exhorted Sanders to “push the button” in seeking dates with Harvard and Princeton. He was solidly determined to continue these kinds of games because he was convinced they helped to solve another dilemma: how “to maintain a genuinely amateur program” in an era when college sports seriously strayed from principles of amateurism. “Football had become big business,” he lamented, “with large professional staffs, astronomical budgets, and an enormous public following.” Highly dubious that Vanderbilt, with its stringent academic standards and modest financial means, should follow suit, he resolved that there was “a better way for institutions like ours than trying to emulate the Green Bay Packers.” “To build up a counter-tradition” to these trends, then, he employed the tools of scheduling, renovating Vanderbilt’s schedules to make room for more non-conference games like this one against Yale — series with “prestige institutions not eminent for their athletics but their academic accomplishments.”²²

²² Harvie Branscomb to S. M. McMurray, November 20, 1948, Folder 11, Box 212 (first and second quotations); Harvie Branscomb to Henry R. Sanders, October 28, 1948 (third quotation); Harvie Branscomb to Henry R. Sanders, March 24, 1947 (fifth quotation); both in Folder 4, Box 130; all in Chancellor’s Papers; Harvie Branscomb, *Purely Academic: An Autobiography* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1978), 148-49 (fourth and sixth through ninth quotations).

Whatever competitive or even ethical sanity Branscomb thought these prestige opponents would bring to Vanderbilt football, he couldn't escape the inherent contradiction of his scheme: the Commodores were obliged to play intersectional series out of sheer necessity as "there were few like-minded institutions of our size and standing in our region." Before the Yale game could be added to the 1948 schedule, he first had to broker a separate peace with the rise of the black athlete at these so-called prestige institutions. In February 1947, two months before Yale's offer arrived via cable and just three after the Nevada imbroglio at Mississippi State, he sought out the counsel of the Committee on Athletics, Health, and Physical Education, a faculty board that oversaw, among other things, Vanderbilt's athletics department. Writing Fred J. Lewis, dean of the School of Engineering and committee chair, he asked them "to advise me whether or not you feel that we would want to undertake a game with an eastern school in which the possibility of playing against a Negro player would always be present." Even though Yale administrators confided that Jackson's grades "are so low that he is prohibited from playing further unless and until he brings them up," Branscomb didn't feel Vanderbilt could afford to leave matters to chance. "While they might hold out such a player," he posited, "we could not count on that." More to the point, "by the time we get a game they may have others of the same race."²³

Keenly aware of the imperatives underlying the chancellor's inquiry, Lewis reported that it was the "general opinion" of his committee that the "scheduling of games with football teams from the East and Middle West . . . would very likely involve playing against negro players." They were

²³ Branscomb, *Purely Academic*, 149 (first quotation); Harvie Branscomb to Fred J. Lewis, February 17, 1947, Folder 15, Box 129, Chancellor's Papers (second through fifth quotations). Branscomb claimed in all his correspondence before the game was scheduled, and in all his responses to angry alums after it was played, that Jackson's academic eligibility was always in doubt. See, for instance, Harvie Branscomb to Henry R. Sanders, March 24, 1947, Folder 4, Box 130, Chancellor's Papers. For Yale's formal offer, see William C. DeVane to Harvie Branscomb, telegram, April 11, 1947, Folder 15, Box 129, Chancellor's Papers.

“equally sure” that Yale officials “do not want or would not consent to holding Jackson out of the game if we were to play in New Haven, and he were eligible.” These circumstances offered ample evidence that changing times required a change in policy: if Vanderbilt was to play a national schedule, then its leaders needed to learn how to accommodate emerging postwar realities of race. While law and custom still dictated that “negro players would not be allowed to participate in Vanderbilt home games,” these practices did not, in the committeemen’s judgment, entirely preclude the Commodores from playing integrated opposition. “Such games scheduled away from Nashville would have to be according to the rules of the place where the game was to be played,” they declared, leaving Vanderbilt officials “no right to require any exceptions with regard to personnel.” It was a shrewd bit of bureaucratic jujitsu: inverting the primary conceit of states’ rights politics — respect for sovereignty — to justify interracial play proved baldly pragmatic and utterly ingenious. Here, at last, was the long sought-after terra infirma upon which a national schedule could not only be built, but sustained. Splitting the difference between pigskin and politics, this method anticipated schedules filled with top-flight competition from all corners of the country — at a time when few intersectional foes were likely to take the field without a black player. A pure national schedule, then, represented nothing more than idealism (or naivete) run amok. No white southern university — not even Vanderbilt — could push that hard that fast in the direction of interracial play. The concept of gridiron competition was so entangled within the precepts of custom that uncoupling one from the other was inconceivable. Pigskin *was* politics.²⁴

²⁴ Fred J. Lewis to Harvie Branscomb, February 18, 1947, Folder 15, Box 129, Chancellor’s Papers (quotations).

IV

“There has been some change in the attitude on the part of Georgia people,” Georgia president O. C. Aderhold conceded, though “the vast majority of us still feel as we did a quarter of a century ago.” Under these circumstances, the idea of interracial competition was still too radical, too explosive. Consider, for instance, the events preceding Georgia’s game with Pennsylvania at Philadelphia’s Franklin Field, set for November 8, 1952. Eleven months earlier, in December of 1951, Harmon Caldwell, chancellor of the University System of Georgia, promptly forwarded to Aderhold an overwrought letter penned by a regent from Augusta who had just discovered that the Quaker team captain, Bob Evans, was an African American. Indeed, Evans, their star tackle, was elected by his (mostly white) teammates to lead them in the 1952 season. His singular prominence on the squad caused this regent to question the wisdom of going forward with the game. “I can visualize right now,” he brooded, “the pictures of a Georgia captain meeting the negro Pennsylvania captain in the center of the field, being broadcast over all the country, just prior to the first Tuesday in November of 1952.” Convinced that “it would be a bad idea for us to get involved in any such mess as this,” he told Caldwell that “not only am I against it on principle, but practically speaking, it may cause considerable trouble in the Legislature.” In light of such projections, Caldwell gently suggested to Aderhold that “you may wish to discuss this matter with your Athletic Board,” which he did exactly one week later during their regular monthly session. Relating the gist of Bloch’s anxieties to the assembled body, Aderhold didn’t talk them out of the game, but he did demand modifications to how Georgia scheduled its non-conference series if only to palliate these concerns. In a move reminiscent of the actions of their Vanderbilt counterparts, the Board passed a resolution reaffirming Georgia’s intentions to slate a national schedule and “play against whatever player a northern team fields.” Their

concession? “We [will] not schedule a game in Athens with a team who would play a colored player.”²⁵

This policy signaled no discernable shift in the Bulldogs’ scheduling practices other than the fact that it was now in writing. When an alum angrily protested “in plain old Georgia language” UGA’s practice of “playing niggers,” especially as it applied to the Penn game, Aderhold made no apologies. “One institution does not have the right to suggest the personnel to represent another institution.” One thing was certain: the inevitable surrendering of racial prerogatives to the will of northern opponents demanded an imprimatur of change far weightier than policy nuances. These situations required a university to reach an understanding — formal or not — with its boosters which quietly exempted its football program from prevailing racial norms. Not an easy bargain, to say the least. Institution heads and athletics directors were hardly negotiating from a position of strength in these situations. Not only the color line, but the almighty bottom line, forbade it. “A large outlay of money,” Aderhold explained, was necessary “in order to develop teams that give competition to other teams in the Conference and throughout the country.” In an age when gate receipts were the principal revenue stream in college athletics, he recognized that “if money is flowing freely and people go in large numbers to football contests,” life for his program, for any program, was good. However, “if we were to have a sharp decrease in attendance at football games, we would be in terrible shape.” A university could scarcely afford to do anything which might imperil the sustained public financing of its gridiron endeavors — even demonstrating too eager a desire to schedule integrated teams. And,

²⁵ O. C. Aderhold to Percy Rubinstein, June 24, 1952 (first quotation); Harmon Caldwell to O. C. Aderhold, December 11, 1951 (second through fourth quotations are from the excerpts of Bloch’s letter included in the body of Caldwell’s letter; the fifth quotation is Caldwell’s own concluding directive); Minutes of the Board of Directors of the University of Georgia Athletic Association, December 19, 1951 (sixth and seventh quotations); all in Folder “Athletics, Board of Directors, January 1951-July 1953,” Box 66, Omer Clyde Aderhold Papers, UGA.

when it came to scheduling in the shadow of Jim Crow, the dictates of popular tastes were not just relevant. They rendered all else irrelevant.²⁶

A national schedule proved a far easier sell if the opponents on that schedule projected a vision of the nation which mirrored the segregated South. Thus began a mad scramble to locate the few remaining northern universities whose teams had not yet been integrated. Catholic colleges, for instance, remained so reliably white from season to season that many among the SEC brethren felt comfortable enough to meet them on their own home fields. Take Villanova: its ten games against league members between 1946 and 1953 made it one of the SEC's most frequently contracted, non-southern foes of the postwar era. In a show of their winking confidence, eight of those ten contests were played at conference venues.²⁷ Moreover, 43 of the SEC's 78 intersectional contests scheduled in these same eight seasons were home games, indicating that most member institutions were not yet willing to sacrifice game revenues in order to prove a point. Yet these kinds of opponents couldn't be counted on to hold the line forever — in fact, the pool was shrinking such that Kentucky athletics director Bernie Shively, in July 1951, frantically asked his Athletic Association Board of Directors “to instruct me as to how to deal with the participation of negroes on athletic teams which play here in Lexington.” Their advice: play whatever team the opponent puts on the field. This wasn't the case

²⁶ Percy Rubinstein to Wallace Butts, June 19, 1952 (first and second quotations); O. C. Aderhold to Percy Rubinstein, June 24, 1952 (third and fourth quotations); both in Folder “Athletics, Board of Directors, January 1951-July 1953,” Box 66, Aderhold Papers; O. C. Aderhold to Hughes Spalding, April 6, 1951, Folder “Athletic Association, 1948-51,” Box 40, Chancellor's Subject Files, GaA (fifth through seventh quotations).

²⁷ In those seasons between 1946 and 1962, Villanova played 48 regular season contests against southern teams — the most of any northern university. Indeed, Villanova was believed to be so reliably white that the organizers of the Dixie Bowl in Birmingham extended a bid to the Wildcats in December 1946; the game was never played since the organizers could not convince any other institution to play. See “Seek Villanova Rival,” *NYT*, December 3, 1946, 45. In comparison, Navy played 47 intersectional games; Boston College 41; and Duquesne 18 — or exactly one half of all its games in the four seasons (1947-50) it fielded a football team.

at other SEC institutions, as intersectional foes began terminating game contracts because they could no longer justify the segregation of participants. When Bobby Dodd and his Georgia Tech squad took their own 30-game winning streak into their October 24, 1953, match-up with Notre Dame in South Bend, the unavoidable subplot for northern sportswriters was the recent decision of Irish athletics director Moose Krause to nix the return engagement to Atlanta in 1954. Given the presence of two black sophomores — end Wayne Edmonds and fullback Dick Washington — on its varsity squad, “the university administration at Notre Dame,” Arch Ward of the *Chicago Tribune* reported, “ruled that a student who qualified for membership on any of its athletic teams was entitled to the same consideration as any other member.” Krause knew Edmonds and Washington wouldn’t receive such consideration if the Irish played in segregated Atlanta.²⁸

Such assertiveness brought about an unquestionable level of suspicion and distrust on the other side of the Mason-Dixon line. Unwilling to play on any terms other than their own, university leaders at Alabama were particularly cautious, in the words of its then-president John Gallalee, “to prevent any untoward happening” when arranging intersectional games. Although the Crimson Tide had played non-southern opponents in five of their first six postwar seasons — Boston College in 1946; a three-game series with Duquesne from 1947 to 1949; and the aforementioned 1951 date with Villanova — these contests were arrested in mistrust. “We always protected ourselves in planning intersectional games,” boasted Hill Ferguson — the widely acknowledged kingpin of the university’s Board of Trustees — by fixing a watchful, even paranoid eye on these teams lest they sneak an athlete

²⁸ Annual Report of the Athletic Director, 1950-51, appended to the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Kentucky Athletic Association, July 18, 1951, Folder “Meetings of the Board of Directors of the Athletic Association, July 1947-July 1956,” Box 53, Herman L. Donovan Papers, UK (first quotation); Arch Ward, “In the Wake of the News,” *CT*, October 24, 1953, A1 (second quotation).

of color onto their roster.²⁹

Alabama and its SEC brethren soon discovered, though, that the possibility of black athletes playing in these contests proved too widespread, too inexorable, to be surmounted by cherry-picking the few all-white squads out of an ever-increasingly integrated field of competitors and scheduling them — a lesson the Crimson Tide learned too well in late 1952. When sportswriters throughout the state speculated that Alabama's likely New Year's Day opponent in the Orange Bowl was Pittsburgh, Ferguson frantically wrote Gallalee to warn him that the Panther team "had four negroes on it!!!" Equally shaken by this rumor, Hugo Friedman, an active and influential member of the Committee on Physical Education and Athletics, advised that "if anything did come in the way of an invitation we want to be SURE to insist that no negroes be allowed in the game." For his part, Gallalee reassured these anxious supporters that, "if we did receive an invitation to the Orange Bowl or to any other bowl, we should not accept unless we know our opponent." And, yet, when the Orange Bowl Committee tapped Syracuse, not Pittsburgh, to fill the bill, he happily signed off on the match-up without ever glancing at its roster. Perhaps such negligence explains why, reading over a scouting report of Syracuse in the *Birmingham News* a few days before leaving for Miami, he was so mortified by the mention of Avatus Stone, the Orange's black quarterback. Believing that he had been duped, Gallalee was adamant Alabama hold the color line at all costs. Excitedly cornering head coach "Red" Drew in the locker room just prior to kickoff, Gallalee ordered him to pull his team off the field straightaway if Stone was sent into the game. But Stone didn't make the trip: he wasn't even on the team. (He had quit in August, after tiring of the relentless verbal abuse of his white coaches, who

²⁹ John M. Gallalee to Hill Ferguson, November 21, 1952 (first quotation); Hill Ferguson to John M. Gallalee, November 18, 1952 (second quotation); both in Folder "Correspondence, Dr. John M. Gallalee, 1950-1952," Box 4, A. B. Moore Papers, UA.

dubbed him “Nigger Stone,” and their edict that he stop dating white coeds.) While his fears came to naught, Gallalee knew Alabama was in no position to test fate. Dealing with surprises in a bowl game was challenging enough; doing so in the regular season would spell certain catastrophe for the university. With few options, backing away from the national game seemed the only viable solution for avoiding black athletes. Retreat became remedy.³⁰

V

If, as historian Joseph Crespino writes, the *Brown v. Board of Education* case hovered over the South in the early fifties “like a slow-moving thunderstorm on the near horizon,” then SEC commissioner Bernie Moore spent most of those years before its arrival herding his members to the relative safety of a round-robin schedule, where he believed they would find shelter from the political and cultural tumult sweeping over the world outside the conference. Since December 1946, when a narrow seven member majority ratified a bylaw which established a six-game intraleague slate, the commissioner had served as this format’s greatest champion, most ardent enforcer, and loudest critic. He was “not convinced” that the six-game minimum, which took effect in 1948, was “a mathematical possibility” in a conference where each member was a free agent. By December 17, 1953 — five months to the day before the U. S. Supreme Court issued its unanimous opinion in *Brown* — Moore was fed up, unleashing his frustrations in a sharply-worded memorandum to the athletics directors. “For the past four years,” he railed, “I have pointed out to the Directors that it was almost impossible to comply

³⁰ Hill Ferguson to John M. Gallalee, November 18, 1952 (first quotation); John M. Gallalee to Hill Ferguson, November 21, 1952 (third quotation); both in Folder “Correspondence, Dr. John M. Gallalee, 1950-1952,” Box 4, Moore Papers; Hugo Friedman to John M. Gallalee, November 17, 1952, Folder “Athletics — General, 1952,” Box 3, John M. Gallalee Papers, UA (second quotation); E. Culpeper Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation’s Last Stand at the University of Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 21.

with this rule since some of the member institutions do not play each other. It would be very simple to formulate a schedule under this rule if all member institutions were willing to schedule football games with each other.” Despite his pretensions to authority, he was a toothless lion: warning that he was prepared to use the full weight of his office “to enforce the rule,” all he could muster was a feckless proposal for “a 10 or 12 year Master Schedule” that required “each institution to play all other members of the Conference within that period of time.”³¹

Yet *Brown*’s psychic impact on the white South violently reshaped the competitive paradigm of SEC football. Northern institutions were now armed with ample political ammunition to pressure their southern counterparts into sweeping clean every last vestige of Jim Crow from their gridiron cultures — whether the segregation of participants or that of spectators — before they would even contemplate a potential series. Meanwhile, white politicians at home in the South launched their own campaign of pressure and intimidation aimed at limiting the ability of state-funded universities to face black student-athletes under any circumstances. The breaking point came in December 1955, when Georgia governor Marvin Griffin sought to put the kibosh on Georgia Tech’s appearance with an integrated Pittsburgh team in the Sugar Bowl on New Year’s Day. The game went on as planned, resulting in a 7-0 victory for the Yellow Jackets, but the fallout was swift. No sooner did its Board of Regents squelch Griffin’s intrusive designs than they instituted their own policy, patterned after the one adopted by the UGA Athletic Association in 1951, mandating “all contests held within the

³¹ Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 18 (first quotation); Minutes of Annual Meeting of Southeastern Conference, December 13, 1946, Folder 1 [1946-47], Drawer 12, Mitchell Presidential Files; Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee, May 18, 1952, Folder 4, Box 22, Early Presidents Collection, GT (second and third quotations); Bernie Moore to Athletics Directors of SEC, memorandum, December 17, 1953 (fourth and fifth quotations); Proposed Amendments to Southeastern Conference By-Laws, issued on November 18, 1953 [and appended to Moore’s memorandum] (sixth and seventh quotations); both in Folder “Southeastern Conference, 1953-1955,” Box 17, Oliver Cromwell Carmichael Papers, UA.

State of Georgia” conform to “the Constitution, laws, customs, and traditions of the State.” This rule left Bobby Dodd unfazed. Despite his advocacy of intersectional play, he told the UPI wire service, “we followed that policy while there was no such rule in writing.”³²

One month later, the Mississippi House of Representatives voted down a measure that would have made it a felony offense, punishable by a year in prison and a \$2500 fine no less, for officials at Ole Miss and Mississippi State to knowingly arrange an athletic contest in which black players were expected to participate. For their part, Louisiana’s state legislature successfully passed a similar bill that spring to “prohibit all interracial dating, social functions, entertainments, athletic training, games, sports, and contests” within state borders, effectively shrinking the pool of opponents for LSU and Tulane alike. While LSU president Troy Middleton argued in April that it was “in accord with the public interest” for “a major university [to] carry on a program of intercollegiate athletics against major competition, including intersectional contests,” the passage of this bill into law three months later forced the cancellation of the Tigers’ home-and-home series with Wisconsin in 1957 and 1958. What was in the public interest was presently a matter of shifting determination.³³

All these developments gave Moore’s cause new life. As the league’s athletics directors and head coaches gathered for their annual spring meetings in May 1956, an abject sense of fatalism settled over their sessions — a condition which ultimately brought most of them around to his side

³² Draft Resolution of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, undated [December 1955], Folder 15, Box 1, Board of Regents Collection, GT (first and second quotations); “Dodd ‘Delighted’ Over Regents’ Vote,” *Savannah Morning News*, December 6, 1955, 15 (third quotation). For a full account of the Sugar Bowl controversy, see, generally, Robert W. Dubay, “Politics, Pigmentation, and Pigskin: The Georgia Tech Sugar Bowl Controversy of 1955,” *Atlanta History* 39 (1995): 21-35.

³³ “Seeks Racial Ban in College Sports,” *C-L*, January 19, 1956, 1; “Sports Segregation Gains in Louisiana,” *NYT*, July 6, 1956, 45 (first quotation); “Statement by President Troy H. Middleton to Board of Supervisors, L. S. U., on Some Aspects of Segregation Pertaining to the University,” April 7, 1956, Folder 4, Box 28, Board of Supervisors Records (second quotation); “Curb on Football Seen,” *NYT*, July 20, 1956, 19.

on round-robin scheduling. Some saw new wisdom in a rotating schedule that increased the annual number of intraleague series from the current six to seven or even eight. It was a striking about-face for a group which conspired for a full decade to keep the number of league dates as low as possible. And their newfound interest handed Moore an opening: for his plan to become, at long last, a reality, he would play upon their shared racial anxieties about non-conference scheduling. In late June, he sent each athletics director a letter in which he not only aggressively lobbied for the round-robin format, but warned that “there is no doubt that we will be forced before too long to play more and more games among ourselves.” “Any rotating plan,” he reminded them, “means each institution will have to give and take a little.” However convinced members were that they had less and less ground to surrender (perhaps because each took so much to begin with), he argued that, “so far as scheduling is concerned,” they were “pretty well hemmed in.” The cause was clear: “segregation (including the insistence of some institutions outside this area that tickets and seating be de-segregated even if there are no negro players [on their teams]).” Take a look around the country, he asked them: integration was moving at a pace that would place them at a competitive disadvantage soon enough if they didn’t shore up their interests. “The Big Seven institutions are already integrated,” so “competition there for the Southeastern Conference is limited.” “Most Eastern games” were also out due to “segregation problems.” A well-integrated Big Ten had just adopted its own nine-game round-robin slate, leaving “only one outside game possible (which will be bid for by Notre Dame, the Service Academies, the West Coast teams, and possibly Oklahoma.)” The Atlantic Coast and Southwest Conferences were the only other segregated leagues — and the latter “recently expanded to take in Texas Tech,” thereby “cut[ting] down competition with outside institutions by one game.” An inward turn, then, offered a stable of first-rate opponents, as well as a schedule in which no racial complications would

ever arise. For programs already in flight from the national game, Moore's plan offered competitive salvation. But budgets were also on the line. "I do not believe any member institutions would be hurt financially by this schedule," Moore concluded, "and some would be strengthened. Furthermore, I believe that with a round-robin schedule, with the added interest and publicity, all games could be built into a substantial gate." Whiteness could be made popular *and* profitable.³⁴

Most members — a simple majority, at least — were willing to explore the possibilities of Moore's round-robin plan. When the SEC Executive Committee convened in Atlanta in March 1957, Moore presented his final plans for a rotating schedule that would run through the 1965 season, with five permanent games selected on the basis of "finances and long-time rivalry" and two more games through which the other six members would cycle every two years. Traditional rivalries — Alabama-Auburn, Ole Miss-Mississippi State, LSU-Tulane, Georgia-Georgia Tech — were preserved, while similarly keeping in place those long-running series, such as Florida-Georgia or Alabama-Tennessee, that filled out the mid-season stretch of the schedule. Even more important to the commissioner's mind, it required all the members to finally play on a regular basis — or, in his words, contract a "balanced schedule." For those programs searching for a way out of the looming crisis of integration, his eleven-week schedule left vacant four weekends each season that could be "used to schedule additional SEC games." Such flexibility was deliberately designed to entice members to build their schedules through heavier reliance on intraleague series rather than non-conference ones — and thus offering them the supposed sanctuary of segregated competition.³⁵

³⁴ Bernie Moore to Richard O. Baumbach, June 20, 1956, Folder "Southeastern Conference, 1956-1960," Box 13, Rufus Carrollton Harris Papers, TU (quotations).

³⁵ Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting of the Southeastern Conference, March 17, 1957, Folder 2, Box 22, Early Presidents Collection (quotations).

Moore's proposal had its supporters: N. W. Dougherty, for instance, the venerable conference secretary and Tennessee faculty athletics chair, believed the SEC "would be strengthened if we only played one or two games outside the Conference rather than the four that we are playing now." "I am inclined to believe," argued Dougherty's Ole Miss counterpart, T. A. Bickerstaff, "that any large conference which does not provide for inter-member contests at least once in a relatively short period falls short of one the principle purposes of a conference." Kentucky athletics chair A. D. Kirwan said that the cumbersome size and disparate nature of the SEC membership "result in a tendency to divide the Conference into two parts"; round-robin schedules might draw them closer and in greater accord. Yet increased interaction hardly fortified the bonds of membership in a league whose lifeblood was the enmity its members held for one another. Each program was motivated first and foremost by its own self-interests; *for the good of the conference* was a phrase that never passed the lips of any of its athletics directors or head coaches — one could be convinced that no such sentiment even existed. Nearly everyone in the SEC understood, and agreed, with Moore's rationale for a round-robin slate — even those who favored intersectional play — but the more the members saw of each other, the more intense their suspicions grew. Some foresaw only schism if the round-robin was implemented. Georgia Tech acting president Paul Weber, for one, wasn't willing to play any foe but those Dodd alone selected, going so far as to advise him that, if "the rotating schedule is not rejected" by the athletics directors, "we must be prepared to withdraw from the conference." Still others, fearing the potential for a split, believed — however illogically — that expanding the size of the league to take in two additional members would preserve their modicum of choice, lessen the frequency by which they faced one another, and supply them with two more dependably segregated opponents. Indeed, Auburn athletics director Jeff Beard posited that "a large conference" would help with "the

segregation problem.” In fact, an internal survey of the institution heads, athletics directors, faculty athletic chairmen, and head coaches found that the only two advantages of expansion were “help[ing] member schools with football schedules” and “help[ing] with segregation problem.”³⁶

If the conference was to select more members, then the criteria were expressly racial: the SEC was searching out those universities that could solidify its whites-only agenda. In the candidates that surfaced — Florida State, Houston, Mississippi Southern — the only one to have anything close to consensus appeal was Miami: since war’s end, the Hurricanes faced all 12 members — 32 contests in all, including their annual rivalry with Florida. For many, there were strong reasons for adding Miami: its destination appeal for fans, its place within a major media market, its close ties to the Orange Bowl. “By all means,” Neyland exclaimed, “add Miami.” Commercially, the Hurricanes were a good fit; culturally, however, Miami and the SEC brethren were at stark odds. “Our public,” noted its president Jay Pearson, “does like to see teams from other major conferences and other independents like Notre Dame and Pittsburgh.” Indeed, Miami played more intersectional dates — 30 — than any other program in the South, save West Virginia, a situation enhanced by the freedom, since 1950, to face integrated opposition at home in the Orange Bowl Stadium, conditioning their supporters to expect the best in competition. Pearson was determined to preserve this pattern of scheduling, even if Miami entered the SEC, making him uncomfortable to limit these series on racial grounds. “With the integration problem arising,” he wrote Florida president J. Wayne Reitz, “your conference is moving more and more toward a tight inter-conference schedule with six, and even

³⁶ N. W. Dougherty to Bernie A. Shively, February 28, 1956 (first quotation); Bernie A. Shively, “Results of a Survey of the Southeastern Conference Presidents, Faculty Chairmen, Athletic Directors, Football Coaches, and Basketball Coaches on the Possible Expansion of the Membership of the Conference,” April 4, 1956 (hereafter Shively Survey) (second, third, fifth, and sixth quotations); both in Folder 1, Box 138, Fortune Collection; Paul Weber to R. L. Dodd, April 24, 1957, Folder 2, Box 22, Early Presidents Collection (fourth quotation).

seven or eight, games of inter-conference play considered as a possible requirement each season.” Such a schedule would slash the number of non-conference games which then-independent Miami annually contracted from all ten dates down to just three, which “causes concern down here.” Many within the university posited that “we might actually do a dis-service to ourselves and to the people of this area if we entered into a relationship which permitted us to play only three games outside of the SEC.” Moreover, “some people feel that we may eventually be prohibited from playing a bowl game against teams that use certain players, and some even think that the conference may someday go far enough to prohibit any of these three games being played with teams which use certain kinds of players.” Reluctant to submit Miami’s schedules to the tyranny of a racist SEC majority, he concluded that “it is our general feeling that we would rather take our chances with scheduling games with your fine teams that could be worked in and around your present inter-conference schedule” than join the league itself.³⁷

Most administrators and coaches, and even a few of their supporters, breathed a collective sigh of relief at Miami’s rebuff. One fan warned Moore that “U. of Miami will be the first ‘Southern’ school to admit negroes and want to let them play (because most of the students and supporters are Northerners)” — hence “the major reason I am so greatly opposed to that school being admitted into our fine conference.” A wall was now being built to keep southern teams out, too, particularly those, like Miami or even Oklahoma, who weren’t beating back the tides of racial change. “If a person here believes in integration,” Mississippi State president Ben Hilburn said in November 1956, “he will be much happier to move out and get in his own environment.” Many in the general public had no use

³⁷ Shively Survey (first quotation); Jay F. W. Pearson to J. Wayne Reitz, February 13, 1957 (second and third quotations); Jay F. W. Pearson to J. Wayne Reitz, February 27, 1957 (fourth through seventh quotations); both in Folder “Correspondence, SEC, 1955-57,” Box 54, Reitz Presidential Papers.

for the pernicious compromises that a few SEC institutions — principally Tulane and the so-called “eastern” members — struck to perpetuate intersectional play. “As hard as the white people of the South are fighting Integration,” a fan pleaded with Tulane president Rufus Harris in September 1957, “why does the Tulane football team have to go up North in search of it?”³⁸

Yet these distinctions meant nothing to the world outside the SEC. Despite their eventual rejection of Moore’s round-robin schedule, in April 1958, his plan’s spirit of withdrawal — secession, even — colored the collective reputation of the SEC brethren for the near term. For many TWIs, the SEC’s stand supplied an all-too-convenient rationale for resisting integration themselves. Texas athletics director Dana Bible brushed off a scholarship inquiry from an African American, in October 1956, by noting how, “in 1958, which would be your sophomore year here, we have football games scheduled with Georgia and Tulane, neither of which will permit its team to play against integrated squads” on their own home fields. Since “it is our plan to continue to schedule teams” in the SEC, “you may find it more desirable and economical to attend a school in a section where integration is no problem and where you could be assured at this time of full participation.” Conversely, northern programs now either had no appetite for carrying the political baggage of their SEC foes, or they undertook these series as a cultural crusade. When three state legislators called for Michigan to cancel its October 5, 1957, date with Georgia — arguing that it was “an affront to the integrity of our Negro students and athletes” that the Bulldogs’ whole squad could play in Ann Arbor but, if the game were in Athens, the Wolverines’ two black players, halfback Jim Pace and tackle Willie Smith, could not

³⁸ Edgar S. Anderson to Bernie Moore, February 27, 1956, Folder 1, Box 138, Fortune Collection (first and second quotations); Ben Hilbun to Fred Sullens, November 6, 1956, Folder “Segregation,” Drawer 13, Hilbun Presidential Papers (third quotation); A. L. Chapman to Rufus C. Harris, postcard, September 18, 1957, Folder “Athletics — Army Football Game,” Box 11, Harris Papers (fourth quotation);

— the university’s own Board of Control of Intercollegiate Athletics refused. “We consider it educationally sound,” the Board maintained, “to bring young citizens of a Southern state to Michigan to play in an athletic contest with our teams in which Negro and white players are accorded positions on the basis of merit alone and without regard to race and religion.”³⁹

This lesson, argued Citizens’ Council founder Robert B. Patterson, held dire repercussions for white racial privilege in his home state of Mississippi and throughout the segregated South. The captain of Mississippi State’s 1942 football team, he contended in late February 1959, “I understand the passion for victory and competition where athletics are concerned,” but, to his mind, “it is a short step from participation against an integrated team to having a Negro athlete on a Mississippi team.” Since the *Brown* decision, “the South has been under constant attack by those who would integrate our schools and social system,” sowing the seeds of “complete destruction and chaos.” So, “to place a team representing our tax supported institutions on an equal footing with an integrated team will be construed nationally as acceptance of token integration,” as well as “a retreat from an avowed principle.” Interracial play, then, was little more than “a great victory for the forces of integration.”⁴⁰

Later that same year, when Alabama announced that it would face an integrated Penn State squad in the post-season Liberty Bowl, in Philadelphia, six days before Christmas, James Laseter, chairman of the Citizens’ Council of West Alabama, wired Paul “Bear” Bryant that all his members “strongly oppose our boys playing an integrated team.” Regardless the “Crimson Tide’s fine record

³⁹ Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting of the Southeastern Conference, April 20-21, 1958, Folder “Southeastern Conference, 1957-58,” Box 23, Draughon Presidential Papers; D. X. Bible to Clinton A. Givans, October 3, 1956, Folder “Negro Students,” Box CDL2/E32, UT Dean of Students Records, CAH (fifth and sixth quotations); “Michigan U. Spurns Football Bias Plea,” *NYT*, February 16, 1957, 10 (seventh quotation); “Michigan To Play Georgia Despite Segregation,” *AC*, February 16, 1957, 6 (eighth quotation).

⁴⁰ Robert B. Patterson to Babe McCarthy, February 25, 1959, Folder “Athletics Department, 7-1-57 to 7-1-60,” Drawer 1, Hilbun Presidential Papers (quotations);

this year,” “the Tide belongs to all Alabama and Alabamians favor continued segregation.” Bryant took his boys to Philadelphia nonetheless — the first time an Alabama squad ever lined up against black athletes — where they lost to the Nittany Lions, 7-0. In advance of their trip, John Patterson, the same Alabama governor who had, earlier that year, kept black marching bands from performing in his inauguration parade, hailed the Liberty Bowl invitation for “bring[ing] Alabama back into national football prominence.” If anything, the Tide’s appearance in Philadelphia demonstrated just the opposite: that their absence from the national stage was hardly temporary, nor was their return to it anything but momentary. Post-season games were considered far different from regular season ones in that they were played away from campus and with a great deal of money and prestige at stake. Interracial play in these contests was abided if only for these considerable payouts. Two years after Alabama’s Liberty Bowl defeat, for instance, Auburn president Ralph Draughon asked his institution’s Board of Trustees — of which Governor Patterson was an *ex officio* officer — to weigh the consequences of accepting a possible Bluebonnet Bowl bid against Kansas. While “Kansas is an integrated team,” he advised, “the acceptance [of a bid] by Auburn would yield about \$100,000.00 from gate and television receipts.” Putting the spurs to them still harder, he reminded them that “no political repercussions” followed the Alabama-Penn State meeting, meaning that little furor might arise should the Tigers square off against blacks. Counting up the ballots Draughon sent, all but one of these 14 trustees, including the governor, voted affirmatively — though reluctantly. “Regardless of the amount of money involved,” one trustee informed Draughon, “I would hate to see us play an integrated team”; but “I won’t make a big fuss” given that “you favor it.” He could save his worries, as the game didn’t come to pass: Bryant’s team, en route to a national title, would steamroll Auburn, 34-0, in early December, thereby knocking the Tigers out of contention for this bowl bid. But the

Auburn trustees' decision evinced how thoroughly profits could trump principle.⁴¹

There was a sense, too, these contradictions of practice — interracial play was forbidden in the regular season, but forgiven in the post-season — were all too symptomatic of the more insidious negotiations which the white South had to make with their system of segregation and the patterns of national life. Noting the insanity of a dual competitive standard at the time of the Liberty Bowl, *Montgomery Advertiser* editor Grover Hall, Jr., contended that the Tide's match-up with Penn State was "scarcely an unusual contradiction" as "Southerners contradict themselves frequently on matters of race." For a white southerner to live in the United States at all commanded a recognition that dual systems of racial interaction existed. "Any time an Alabamian boards a train or plane," Hall insisted, "he enters an integrated society. Yet the planes are still flying, the trains still running." This reality hit former Alabama trustee Hill Ferguson most powerfully upon his trip north to Philadelphia for the game. "I came in contact with Negroes in the hotels, conveyances, at the ball game — and, in fact, everywhere I went." While this was the case in Philadelphia, "I do not think that this stops me from opposing local integration as vigorously as I can." Far from the fear he had inspired in then-Alabama president John Gallalee before the 1953 Orange Bowl, Ferguson now saw an inevitability in a meeting of the races. "If we are to compete nationally," he calmed one irate Tide fan, "we must assume that some of our opponents may show up with individual team members whose color we do not like." What's more, "I think we must accept this situation." Retreat was no longer a remedy — or even realistic. For the Crimson Tide to become a powerhouse again under Bryant, the university had to

⁴¹ James B. Laseter to Paul "Bear" Bryant, telegram, December 7, 1959 (first through third quotations); "Governor Patterson's Statement," December 1, 1959 (fourth quotation); both in Folder "Liberty Bowl," Box 5, 089-104, Rose Papers; Ralph Draughon to Paul S. Haley, November 28, 1961 (second through fourth quotations); John Patterson, ballot, undated [circa late November 1961]; John W. Overton to Ralph Draughon, November 29, 1961 (fifth and sixth quotations); all in Folder "Athletics, 1960-61," Box 7, Draughon Presidential Papers.

look beyond the region for games. “Some argue that Alabama should play only teams in the Southeastern states,” he continued, “and take no chances with those from Texas and other border states, or from the main body of our states, where there seems to be no color line.” It hardly behooved the university “to announce that we had forbidden our students from all outside games and contests” at a time when “we are going to have the fight of our lives keeping Negroes out of our local schools, and colleges.” More astonishing, for this inveterate racist, Ferguson allowed that, “if I were still on the Board at the University, I would not vote to keep our boys and girls strictly on a home town basis.”⁴²

His was hardly a majority position. Neither Alabama, nor Auburn, nor LSU, nor Mississippi State would schedule another intersectional game after *Brown*. Aside from a previously contracted date at Villanova in 1954, Ole Miss cloistered itself away with these same institutions, holding the line out of a mix of fear and habit — a bid, as the Rebels’ head coach John Vaught explained it, “to preserve the caste system.” Meanwhile, these five programs — the Deep South Five — “reached an uncommonly high plateau,” capturing national championships — Auburn in 1957, LSU in 1958, Ole Miss in 1960, and Alabama in 1961, 1964, and 1965 — even though they had long ago withdrawn from that nation, aided in their flight by an accommodating pool of regional opposition. “If we have had any difficulties scheduling ball games without negroes I haven’t heard of it,” Hilbun wrote one Mississippi State booster in 1960. “Of course, certain teams play with them but we don’t play those teams. Thus far we have found enough, without getting into that, who can give us all the competition we want.” In so doing, these same teams, mid-major programs like Southern Mississippi and Florida

⁴² Grover C. Hall, Jr., “The Silent Protest,” *Montgomery Advertiser*, December 3, 1959, A4 (first through third quotations); Hill Ferguson to J. Y. Brame, December 23, 1959, Folder “Liberty Bowl,” Box 5, 089-104, Rose Papers (fourth through eleventh quotations).

State, gave the Deep South Five all they wanted on race, too, replicating the architecture of their SEC patrons' gridiron ambitions lest they lose these lucrative dates on their non-conference schedules. Even when integration arrived at a place like Memphis State, as it did in 1959, its athletics director and head coach Billy Murphy knew that, if his program kept pace with his university, "the presence of a Negro on an athletic team" would have "presented some problems" in preserving its series with Ole Miss and Mississippi State, on which it relied fiscally. Segregation, under these circumstances, was a budgetary necessity, "a fact of life" that he knew "had to be dealt with." In turn, his own team would reliably reflect the all-white image of their varsity squads for another decade.⁴³

But not every mid-major program chose to march lockstep with their SEC patrons. In 1957, when North Texas State announced that its varsity team would feature two black athletes, Leon King and Abner Hayes, Ole Miss unceremoniously dropped the Eagles from its schedule, depriving them a \$25,000 guarantee. News of this cancellation shaped how even major southern universities, winking to the inevitability of integration, dealt with SEC members — even those known to abide interracial play. Indeed, when his Longhorns traveled to New Orleans to face Tulane in October 1958, Texas' newly-minted athletics director, Ed Olle, alerted his counterpart, Richard Baumbach, that, by the time their series resumed in the fall of 1962, "negro players might be on the varsity football team." Of course, Texas football wouldn't integrate until 1971, yet the mere fact that its policies might be "changed to permit negroes to play" should have revealed to even the most stalwartly segregated SEC programs that race wasn't a crisis from without, but within, the southern ranks. The sixties

⁴³ John Vaught, *Rebel Coach: My Football Family* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1972), 7 (first and second quotations); Ben Hilbun to Louis Cook, February 20, 1960, Folder "Athletics Department, 7-1-57 to 7-1-60," Drawer 1, Hilbun Presidential Papers (third quotation); H. A. Gilliam, Jr., "Memphis State and the Negro," *Commercial Appeal*, May 27, 1968, clipping found in Folder 29, Box 4, Cecil C. Humphreys Collection, UMem (fourth and fifth quotations).

would disabuse them of this delusion soon enough, showing them they had drawn the borders of their region too far afield — too far, as it turned out, from even their own conference.⁴⁴

VI

In November 1957, Kentucky athletics director Bernie Shively was frantic. Deep into negotiations with Hawaii athletics director Henry Vasconcellos for a game the following September, to be played in Louisville, Shively discovered that the SEC's reputation for insularity had preceded him, even to the Hawaiian Islands. Vasconcellos wanted to play, but his acting president, Willard Wilson, a native Kentuckian himself, wanted a full explanation of UK's position on interracial competition. With as multi-racial, multi-ethnic a team as to be found in all of college football, Wilson stipulated "positive assurance" from Shively's end about the sort of southern hospitality his squad would receive "before we became irretrievably involved." In desperate need of another non-conference date on his schedule — especially one the Wildcats could win easily — Shively couldn't afford to lose this series because of racial politics. So, he turned to his president, Frank Dickey, asking him to outline for Wilson "our feelings on racial discrimination." Employing every ounce of his personal charm, Dickey guaranteed Wilson that "there should be no problems in connection with your game in Kentucky." His university had practiced "no discrimination of any type during the past nine years and certainly there would be no problem involved in an athletic contest." And, as if to vouch for the sincerity of his pledge, he recommended the Hawaii traveling party lodge at one of Louisville's finest (and integrated) hotels,

⁴⁴ Ronald E. Marcello, "Reluctance versus Reality: The Desegregation of North Texas State College, 1954-1956," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 100 (1996): 153-85, esp. 181; Minutes of the Athletic Advisory Committee, October 7, 1958, Folder "Athletic Advisory Committee, 1958-1960," Box 11, Harris Papers (quotations).

the Statler Seelbach, which he promised “would be the most desirable.”⁴⁵

Dickey’s letter did the trick. Sufficiently pleased that Kentucky was somewhat different from its SEC brethren, Wilson allowed Vasconcellos to finalize the contract talks with Shively. The game went on as planned, on September 13, 1958, though the 55-0 UK victory hardly made the Hawaiians’ trip to the mainland worth all the hassle. Their meeting was notable for more than its lopsided result: it was the first time a SEC member had gone ahead with a home game versus an integrated opponent. Discrimination wasn’t the organizing principle of Kentucky’s schedules; competition was. But the demands of its football program hardly governed UK athletics, especially when questions of race were at stake. In August 1956, for instance, Dickey, who had assumed the UK presidency only two months earlier, received a letter from an alumnus about the university’s intentions to participate in the Sugar Bowl Basketball Tournament that December. Outraged that his alma mater would offer such an implicit sanction of Louisiana’s athletic segregation laws as appearing in New Orleans, when Notre Dame, Dayton, and St. Louis had each withdrawn in protest, he contended that “the whole deal to me looks inconsistent with the progressive policy of education” that UK set for itself following its integration in 1948. “To participate” was “a backward step.” Not wanting “to fight a mental Civil War over again,” he urged Dickey to pull the Wildcats out of the tournament lest their involvement “give comfort . . . to Southern facists [*sic*].” More important, this event pointed up UK’s own paucity of black athletes, fostering the “incongruous” impression that, while an integrated institution, its administrators and coaches gladly toed the line when the SEC insisted upon all-white teams. “It has always been interesting to me,” he observed, “that in football the U of Ky. has almost always played

⁴⁵ Willard Wilson to Frank G. Dickey, December 12, 1957 (first quotation); Bernie A. Shively to Frank G. Dickey, November 26, 1957 (second quotation); Frank G. Dickey to Willard Wilson, November 27, 1957 (third through fifth quotations); all in Folder “Athletic Association 1957,” Box 33, Dickey Papers.

in the Southern and Southeastern conference with teams from states with which we have had very little in common economically or otherwise except perhaps for the attitude toward negro players.”⁴⁶

Dickey found himself in near total agreement. “We do not wish to do anything,” he told this alumnus, “which would tend to tear down the fine start which Kentucky has made in its program of desegregation.” Anything, that is, except backing out of this tournament. Although he confessed “our future actions should be governed by the ideas which you have expressed,” Dickey had been on the job long enough to appreciate the supreme power of basketball at Kentucky, and of its head coach, Adolph Rupp. Unlike other institutions in the SEC, where the prerogatives of football predominated, UK athletics was motivated first, last, and always by the interests of its basketball program. Indeed, Rupp’s teams dominated the SEC so thoroughly that they had failed just six times since the league’s inaugural 1932-33 season to capture the conference crown, leading the other 11 members to retaliate by permanently discontinuing their post-season tournament in 1953. Since the Second World War, the Wildcats had likewise triumphed in the 1947-48, 1948-49, and 1950-51 NCAA tournaments; and, just a year-and-a-half after this alumnus’ letter crossed Dickey’s desk, UK would hang a fourth national championship banner from the rafters of Memorial Coliseum. Such unrivaled success on the hardwood made Rupp an indomitable force, not only within the athletics department but on the campus in general: the eminent southern historian Thomas D. Clark, chair of the History Department as well as a member of the Athletic Association Board of Directors, cracked that “I’m sure there were times when Rupp had to check to determine whether he was the university or a servant of the university.” Whatever Rupp wanted, Rupp got — and this matter proved no exception. Putting aside

⁴⁶ Herschel Weil to Frank G. Dickey, August 5, 1956, Folder “Athletics Association 1957,” Box 33, Dickey Papers. On the 1956 Sugar Bowl Tournament, see “Teams Quit Sugar Bowl Tournament,” *WP*, July 29, 1956, C3.

his own misgivings about the “deplorable situation” in Louisiana to fulfill the Baron’s order, Dickey insisted that “the moral values of integrity and honesty” instructed that “no institution should go back on its contracts.” Thus, “it will be necessary for us to go ahead with our original commitments.”⁴⁷

While segregation was contrary to institutional policies, no decision was made at Kentucky at the cost of the basketball program. While other SEC members measured the approach of athletic integration by the metrics of football, racial politics in the Bluegrass State were interpreted strictly in terms of how Rupp might respond. So it wasn’t surprising, then, that a few candid remarks on the subject from the Baron’s own mouth would garner considerable attention. Visiting Atlanta in April 1961 as the keynote speaker at the Oglethorpe University basketball banquet, Rupp agreed to a brief interview with Gregory Favre, assistant sports editor of the *Atlanta Journal*, before dinner was served. “The end of segregation in Southeastern Conference athletics,” he volunteered, would begin “when I turn my hand.” Did this admission mean that he was actively recruiting black prospects? “The best two high school basketball players in Kentucky, both Negroes, would enroll at the university and would play.” But what about the steadfast refusal of some SEC members to face athletes of color on their own home fields? “Many schools in our league allow their teams to go off on strange grounds and play against Negroes, but they won’t allow integrated competition on their home soil. What will these schools do if I bring an integrated team into their cities to play. If they refuse to play me then they’ll just have to forfeit according to the rules and I’ll take all those easy victories I can get.” What will athletic integration mean for Kentucky’s affiliation with the SEC? “There may be some schools that will refuse to play Kentucky if we have an integrated team, but if they do those schools don’t

⁴⁷ Frank G. Dickey to Herschel Weil, August 8, 1956, Folder “Athletics Association 1957,” Box 33, Dickey Papers (first, second, fourth, fifth, and sixth quotations); “Clark on UK and Collegiate Athletics,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 103 (2005): 447 (third quotation).

belong in our league.”⁴⁸

No sooner had Rupp uttered these words than he began to regret them. By morning, he had launched a vociferous round of denials, telling anyone who would listen that the interview was “just a misunderstanding.” Before the second edition of the *Journal* even went to press, he recanted the previous evening’s assertions so vigorously that the proposition of athletic integration at Kentucky went from a willful act of institutional independence to a potential menace visited upon his program by outside agitators. “What I really meant,” he backtracked, “was that the Negroes would probably use Kentucky as a test case since we are farthest North.” When contacted by the *Journal*, Dickey was more circumspect. “There is no policy of segregation for athletic teams at Kentucky,” he noted, “and if a Negro student-athlete wished to participate as a member of a Kentucky team, and was good enough to make the team, he would not be discouraged.” “We are talking about something that hasn’t happened,” but, “should it happen, we would hope the other members of the conference would see fit to compete against our teams.” Some eight months later, though, he intrepidly asserted that “we have to be realistic about the situation with which we are confronted.” Black participation in UK athletics, as well as the conference ranks, was “inevitable.”⁴⁹

Such certainty could not surmount what he knew to be equally inevitable: integration equaled ostracization from the SEC. The first member to break the color line — especially in football — had to steel themselves for an all-out battle in defense of their membership. And there was no doubt in Dickey’s mind that Kentucky could ill afford this fight, as it was one his university would likely lose.

⁴⁸ Gregory Favre, “Rupp Forecasts End of SEC Segregation,” *AJ*, April 26, 1961, 53 (quotations).

⁴⁹ Favre, “Rupp, Boss’ Views Don’t Correspond,” 53 (first through fourth quotations); Jim Minter, “Dickey: ‘No Policy of Segregation,’” *AJ*, April 26, 1961, 53 (fifth quotation); Frank G. Dickey to William B. Dickson, December 22, 1961, Folder “Athletics Association 1960-1961,” Box 33, Dickey Papers (sixth quotation); “Kentucky Willing to Play Negroes,” A16 (seventh quotation).

Instead, he sought to reassure the SEC brethren that, for the time being at least, UK was loath to go it alone. “The most effective method of bringing about integration,” he argued, “would be through a joint movement of the SEC universities.” Political niceties aside, he felt that risking an association with the SEC would prove catastrophic not only for Kentucky basketball and football, but for the institution as a whole. A fair number of fans — “ten to one,” by his estimate — likewise urged him to preserve segregation for the time being. “After your remarks concerning your willingness to let Negroes [*sic*] play on university athletic teams,” one such fan pressed him, “how long do you think the other conference-member southern universities would welcome the University of Kentucky as a member of the S. E. C.?” When a more sympathetic supporter inquired if “any consideration [had] been given to the possibility of using Negro athletes in the non-SEC games” alone, Dickey responded that “it seems the better part of wisdom not to consider this.” “First of all,” he wrote, “it would be grossly unfair to the Negro students to place them in this position and, secondly, I do not believe it would be a good thing for the athletic teams themselves.” Black participation, like membership in the SEC, was an all-or-nothing proposition.⁵⁰

By the spring of 1963, it seemed most campus constituencies were happy to have nothing if it meant perpetuating whites-only athletics. When Shively argued in an Athletic Association board meeting that, if Kentucky was to integrate, “we can’t be a member of the Southeastern Conference anymore,” Clark retorted, “Well, let’s get out.” Their exchange seemed to encapsulate the essential crisis facing the university: doing the right thing morally meant sacrificing the best thing for what

⁵⁰ “Kentucky Willing to Play Negroes,” A16 (first quotations); Frank G. Dickey to Douglas W. Schwartz, December 21, 1961 (second, fifth, and sixth quotations); William B. Dickson to Frank G. Dickey, December 16, 1961 (third quotation); Douglas W. Schwartz to Frank G. Dickey, December 16, 1961 (fourth quotation); all in Folder “Athletics Association 1960-1961,” Box 33, Dickey Papers.

Wildcat fans loved most — winning basketball. Nonetheless, the conventional wisdom on campus instructed that the university should immediately integrate its athletics program, even if that meant leaving — or getting voted out of — the SEC. “If the university is to live up to its moral obligation and make significant progress as a major institution,” an editorial in the student daily, the *Kentucky Kernel*, stated, “it must divorce itself from the segregation policy which dominates the Southeastern Conference. Here and now with a withdrawal from the SEC or an announcement that we will begin to recruit Negro players by a certain date, we have a chance to take a real step forward.” A *Kernel* poll of 132 undergraduates found that 59 percent favored integrating athletics; and, of that majority, only 8 percent opposed recruiting black prospects if it meant sacrificing UK’s SEC membership in the process. For their part, the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences passed a resolution against the continuance of athletic segregation. “I don’t know whether Kentucky should be a sacrificial lamb,” Clark admitted, “but I do know that it is university policy not to segregate classes, and I don’t see any difference between classes and athletic teams.”⁵¹

The momentum toward a decision proved too strong to be turned back as the UK Board of Trustees assembled for its April meeting. One way or another, Dickey counseled, the Trustees should offer up “some recognition” of what had, by this point, become a popular call for athletic integration. Interestingly, they demurred, though not because they opposed recruiting black athletes. Quite the contrary. One trustee, Louisville labor leader Sam Ezelle, called for UK to reexamine “its policy of integrated education and segregated athletics.” “More interested in the prestige of the University of Kentucky throughout the nation rather than in the Southeastern Conference,” he held that it was the

⁵¹ “Clark on UK and Collegiate Athletics,” 446n1 (first and second quotations); “Pressure Mounts for University To Desegregate Athletic Teams,” *SSN*, April 1963, 16 (third and fourth quotations); Minutes of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees, April 5, 1963, UKBTO (poll results).

“responsibility” of the Athletic Association, not the Trustees, to take a stand here. After all, it was the efficacy of their policies, in relation to those of the SEC brethren, which were being challenged.⁵²

The only catch was that Dickey — who had announced earlier that spring that he was leaving Lexington on June 30 to become the director of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools — was experiencing second thoughts of his own about how quickly Kentucky should act in its integration bid. If the university moved too fast to sign black athletes, then the Deep South Five were bound to punish it for transgressing the norms of league politics. He warned that the blowback from the SEC brethren could jeopardize not only Kentucky’s conference membership, but the recent issuance of bonds for the construction of a new stadium to replace aging Stoll Field. Creditors agreed to the bond issue, he claimed, based in no small part upon Kentucky’s place in such a nationally-prominent conference. If the university were to imperil its SEC ties, and slate sub-par competition on an annual basis, ticket sales would deteriorate — a development that could potentially shake the confidence of bond-holders in their investments. This was, to his mind, an “ethical problem” for the university. It was also a stall tactic that failed to gain any traction. “Were the bonds sold,” a *Courier-Journal* editorial demanded, “on the condition that the university would maintain Jim Crow athletic teams?” When the Athletic Association Board of Directors approved black participation in late April, the very details of their policy halted the pace of integration. Tepidly advocating “equal opportunity” for all undergraduates, they nevertheless neglected to set a timetable by which those opportunities would begin for UK’s 170 black students, supplying Dickey and Shively with considerable leeway to move as they saw fit. “Any student enrolled in school who wants to come out,” Shively assured the press, “can come out.” Whether black students would see any playing time if they made the team

⁵² UK Board of Trustees Minutes, April 5, 1963, UKBTO (quotations).

was another matter. In this way, black participation remained an abstraction. Ezelle was nonplused. “It’s a disappointment,” he protested. “I think they did less than their duty.”⁵³

Within the Athletic Association board itself, many members clung to dim hopes that Dickey, who was also its chair, would kickstart the process before his last day in office. But, a month-and-a-half before leaving town, Dickey was on his knees before his fellow SEC institution heads, especially the Deep South Five, pleading with them to spare Kentucky the humiliation of being kicked out of the conference. “Integrated since 1948,” he reminded them, UK “has not had any integrated athletic teams because of our membership in the Southeastern Conference” — a move to keep faith with the racial sentiments of the league. He no more wanted “to withdraw from the Southeastern Conference” over race than “embarrass any of our fellow members.” Short of “work[ing] out some solution to this problem which would be acceptable” to the rest of the SEC brethren, all he could offer was a pledge that “we have not recruited any Negro players nor do we have any immediate plans to do so, contrary to all the newspaper publicity which has come to my desk recently.” With that said, “if we set a date” for integration, “I believe that it would be only a matter of several years before we would be involved in integrated athletic competition.” Regardless the circumstances, “I would have preferred that this matter be delayed for several years but, as you so well know, sometimes the control on such situations is outside the university.” Popular will had trumped institutional prerogative once again.⁵⁴

Clark was horrified by the contents of this letter. It confirmed his worst fears about Dickey’s intentions: he would rather bargain with segregationists out of fear than side with racial progressives.

⁵³ “Pressure Mounts for University To Desegregate Athletic Teams,” 16 (first quotation); “Wildcats Will Integrate Play,” *AC*, May 30, 1963, 40 (second and third quotations); “UK Desegregation of Athletics Could Have Far-Reaching Effects,” 12 (fourth quotation).

⁵⁴ Frank G. Dickey to SEC Institution Heads, May 2, 1963, Folder “Southeastern Conference, 1962-63,” Box 20, Colvard Papers (quotations).

Clark's patience, too, with the SEC was at its end: the league and Kentucky no longer shared any of the same ambitions. In a last ditch appeal to Dickey, he begged him to set a start date for integration "before you leave the President's office." "I came away from the last Board meeting with the very good feeling that we had indeed made some social history for the country as a whole," he wrote days after Dickey's appeal to his SEC colleagues. "I am sure that the intent of everybody was that we set a due date and that on that date we begin actively integrating our teams." Whatever the price, "we should maintain the lead in this matter": "I would not want to see us drag our feet." But Dickey dragged his feet all the way to the finish line, forestalling any decision on his watch. "The thing that defeated him," Clark observed of Dickey, "was that he should have been about 90 percent rougher, tougher than he was. Maybe 100 percent. He should have been tough looking at the future and heartless looking at the past." As it was, he showed himself to be, like his stand on integration, just plain "spineless."⁵⁵

Spineless, perhaps, but also incredibly cautious. Dickey knew that the Deep South Five could easily lock gridiron segregation in place by ramping up their machinery of intimidation: colluding to keep UK off their schedules, forcing others in the SEC brethren to do the same — or pushing them out of the league altogether. Delay, with an eye toward neutralizing such tactics, was really the only weapon available to an institution, like Kentucky, that wanted to integrate *and* to remain in the fold. Most members weren't opposed, per se, to Kentucky introducing black athletes into its own program. "I do not care what the University of Kentucky does," stated Georgia Tech president Edwin Harrison. "They can do as they please." Only when its decisions impinged upon those which each member had

⁵⁵ Thomas D. Clark to Frank G. Dickey, May 7, 1963, Folder "June 1962-April 1963," Box 34, Dickey Papers (first through third quotations); "Clark and the University of Kentucky," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 103 (2005): 385-86 (fourth and fifth quotations).

to make about scheduling did UK's integration bid finally become problematic. But Kentucky lobbed this action into a camp already rife with divisions over race — in fact, all of the so-called “eastern” institutions and Tulane had revised their scheduling policies well in advance of UK's lurch toward integration, expecting that the long-anticipated battle over interracial play would emanate from the Bluegrass State. And, yet, in opening the door to black participation, Kentucky had unwittingly made athletic integration a homegrown dilemma. Change — albeit tempered — now circled in their midst. By heading this issue off, these members ensured that interracial play wasn't a competitive stumbling block for their football programs — or the downfall of their conference. Rather, they functioned as the firewall between the progressive tact of this new UK policy and the racial fanaticism of the Deep South Five. The crisis now became holding back the heat on either side from engulfing the SEC.⁵⁶

VII

In late October 1961, some six months after Adolph Rupp's all-too-candid interview, the University of Texas Board of Regents asked its chancellor, Harry Ransom, “to secure sufficient information” on “what steps have been taken” at TWIs across the South “in the field of integration generally” and “the integration of intercollegiate athletics” in particular. Preparing for a defense of the university's interests should any litigation arise when the Board at last announced the integration of its athletics program, Ransom's authoritative study — surveying nearly three dozen institutions, including those comparable universities in western states “bordering Texas” — left him “astonished at the extent of integration.” All of the western institutions, so wrote New Mexico president Tom Popejoy, practiced “indiscriminate integration” in athletics. Back in the South, integration was moving a pace at a few

⁵⁶ Bill Clark, “SEC Reaction Mixed On Integration Move,” *AC*, May 30, 1963, 38 (quotation).

TWIs, like Chapel Hill or Virginia, “without specific court orders on particular university activities.” Athletics, meanwhile, wasn’t yet among them. One place where “few voluntary actions . . . looking to desegregation” were being made was the SEC. Indeed, LSU president Troy Middleton railed that, if “a Negro request that he be permitted to participate” before his own retirement in February 1962, “I think I could find a good excuse why he would not.” “Confident that in the near future we will be facing these same problems,” Alabama president Frank Rose nevertheless reported that “since the terrible Autherine Lucy incident” in 1957 — when his university admitted its first black student, only to expel her shortly thereafter when white undergraduates and rabble-rousers rioted on campus — “we have not had any serious [black] applicants.” Even Georgia president O. C. Aderhold, a more moderate voice on black participation, advised Ransom that “integration of athletic squads has not become an issue” — and “we will not deal with it until it does.” UGA’s policy for playing integrated teams developed a decade earlier — “we play by the rules of the home team when out of the state” — hadn’t yet been modified to address “what we would do in case an integrated team was scheduled to come to our campus.” Such change was still fairly unimaginable in Athens.⁵⁷

What Aderhold was essentially telling Ransom was that his institution had yet to distinguish between black participation on an opponent’s squad and the threat of it happening on its own: the former would seemingly precipitate the latter. However, as Ransom learned, this was no longer a

⁵⁷ Wales H. Madden, Jr., to Thornton Hardie, October 6, 1961 (first through fourth quotations); Harry H. Ransom to Board of Regents, memorandum, November 3, 1961 (fifth, sixth, eighth, and ninth quotations); Tom Popejoy to Harry H. Ransom, November 1, 1961 (fifth quotation); Troy H. Middleton to Harry H. Ransom, October 27, 1961 (tenth and eleventh quotations); Frank A. Rose to Harry H. Ransom, November 2, 1961 (twelfth and thirteenth quotations); all in Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/60-8/31/62,” Box 85, UT Chancellor’s Office Records; O. C. Aderhold to Harry H. Ransom, October 27, 1961, Folder 2, Box 77, Aderhold Papers (fourteenth through seventeenth quotations). For Ransom’s letter to these institution heads — which was essentially a form letter — see, for instance, Harry H. Ransom to J. Wayne Reitz, October 25, 1961, Folder “Intercollegiate Athletics, Div. of — Misc., 1955-67,” Box 38, Reitz Presidential Papers.

universal distinction among the SEC brethren. Florida president J. Wayne Reitz, for one, admitted how “we have given little or no consideration to the problem of integration of athletic squads” since “we do not visualize this as an immediate problem.” The Gator varsity would stay segregated for the foreseeable future, to be sure. And, yet, “it is our feeling,” he confided in Ransom, that “the situation of competition with other teams which may be integrated . . . would not pose a serious problem at the moment.” Tennessee president Andy Holt apprised Ransom that his university had already gone a step further. Rupp had called out the Volunteers for their recent refusal “to compete against a track team because it had Negroes on its squad” — “but they turned around and said they would go there and compete. Is that right?” Holt didn’t deny this assertion: up to this point, “we had informed the Athletic Director of an out-of-state team scheduled to play in Knoxville that local conditions would not permit us to play Negro athletes in our [home] games.” But the insults of a hated rival spurred Tennessee’s Board of Trustees to implement its own desegregation plan, if for no reason than spite. “The Athletic Department was informed [by the Board] that undergraduate Negro students wishing to try out should be treated like all others,” Holt explained, “and that any athletic team from another school with Negro athletes would be permitted to play our team.” Indeed, the sincerity of this policy was put to the test that autumn, as the Vols prepared for an October 14 home date with Tulsa. Holt had been forewarned by Tulsa officials that their team “might have one or more Negro members,” though the Golden Hurricane traveling party ended up being entirely white. Nevertheless, he revealed to Ransom, “we were prepared to play such [athletes]” if they had made the trip.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ J. Wayne Reitz to Harry H. Ransom, October 31, 1961, Folder “Intercollegiate Athletics, Div. of — Misc., 1955-67,” Box 38, Reitz Presidential Papers (first and second quotations); Favre, “Rupp Forecasts End of SEC Segregation,” 53 (third and fourth quotations); A. D. Holt to Harry Ransom, November 7, 1961, Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/60-8/31/62,” Box 85, UT Chancellor’s Office Records (fifth through eighth quotations).

Taking Rupp at his word, too, Holt noted how “some members of our Conference have said their teams, especially their basketball teams, will have Negro members before long.” In fact, Rupp’s assertion became an article of faith among the SEC brethren. Vanderbilt’s University Senate insisted in a report on integration to the Board of Trust that “it is only a matter of time until a Negro appears on a visiting team, even within our own Conference.” Tulane president Herbert Longenecker argued that Kentucky’s “intention of accepting Negro students” was a particular point of interest given how the Wildcats were “already on our future schedules.” What was taking shape at Kentucky portended a world in which, as he saw it, the SEC brethren would play opponents, “at home or away, regardless of the fact that their teams may have Negro members.” The problem for Dickey and Shively, back in Lexington, was that they had no idea that members were considering these policy shifts. It wasn’t until May 1963, when the University System of Georgia declared integrated teams could play inside their state borders, that they had any inkling that the ice was thawing. Days after receiving Dickey’s obsequious letter about integration, a concerned Edwin Harrison approached the Board of Regents. This policy, the Georgia Tech president reminded them, was created to safeguard against *northern* teams. In a competitive landscape where a SEC member was earnestly contemplating the opening of its football program to athletes of color, keeping this policy in place proved simply impractical. Neither Georgia Tech nor Georgia would be able to meet league opponents on their own home fields, forcing them to take to the road to play these *southern* teams under the same absurd conditions they had long faced intersectional ones. Appreciating the scale of this dilemma, the Regents unanimously (if reluctantly) “eliminated and changed” their policy, revising it “to permit competition with other teams regardless of [the] race or color of such members of the opposing team” — all in an effort “to

protect the institution,” be it Tech or UGA, “playing such opposing teams in the future.”⁵⁹

Much to the Regents’ chagrin, this future had already arrived: it was they who were catching up to it. Competition with teams (in the words of their original policy) “where the races are mixed” was destined to become more commonplace as the decade wore on. Denying that fact was like trying to avoid inhaling any oxygen when taking a deep breath: interracial play was “a situation,” a Florida athletics official counseled Reitz, just two months before the Georgia Regents’ announcement, “that is going to arise more and more frequently.” One Tulane alum warned Longenecker “such a drastic social revolution should and must be made very gradually.” Yet each SEC member was faced with decisive competitive *and* commercial choices about their schedules for the second half of the decade — when black students would inevitably attend their institutions. Although the SEC brethren, Tulane included, had, as Longenecker explained, “sought schedules which would minimize the possibility” of interracial play, “whether this will be possible in the future remains a matter of speculation.” After all, as early as the spring of 1961, “the military academies, the University of Pittsburgh, Notre Dame, and the University of Michigan . . . all expressed interest in scheduling future football games with Tulane,” leaving its program to judge the ire of its white supporters against more material concerns.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ A. D. Holt to Harry H. Ransom, November 7, 1961, Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/60-8/31/62,” Box 85, UT Chancellor’s Office Records (first quotation); A Communication from the University Senate to the Board of Trust, adopted April 26, 1962, appended to the Minutes of a Meeting of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust, May 4-5, 1962 (second quotation); Herbert E. Longenecker, Statement on the Participation of Negroes on Athletic Teams of Opponents, June 14, 1961, Folder “Athletic Advisory Committee, 1960-61-63,” Box 31, Longenecker Papers (third through fifth quotations); James A. Dunlap to L. R. Siebert, May 23, 1963, Folder 6, Box 1, Board of Regents Collection (sixth through eighth quotations).

⁶⁰ Draft Resolution of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, undated [December 1955], Folder 15, Box 1, Board of Regents Collection (first quotation); Percy Beard to J. Wayne Reitz, March 1, 1963, Folder “Intercollegiate Athletics, Div. of — Misc., 1955-67,” Box 38, Reitz Presidential Papers (second quotation); John Serio to Herbert E. Longenecker, June 7, 1963 (third quotation); Herbert E. Longenecker to John Serio, June 11, 1963 (fourth and fifth quotations); both in Folder “Negroes — Attendance at Univ. Functions or Meetings at the University, 1961-63,” Box 49; Herbert E. Longenecker, Statement on the Participation of Negroes on Athletic Teams of Opponents, June 14, 1961, Folder “Athletic Advisory Committee, 1960-61-63,” Box 31 (sixth

For the most part, Tulane and these eastern members came down on the side of commerce and competition, not culture. Indeed, in January of 1964, Tulane's newly-hired athletics director, Rix N. Yard, initiated a series of contract talks with Notre Dame officials about a home-and-home series, with an October 1969 game slated for New Orleans and another in South Bend in November 1971. It was the meeting in the Crescent City which concerned Father Ned Joyce, Notre Dame's executive vice president, who oversaw the university's day-to-day business. A native Southerner himself, Joyce informed Yard, "I can see no difficulty about making this commitment as long as we have the option of changing the site of the game in the event that the colored problem should still be a factor." "This contingency," then, should be written into the game contracts, Joyce insisted, so as to permit Notre Dame to shift the contest north to South Bend if "we feel the climate there" in New Orleans was still "inimical to our Negro athletes" by decade's end. Yard couldn't lose a series with the Fighting Irish: too much money and prestige was tied to it. He suddenly found himself having to vouch for the good father "the rapid progress" that both Tulane and New Orleans had achieved in the field of integration. "I feel confident," he wrote Joyce, "that Notre Dame would have no difficulty in housing or feeding your travelling party in 1969 and thereafter, no matter what hotel or restaurants you selected." Indeed, he even went so far as to tell Joyce that "if the Notre Dame team were to stay in New Orleans *tomorrow* there would be no problem, provided the hotel and the restaurants which you used were carefully selected." In other words, there were parts of the South, and the SEC, which were willing to interact with African Americans in the here and now — not just the future.⁶¹

quotation); all in Longenecker Papers. On the commercial consequences of refusing to schedule integrated teams in the late sixties, see, for instance, Horace Renegar to Herbert E. Longenecker, memorandum, March 29, 1961, Folder "Advisory Committee, 1960-61-63," Box 31, Longenecker Papers.

⁶¹ Rev. Edmund P. Joyce, C. S. C., to Rix N. Yard, January 27, 1964 (first through fourth quotations); Rix N. Yard to Rev. Edmund P. Joyce, C. S. C., January 10, 1964 (fifth through seventh quotations; emphasis added in

All of which was why the Deep South Five were so taken aback by the depth of support for keeping a soon-to-be-integrated Kentucky on schedules and in the fold. Increasingly isolated from not only the nation, but developments in their own league, these programs had diminishing clout — a humiliation that left them bereft of any real alternatives. If the conference broke apart over the issue of race, the Deep South Five effectively became a segregated island competing in a sea of change. “Like an ostrich,” Jesse Outlar told his *Atlanta Constitution* readers, “the SEC prefers to overlook integration.” When league officials convened in Atlanta for the SEC’s winter meetings, in January 1964, Outlar reported how “representatives are smiling on the outside, but they are confronted with issues which may permanently splinter togetherness.” Naturally, most members refused to comment on any contingency that might alter the racial status quo. Their mounting silence loudly underscored the mounting tensions within their ranks. Snapping at a reporter on the opening day, Bernie Moore gruffly insisted he couldn’t “see any reason that the integration issue should come up.” Moreover, the commissioner huffed, “I don’t know who might bring it up even in informal talks.” Even Bobby Dodd — who became the prime focus of media attention after Georgia Tech resigned its membership in the final working session — quieted speculation that his first post-SEC move was signing black talent to match that of the intersectional foes which were now to fill out the Yellow Jackets’ future schedules. “Leaving the league,” he declared, “will have no bearing on the integration issue.” Here, at least, was a curious point of consensus. “There are Negro students in SEC classrooms,” Outlar observed, “and there will be Negro athletes qualified to perform in all sports”: this reality “shouldn’t pose any problem,” but “that isn’t the viewpoint in various SEC areas.” “If athletes have ability,” he

seventh quotation); both in Folder “Athletic Advisory Committee, 1960-61-63,” Box 31, Longenecker Papers.

contended, “they should play, regardless of race.”⁶²

Most members spent 1964 deflecting the issue entirely, especially talk of how their continued silence might render long-term damage to league unity. Psychically, politically, emotionally spent by their decades-long fight to keep black students out of their universities, many administrators were content to simply ignore the matter of black athletes altogether, treating it as the proverbial elephant in the room, with the understanding that attention would have to be paid. Indeed, that moment came New Year’s Eve: in a press release, Longenecker announced Tulane’s intentions to cashier its SEC affiliation for the “freedom to design schedules that will improve our competitive position.” Down to just ten members, with others eyeing the exits, the SEC was falling apart. “I hope we may be able to hold the Conference together,” Auburn president Ralph Draughon confessed to Longenecker. But shoring up the fragments of their crumbling alliance required the SEC brethren to break the impasse on race and scheduling. Saving their conference meant raising their voices.⁶³

In January 1965, as league leaders once again gathered in Atlanta for their winter meetings, the muted dissension of the previous year was supplanted by lively, purposive, clear-eyed debate on the SEC’s future. While many dubbed this session “the beginning of the end,” something funny happened on the way to disunion: compromise, agreement, and the makings of lasting unity. Pushed to the brink, the Deep South Five and their five remaining eastern counterparts unexpectedly rallied

⁶² Outlar, “The SEC Fraternity,” *AC*, January 22, 1964, 31 (first, second, and sixth through ninth quotations); Outlar, “SEC Seems Likely to Retain Its Controversial 140 Rule,” *AC*, January 23, 1964, 40 (third and fourth quotations); Clark, “Departure Won’t Alter Tech Integration Plans,” *AC*, January 28, 1964, 29 (fifth quotation).

⁶³ News Release on Tulane’s Withdrawal from Southeastern Conference, December 31, 1964, Folder “Correspondence, SEC, 1964-65,” Box 54, Reitz Presidential Papers (first quotation); Ralph Draughon to Herbert E. Longenecker, January 7, 1965, Folder “Southeastern Conference, Jan-Feb 1965,” Box 23, Draughon Presidential Papers (second quotation).

together, digging their way out of their stalemate, and at last realizing that counting coup did little to ensure the SEC's survival past 1965, let alone this meeting. "We have some problems," Auburn athletics director Jeff Beard noted, "but nothing that can't be worked out." In a bid aimed at reaching more common accord, the Deep South Five conceded — once and for all — the inseparability of intraleague scheduling and athletic integration. Dispensing with their tiresome efforts to drive a wedge between the instruments of competition and the competitors themselves, leaders at these five universities acknowledged that they desperately needed a functioning, unified SEC more than an all-white pool of opposition. As Mississippi State athletics director Wade Walker put it, "Our school could not have survived without the SEC and we are even more indebted to it in the future."⁶⁴

The single greatest area of fundamental agreement sprung up around the renewed work of the athletics directors to build a round-robin schedule. In rejecting his 1956 plan, Moore reminded them, the SEC had barely "got along" without a resolution to this most basic of competitive issues. Now, as a winnowed membership warmed to the principle of compromise, the matters of how and when they would play against one another was back on the table. Moore, discouraged by his inability to effect any change in this area in the previous two decades, counseled the athletics directors that "with only ten members it was becoming increasingly more difficult for all institutions to schedule six Conference games without more and more being compelled to schedule more than six before every institution had six." Motivated as they were by the tyranny of their balance sheets, he knew that if there was no financial incentive for them to slate the obligatory number of league series, they wouldn't do so. In a rare show of strong-arm tactics, he proposed that "the division of receipts from

⁶⁴ Minter, "Rotating Slate May Cause Eventual Break Up of SEC," 4 (first and third quotations); John Logue, "SEC Officials Laud Rotating Grid System," *AJ*, January 30, 1965, 6 (second quotation).

television and bowl games shall be based on the playing of six Conference games.” With members receiving nearly \$70,000 each from TV and bowl payouts in 1964 alone, attaching future financial rewards to the scheduling of intraleague contests was bound to get their attention.⁶⁵

If attention was what Moore wanted, then he got it, so much so that his proposal fostered an unlikely marriage of convenience between Shively and Beard — men whose institutions uneasily eyed one another from opposite sides of the divide on interracial play. Just two years earlier, after all, Auburn officials defiantly refused to schedule Kentucky, for fear of the racial implications. Now they seized upon an opening to forge a mutually-beneficial compact to save their conference. Indeed, Beard recognized that, in a world where integration was becoming the norm, not an exception, his own program and the four others in the Deep South Five would need a place to compete where they might bring athletes of color into their locker rooms on their own timetable. For his part, Shively sought a guarantee that Kentucky wouldn’t be forced out of the league. Joining hands, then, they put before the SEC brethren their own plan for an intraleague schedule, with “five basic or traditional games” slated annually and two others played “on a rotating basis” every two seasons. Their proposal won an enthusiastic supporter in Draughon, conference president and Beard’s boss. “I think it will be of advantage to all members,” he pleaded with his fellow institution heads, “if the schedule can be completed in the near future.” To an old friend, he was even more optimistic. “With a 10-member conference,” a round-robin schedule — and, ostensibly, the SEC’s survival — was “now possible.”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Minutes of Annual Meeting of Southeastern Conference, January 29, 1965, Folder “Southeastern Conference, Jan-Feb 1965,” Box 23, Draughon Presidential Papers (quotations).

⁶⁶ Minutes of Annual Meeting of Southeastern Conference, January 29, 1965 (first and second quotations); Ralph Draughon to Frank A. Rose, February 7, 1965 (third and fourth quotations); Ralph Draughon to Walker Reynolds, February 3, 1965 (fifth quotation); all in Folder “Southeastern Conference, Jan-Feb 1965,” Box 23, Draughon Presidential Papers.

Approved by seven of the ten members, the Beard-Shively plan was set to come on line in 1970, “whereby over a four year period all member institutions will have played each other.” SEC leaders emerged from the meeting rooms of the Americana Hotel eager to trumpet their achievement. Georgia athletics director Joel Eaves rushed out to tell the *Atlanta Journal* that he was “extremely pleased” with how events played out. Wade Walker soared to more hyperbolic heights: “the rotating schedule is the greatest single thing that ever happened to Southeastern Conference football.” Buck Bradberry, an Auburn assistant coach attending the meetings in place of his boss, head coach “Shug” Jordan, rejoiced that this new schedule “has already drawn the conference closer together than it has ever been before.” He foresaw “no signs of a coming split” over race. “The integration issue hasn’t broken up the Union yet. Why should it break up the SEC?” What this air of compromise did break up was the alliance of eastern members, with Kentucky’s Shively and Georgia’s Eaves joining with the Deep South Five in a bargain that essentially slowed the march to integration. “We were willing to make some concessions,” said Eaves, who had spent most of his career as head basketball coach at Auburn, “because we thought the rotating schedule was a vital thing to the conference.”⁶⁷

The losers here — Florida, Tennessee, and Vanderbilt — were left believing that their league brethren had rushed to a compromise simply for compromise’s sake, creating a logistical nightmare. Florida athletics director and head coach Ray Graves, for one, was seen as obstructing this progress: indeed, Beard had ridiculed him in front of the conference’s institution heads, noting how, amongst its athletics directors, “only Florida voted against a rotating schedule.” But Graves remained dubious that a seven-game league schedule was even mathematically possible, given the contracts that his —

⁶⁷ Logue, “SEC Officials Laud Rotating Grid System,” 4 (first and fifth quotations), 6 (second quotation); Clark, “Integration Is No Treat To Split SEC — Bradberry,” *AC*, January 30, 1965, 11 (third and fourth quotations).

and surely every other — program had already signed with opponents for future series in the early seventies. On the drawing board for the Gators, for instance, were their annual games with Florida State and Miami, which ate up two of the three non-conference slots on a seven-game schedule. “We already have Tulane scheduled through 1972,” not to mention those early decade “scheduled games” with “Illinois and Air Force, plus a date that Notre Dame is holding open for us.” Intersectional play now proved vital and, he declared, “Florida means to honor contracts made with outside schools.”⁶⁸

Graves’ misgivings weren’t unfounded. In fact, when the athletics directors returned home from Atlanta, and began looking over their schedules, they quickly realized that wholesale changes would have to be made to existing game contracts with future non-conference foes. And breaking these contracts introduced another complication: the ever-present threat of the buyout clause, which made the Beard-Shively plan not only a practical headache, but a financial one, too. Some of Graves’ colleagues were letting it be known that they weren’t willing to reconfigure their schedules to make room for the two rotating games, leaving Moore “completely distressed about the possibility of the failure of the rotating football schedule.” Among these insurgent critics was LSU athletics director Jim Corbett, who refused to budge. On bended knee, Moore implored him “to cancel all the games” which prevented LSU “from completing the rotating schedule in 1970.” Without some concessions, he was “sure” that “Vanderbilt, Tennessee, and Florida will hide behind the excuse that LSU is not playing the proposed schedule, therefore, they won’t have to play it, which is natural and, I suppose, legitimate” — the collapse of compromise based on the rights of a minority.

Without such compromise, and the implementation of this schedule, too, the SEC itself might

⁶⁸ Minutes of Annual Meeting of Southeastern Conference, January 29, 1965, Folder “Southeastern Conference, Jan-Feb 1965,” Box 23, Draughton Presidential Papers (first quotation); Minter, “Rotating Slate May Cause Eventual Break Up of SEC,” 4 (second and third quotations).

fold. Moore, just a year away from retirement, was interested in legacy. But it was part of his legacy that kept the round-robin format from being easily adopted. He could complain that “it is beyond my reasoning to understand why a rotating schedule for the Southeastern Conference would not be beneficial to each member institution from the standpoint of building interest and financial values in all Conference games.” After all, “the Big Ten has gone to a rotating schedule,” as had “the Big Eight, the Southwest, the Atlantic Coast, and the Pacific Coast Conferences.” Yet “the experience of other conferences” had never been all that important for Moore or the SEC brethren — except to measure how far away from these leagues they had to flee from the perceived scourge of integration. Chastising one of the SEC’s own athletics directors for holding out on a plan that might now merge its fortunes to the world beyond southern football — “the only salvation for the Conference,” in the dire terms Moore laid out — proved just a wee bit hypocritical. The regional insularity of schedule making was hard habit to break; and Moore showed himself to be no better at it than any athletics director. The SEC would have to learn how to live with itself, and stay easy with an integrated world, so that it might just survive, and thrive, as a union rather than a confederacy.⁶⁹

When a rotating plan was finally agreed upon, in mid-May, with six intraleague games, rather than seven, to start in 1972, not 1970, it was, as Moore put, a “reasonable solution of the schedule problem.” He had his schedule; the SEC had its future. With these programmatic concerns settled, now came the harder work of seeing whether the individual members might at last agree to play one another — even if one team fielded an integrated team and the other didn’t. Six months later, Paul “Bear” Bryant received an inquiry from a sportswriter about whether or not Alabama would agree

⁶⁹ Bernie Moore to James J. Corbett, April 5, 1965, Folder “Southeastern Conference, Mar-Aug 1965,” Box 23, Draughon Presidential Papers (quotations).

to face an integrated Florida team if Graves signed black players. The query was an obvious ploy to gauge the sincerity of the SEC's most successful program — and its most recognizable coach — on the willingness to meet all comers. Cautiously, the Bear forwarded the letter on to President Rose's top assistant, Jeff Bennett, for some much-needed guidance. In a test of whether attitudes had changed at Alabama toward scheduling integrated teams in the seven years since Walter Langsam's proposition to play Cincinnati, Bennett's ghostwritten letter signaled that for the university itself — where he insisted that the “over fifty Negro students currently enrolled” had not confronted “any problems by reason of their appearance on our campus” — competing against black athletes in the regular season was no problem. “The University of Alabama will play Florida regardless of the racial composition of its team,” Bennett wrote. “We have determined this innumerable times in years past, having played many teams in various sports who had Negro personnel, and that particular fact has never presented any problems to us.” This revision of the recent past elicited an even more profound pronouncement: “we do not have any Negroes on our squads, although, of course, any student in the University, regardless of race, is free to compete for positions on any of our intercollegiate teams.” No one was standing in the locker room door blocking the entry of an African American. “Our only concern,” he insisted, “is to do all we can to win against whomever we play.”⁷⁰

It was a convenient lie, but a necessary one, too — the kind of lie that institutions frequently tell so that they might simply move on. And the SEC was fumbling forward, beyond the internecine squabbles of the postwar era, and planning for the decade to come, in which its member institutions

⁷⁰ Bernie Moore to Ralph Draughon, April 21, 1965 (first quotation); Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Southeastern Conference, May 9, 1965; Bernie Moore to SEC Institutions, memorandum, June 3, 1965; all in Folder “Southeastern Conference, Mar-Aug 1965,” Box 23, Draughon Presidential Papers; J. Jefferson Bennett to Paul W. Bryant, November 12, 1965, Folder “Athletics Misc.,” Box 15, James Jefferson Bennett Papers, UA (second through fifth quotations).

would finally have to confront the issue of gridiron integration, settling what Herbert Longenecker called the “collateral problems” of the segregated culture of gameday. Among these was “segregated seating in the Stadium,” that place where commerce boldly converged with competition. Mitigating, once again, the conflicting interests of black access and white tradition, TWIs leveraged the demands of commerce against the vicissitudes of competition. Except, this time, the contest shifted from the field of play to the stands, from the competitors to the spectators themselves.⁷¹

CHAPTER THREE **“A place for them to sit”**

Not every traditionally white institution was so adverse to playing integrated teams as some in the Southeastern Conference, even in the mid-forties. To kick off its 1945 season, for instance, North Carolina took to the road, slating a September 22 date with the squad from Camp Lee, a U. S. Army base located right outside Petersburg, Virginia. Just five days before the game, its commanding officer, Brigadier General George A. Horkan, sent an invitation to North Carolina president Frank Porter Graham, proffering “accommodations on the post,” as well as one last reminder about “the makeup of our team.” “We have on this post many thousands of colored troops,” he explained, “and each year have fielded a mixed football team.” This arrangement “has made for most harmonious relations and conduct of our personnel and has contributed much to their morale.” A meeting with the Tarheels was approved only because “I have been given the impression that the University has no objection to playing a mixed service team.” With “hope this may be the case,” Horkan advised

⁷¹ Herbert E. Longenecker, Statement on the Participation of Negroes on Athletic Teams of Opponents, June 14, 1961, Folder “Athletic Advisory Committee, 1960-61-63,” Box 31, Longenecker Papers (quotations).

Graham that, if North Carolina did not want to face African Americans, the contest should be cancelled altogether as “the complications incident to playing a game on the post and not allowing colored players to participate” would be dire indeed. But Graham, one of the South’s most active racial liberals, put all the general’s anxieties to rest with ample reassurance that “I personally have no objection” to interracial play. Although Jim Crow still had his say in Chapel Hill, “it is our policy when we schedule a football game with another institution or post to play the team which is sent on the field. We would not ever presume to choose the composition of our opponent’s football team.”¹

This news was music to the general’s ears. Effusively praising Graham’s “farsighted policy,” he exclaimed that “your action in authorizing your football team to play against the Camp Lee Team with three negro players is, in my opinion, a very progressive step and will do much to help the inter-racial relation [*sic*] in this part of the country.” At a station post where better than one-third of the personnel were black, Horkan himself devised an unconventional solution to this “morale problem”: putting soldiers of both races on an equal footing in all social situations. A *Chicago Defender* profile of race relations at Camp Lee, published a week before the game, praised him and his adjutants for “building one of the best possible environments for both officers and enlisted personnel, according to the true principles of democracy.” A “democratic spiritedness” between the races was thus “found throughout the camp,” be it at the post exchange, in the mess halls, or on the ball fields — a fact made manifest in the one-two punch of its backfield on the very first drive of the game. On one play,

¹ Brig. Gen. George A. Horkan to Frank Porter Graham, September 17, 1945 (first through seventh quotations); Frank Porter Graham to Brig. Gen. George A. Horkan, September 18, 1945 (eighth and ninth quotations); both in Folder “Football: General, 1944-1948,” Box 20, Graham Files. This was not the Tarheels’ first meeting against an integrated team: that occurred during the 1936 season, when they took on NYU, and their black end, Ed Williams, at Yankee Stadium. Graham’s position on that game was the same as it was here, writing NAACP president Walter White that “we did not presume to pick the New York University team.” See Frank Porter Graham to Walter White, November 4, 1936, Folder “Negroes: NYU Football Team, 1936-1941,” Box 13, Graham Files.

“hard-driving” fullback, Paul Shu, a former VMI standout, would lay into the middle of the Tarheel line, powering forward for two, three, four yards a carry. On the next, Carolina’s secondary would give chase to “fast young Negro back” Levi Jackson (who, as seen in the last chapter, went on to cause other kinds of problems for Vanderbilt in its 1948 game at Yale). The only thing that kept this tandem out of the end zone was an injury to Jackson, halting both the drive and Camp Lee’s ground game. Indeed, his early exit slowed the pace of play on both sides, with wire reports noting how, “for the most part, it was straight football” thereafter. Tarheel head coach Carl Snavely did not dare tip his hand for fear of revealing something before their big showdown with Georgia Tech the following Saturday; Camp Lee simply could not get anything going with Jackson on the sideline. In turn, the two teams slugged it out. By the time it was over, “youth, condition, and the advantage of continuous training [gave] the Tarheels the edge,” outlasting “the Soldier eleven” for a 6-0 victory.²

As word spread about the circumstances under which this game was played, black leaders, like Atlanta University president Rufus Clement, were quick to laud Horkan for his “good judgment in sanctioning a normal interracial activity on the athletic field.” But what happened on the field was only the half of it. Horkan’s decision to integrate Camp Lee’s football team was extraordinary on its own terms alone, although it was hastened by a 1943 War Department order that “at posts, camps, and stations where the garrison includes two or more races, recreational facilities . . . will not be designated for any particular race.” This directive commanded equal access to such gathering places as “theatres and post exchanges,” as well as athletic fields — for participant *and* spectator alike. So,

² Brig. Gen. George A. Horkan to Frank Porter Graham, September 21, 1945, Folder “Football, 1944-1948,” Box 20, Graham Files (first through third quotations); Ernest R. Rather, “Cites Advantages For Soldier At Camp Lee,” *CD*, September 15, 1945, 11 (fourth and fifth quotations); “Tarheels Shade Camp Lee, 6-0,” *AJ*, September 23, 1945, B3 (sixth through eighth quotations); “Tarheels Nip Lee, 6-0, In Opener,” *AC*, September 23, 1945, C11 (ninth and tenth quotations). By his own calculations, Horkan told Graham that “we have some 13,000 colored troops at this post and about 25,000 white troops.”

if Jackson, while nursing his injury on the bench, had glanced behind him at the nearly 12,000 fans congregated on the makeshift grandstands, he would have seen a crowd that looked an awful lot like his team: a raucous assembly of white and black G. I.'s, unencumbered by any enforced segregation. Free to sit wherever they wanted, black soldiers cheered on the Camp Lee team right alongside white ones, lending powerful credence to the *Defender's* finding that "inter-racial relationship at Lee is not subjected to artificial controls."³

In a region where "artificial controls" governed every public interaction, an integrated crowd was no small matter. That this seating arrangement flouted the color line so deliberately was no less ironic for the Army, which, as an internal report of President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights showed a year-and-a-half later, was "carefully segregated . . . right down the line." Indeed, once this game was finished, white troops returned to one set of barracks, and blacks to another, adding a contradictory wrinkle to this seemingly noble experiment in cross-racial morale building. And, yet, the issue at stake here was encounter: if whites and blacks could peaceably sit side-by-side at these games, then it might help forge an equality of access for both races to all public spaces. To that end, at least, this single Army post had far outpaced all of the South's major universities on gamedays. After all, when the Tarheels took on Georgia Tech back in Chapel Hill the next Saturday, they did so in front of a solidly segregated crowd at Kenan Stadium.⁴

³ Rufus E. Clement to Brig. Gen. George A. Horkan, September 29, 1945, Folder "Football, 1944-1948," Box 20, Graham Files (first quotation); Adj. Gen. Paul O'Leary to Commanding Generals, All Service Commands, order, March 10, 1943, Folder "War Department [2 of 3]," Box 7, Records of the President's Committee on Civil Rights, HSTL (second and third quotations); Rather, "Cites Advantages For Soldier At Camp Lee," 11 (fourth quotation). In July 1944, this policy was permanently amended to permit the usage of post facilities to all personnel stationed thereon. See Robert K. Carr to Members of the President's Committee on Civil Rights, memorandum, June 10, 1947, Folder "Negroes in Armed Forces," Box 18, Records of the President's Committee on Civil Rights.

⁴ Milton Stewart to Robert K. Carr, memorandum, April 7, 1947, Folder "War Department [1 of 3]," Box 7, Records of the President's Committee on Civil Rights.

The principles of this social experiment did not readily translate into the postwar South. The culture of gameday, like most aspects of life in the region, promptly resumed the well-worn rhythms of what Thurgood Marshall characterized as a “‘prejudice as usual’ policy.”⁵ Nevertheless, the broad implications of what unfolded in the stands that day at Camp Lee can be extrapolated from the mere acknowledgment by TWIs that football could furnish equal entertainment for patrons of both races. Such recognition was subtly enmeshed within the logic of their ticket sales, with many programs tapping the relative buying power of a previously overlooked black fan base. Green was now the only color that mattered at the box office. Things were far different for black ticket holders once inside the stadium, where they were routinely shunted into segregated sections at the very edges of the stands. Not until African Americans were admitted to these institutions as students during the fifties and early sixties did any of them seriously consider seating spectators without regard to race — a brief deliberation, in most cases. Where a university seated these new students at its home games supplied a telling litmus test for its leaders’ commitment to integrating the life of the campus. Barely a handful dispensed with their segregated ticketing practices in the initial blush of integration; others toyed with the idea of throwing white and black students together, only to balk before taking action; most refused black undergraduates a seat anywhere but “colored” sections. A few hardliners even denied them entry well into the mid-sixties. So long as black students were kept at a comfortable distance from white spectators, they were not students in full. Which was perfectly fine with many institution heads and athletics directors, who were near unanimous in their fear that equal access to the stands would inexorably lead black students to demand — even *expect* — similar entree to the

⁵ Thurgood Marshall, Statement Before the President’s Committee on Civil Rights, April 17, 1947, Folder “Marshall, Thurgood,” Box 18, Records of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights.

playing field itself. They worried that spectatorship would precipitate participation on the field; and participation on the field would signal full integration into the campus community. And that was something each TWI would guard against for as long as possible.

I

Preparations were well under way for the upcoming 1947 season at Ole Miss when, in early July, chancellor J. D. Williams dashed off a brief memorandum to Jeff Hamm, the athletics department's business manager, inquiring as to "what provision is going to be made for negroes at football games this year." It was a matter fresh on his mind. A few faculty members had recently "suggested that perhaps we would have some bleachers at one end of the field and without advertising the fact would permit colored people to come to see the game." Their proposal followed close on the heels of a story a friend from Clarksdale told him about "a retired mail carrier, colored, . . . who had indicated that he would like to come to see all of the Ole Miss games" but wondered if there was anywhere for him to sit. The chancellor himself remembered that, in years past, "I have seen members of our Buildings and Grounds staff down there" in the end zone "looking at the game." To him, their presence was understandable: they were at work. What astonished him, however, was the extent to which blacks, like this retired postman, who had no affiliation with the university, were as keen as whites to attend home games. It had simply never occurred to him that Ole Miss football might have a market appeal that transcended the color line. He saw little harm, then, in indulging such interest by making some limited room for black spectators at Hemingway Stadium — a directive which Hamm promptly responded that "we will be glad to follow out." Although general admission tickets were never previously sold to persons of color, he concurred, both in principle and in practice, that "it will be a

good idea, regardless of whether or not we charge for it, to have a place for them to sit.”⁶

Williams and Hamm were not the only ones caught unawares by this newfound black interest. Indeed, the emergence of the black spectator was one of the principal changes which the postwar era introduced into the culture of gameday: never before had African Americans made so many inquiries about the availability of tickets. While a fair number of blacks trickled through the turnstiles before the war, for the most part, the gates of the South’s major college stadiums, like the gates of its major universities, were locked tight shut to them. They needed not ask for tickets since there were none.⁷ During wartime, some TWIs took preemptive steps to shore up their segregated ticketing practices before black veterans came home from Europe and the Pacific. A 1944 resolution of the University of Texas Board of Regents, “with reference to the use and control of all public buildings” on campus, determined that no university facility “shall be used for any public meeting or entertainment attended by members of the Caucasian Race and the Negro Race,” unless plans were made “in advance” to “segregate completely” all who were in attendance. “Strict compliance with this policy” was spelled out for both Gregory Gymnasium and Hogg Auditorium — the main indoor athletic and performing arts venues, respectively — but such segregation was not explicitly circumscribed on admissions to

⁶ J. D. Williams to J. K. Hamm, memorandum, July 3, 1947 (first through fourth quotations); J. K. Hamm to J. D. Williams, memorandum, July 8, 1947 (fifth and sixth quotations); both in Folder 3, Box 51, Fortune Collection.

⁷ I do not deny that black spectators were sold tickets to white college games in large cities, like Atlanta, in the twenties and thirties. In November 1928, for instance, the *Atlanta Constitution* carried a notice about a local black male who was held up at gunpoint by two white men, who robbed him “of a small amount of cash, a watch, and a ticket to the Alabama-Georgia Tech game.” See “Negro Robbed of Alabama-Tech Football Tickets,” *AC*, November 16, 1928, 4. In November 1934, the Tuskegee Institute football team witnessed Georgia Tech’s match-up with Auburn at Grant Field “through the kindness” of Tech athletics director and head coach Bill Alexander. See “Tuskegee Plays Clark Monday,” *AC*, November 10, 1934, 15. But regular, or even semi-regular, black attendance at Tech games in this period proves at basic variance with the general trend seen in my research at other TWIs, leading me to conclude that the routinized practice of ticket sales to black patrons was a largely postwar phenomenon.

Texas Memorial Stadium. African Americans had never passed through its gates as paying customers — and nothing, to that end, was about to change. The only black faces ever seen there on gamedays were those, like the groundskeepers at Ole Miss, who stole their few, fleeting glimpses of play in the shadows of the stands in between emptying garbage cans and unstopping toilets. This tradition of subservience was further evinced in the complaints of Williams' counterpart at Mississippi State, Fred Tom Mitchell, about the shabby appearance of Scott Field. In a November 1946 memorandum to athletics director "Dudy" Noble about "the condition of the physical plant there," Mitchell called particular attention to "the dressing rooms for the football team," which, to his mind at least, "leaves much to be desired in cleanliness." "I am sure that with the Negro help that is there," he instructed, "this condition can be improved if you put the pressure on those concerned."⁸

Yet pressure was also squarely on the shoulders of administrators like Mitchell and Noble to keep their programs financially solvent in the immediate aftermath of the war — a challenge which forced them to wring every last dollar out of their stadiums. In an age when athletic budgets were figured on earnings cleared through gate receipts, many officials began reassessing how they might maximize the financial return on each and every seat during their home games. For some that meant beefing up their schedules to gin up greater interest. When presenting the schedule he had contracted for Clemson's 1948 season to his Athletic Council for its approval, athletics director and head coach Frank Howard quipped that it was "still a little too tough to play, if we expect to win all the games,

⁸ Excerpt from the Minutes of the Board of Regents of the University of Texas, September 29, 1944, Folder "Negroes," Box 9, UT Chancellor's Office Records (first through fifth quotations); Fred Tom Mitchell to C. R. Noble, November 19, 1946, Folder 1, Drawer 1, Mitchell Presidential Files (sixth through ninth quotations). On the matter of black subservience, see also Petition to Francis Cherry, February 4, 1953, Folder 365 (1), no box, Francis Cherry Papers, AHC. With this petition, a group of 50 black janitors at the University of Arkansas — some of whom worked as groundskeepers at Razorback Stadium — asked Governor Francis Cherry for "a living wage" increase.

but I believe we can make a pretty good showing on it and can also make enough money out of it to keep us operating.” He slated just four home games — against in-state patsy Presbyterian College, Southern Conference rivals Furman and N. C. State, and also-ran Duquesne — which were “about all that people would come to see,” making the selection of the annual Homecoming date a critical financial decision for the department as a whole. Homecoming was, to be sure, a gambit calculated specifically to drive up attendance at a game for which gate receipts were expected to be small. It would have been counterintuitive, then, to designate a contest for which there promised to be sizeable turnout. He felt “sure” that “people will come to see the Furman game” — only 30 miles separated the two campuses — so, “by making the Duquesne game Homecoming, we would get a much better crowd” that Saturday. Otherwise, that particular date might end up a losing proposition.⁹

Experience, Howard wrote a few years later, taught him that Clemson’s gate receipts “[vary] according to weather conditions, the won-and-lost records of the Clemson team and its opponent, other games played in the vicinity . . . and, to a certain extent, the amount of money persons living in a particular area are willing to spend for such recreational activities.” Their budget, it seemed to him, was forever held hostage by a dismal science of elements and chance. And, yet, win or lose, rain or shine, a stalwart black constituency clamored for a prime spot to watch the Tigers play. The only catch was that they did so from a vantage point *outside* Clemson Memorial Stadium: “Nigger Hill,” as white fans took to calling it, was a large mound of dirt just beyond the north gates, left over from the time of the stadium’s construction in the early forties, that, before long, assumed the look of a grass-covered knob as small weeds overran its red clay face. On gamedays, though, it was unfailingly covered over by black spectators, who craned their necks and stood on tiptoes for an unobstructed

⁹ Frank Howard to Lee W. Milford, December 18, 1947, Folder 15, Box 1, Athletic Council Records, CU.

glimpse down into the stadium's earthen bowl. Amazing dedication, considering that they were never admitted inside. Regardless how many seats sat empty, or how far a budget shortfall threatened to drop their program, no one within the athletics department — certainly not Howard himself — ever glanced toward the people standing on that hill and saw potential customers.¹⁰

Elsewhere, though, black spectators found that they were suddenly pushing on an open door. Some TWIs looked to them as a new and additional source of revenue they could ill afford to ignore. Every ticket sold helped their bottom line and a few extra hundred dollars stood to be made at each home game if they merely placed some bleachers in their end zones, or cordoned off an otherwise empty section of their upper deck, where black spectators could pay to sit. All that was required was a modest investment on the front end. In the summer before its 1949 season, Vanderbilt did just that: its Committee on Athletics and Physical Education authorized a series of small-scale renovations to Dudley Field, including a \$3200 allocation for “new portable bleachers for colored patrons” to be installed in one corner of the north end zone. Committee chair Fred J. Lewis reported to chancellor Harvie Branscomb with some pride that, in this era of budgetary belt-tightening, “we have lived well within the requested appropriation” in making these upgrades — that is, “with the exception of the portable bleachers which cost \$4100.” Saddled with a \$900 difference, Lewis' committee simply subtracted this sum from the department's cash reserves; with 334 more seats, all for black patrons who were eager to pay their way inside, the committeemen felt relatively confident that every last dollar would be recouped in no time flat.¹¹

The profit motive was a strong reason — maybe even the *only* reason — that a segregated

¹⁰ Frank Howard to Walter T. Cox, February 27, 1956, Folder 9, Box 2, Athletic Council Records.

¹¹ Fred J. Lewis to Harvie Branscomb, July 25, 1949, Folder 14, Box 129, Chancellor's Papers.

institution like Vanderbilt would grant African Americans any kind of access to both its campus and university-sponsored events. Indeed, in an urban center like Nashville, Vanderbilt was a beneficiary of an appreciable black middle class which held the available means to convert interest into regular attendance — a presence at the box office that inspired visions of a sustainable marketplace for ticket sales. In cultivating such a commercial relationship, however, institutional leaders understood they needed to tread lightly. Local segregation laws still prevailed and no rush to profit could ever trump pure politics. In Dallas, this very consideration tempered SMU's Faculty Committee on Athletics in its search for ways to stabilize its finances amid the 1949 season. Its members recently approved the transfer of all of the Mustangs' home games from small Ownby Stadium on campus to the Cotton Bowl on the other side of town, which expanded to make room for 75,000 fans. It was a gigantic financial gamble, staked principally on the wild popularity of Heisman Trophy winner Doak Walker, whose "all-around brilliance" as "a great passer, runner, kicker, and heady field general" made him SMU's chief drawing card in these postwar years. As he entered his senior season that autumn, the opportunity to see him direct SMU's "thrill-a-minute" single-wing attack never failed to bring fans back for more, filling the Cotton Bowl Saturday after Saturday. By the time the faculty council gathered for its monthly meeting in October, athletics business manager Lester Jordan could report that their bet was paying off handsomely. Both home games played thus far had drawn a combined 114,000 spectators and grossed \$130,000, "exceeding the budget anticipations." While he was bullish about the prospects for the season ahead, Jordan thought the stakes were much riskier in a post-Walker age. He felt the committee should do everything they could to protect the strength of SMU football at the gate — or else they would have to fold. So, with an eye affixed to the bottom line, he wagered a sure bet: "that a colored section be established for all home games to be played during the

regular season of 1950.” Seeing as “there are a considerable number of these fans,” he reassured the committee that demand for tickets among local blacks was high and “they would probably appreciate the action,” repaying SMU’s seeming benevolence with a regular show of strength at the box office. More important for SMU officials, who were loath to transgress any legal code or custom in such a conservative city as Dallas, Jordan reminded them that a segregated section “might save some embarrassment in ticket distribution and [sales] at games.” In sum, economic concessions for black patrons stopped at the turnstiles. The profit motive did have its limits.¹²

Money drove every decision a university made about black access to its stadium, even when it involved games in which its own football program was not a participant. In December 1949, Rice athletics director and head coach Jess Neely agreed to rent out Rice Stadium for the Shamrock Bowl — a charity all-star game for the All American Football Conference, an erstwhile professional league which ceased operation at the end of that season. Neely and other local business leaders thought the game a prime opportunity to demonstrate for the NFL that Houston could support a franchise of its own: a team that could easily call the brand new, 70,000-seat Rice Stadium home. But local gridiron enthusiasts couldn’t have cared less. Fewer than 10,000 advance tickets were sold, assuring that, at \$15 a head, everyone associated with this event stood to lose their shirt. In a last-ditch effort to build a respectable crowd, Neely announced that he would permit, for this game only, the admission of African Americans to Rice Stadium. Local blacks were wooed with the promise that they could purchase a ticket in the east end zone bleachers — “the farthest corner of the park,” the Associated

¹² “Walker Made Difference in Cotton Bowl,” *WP*, January 3, 1949, 10 (first and second quotations); “SMU Edges Missouri, 28-27,” *WP*, October 2, 1949, C1 (third quotation); Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty Committee on Athletics, October 15, 1949 (fourth and fifth quotations); Mayne Longnecker to Umphrey Lee, December 8, 1949 (sixth through eighth quotations); both in Folder “Committee on Athletics, 1949-1951,” Box 6, SMU Athletics Committee Files, SMU.

Negro Press reported — for the cut-rate price of \$5.60. Evidently, black Houstonians were every bit as disinterested as white ones since barely 500 of these seats were filled when the game kicked off. Such a scanty turnout from black spectators, the ANP opined, “should be a lesson . . . [to] whites that Negroes are not satisfied with gestures and favors, not even at a football game.”¹³

All of which pointed to a fundamental exploitation of the black consumer. Those TWIs that sold tickets to black patrons were wholly indifferent to their comfort once the cash register drawer clanged shut. Black ticket holders generally entered by way of a segregated gate; many stadiums lacked adequate restroom facilities and concession stands for their use; and they were typically treated to the venue’s worst sight lines — at Rice Stadium, the ANP noted, they were seated “where they could not see the scoreboard.” And then there was the matter of whether their tickets would even be honored. In his *Atlanta Daily World* column in June 1950, Marion Jackson protested that “device used in the South to enforce segregation at sports events”: “all tickets to ball parks, football stadiums, theatres, and other sports and entertainment events usually bear the legend ‘management has the right to refund price of admission’ or ‘this ticket is issued under revokable license.’” He told his readers that “this means that in the event Negroes by some hook or crook get tickets . . . in some parts of the stadiums, where white persons are seated, they can be refused admission.” Amounting to little more than a “shoddy trick” which “skirts court tests on segregation,” his objections to these practices gave

¹³ “Conference Stars Beat Browns In Charity Game at Houston, 12-7,” *NYT*, December 18, 1949, S1; “The Pigskin Huddle,” *ADW*, December 27, 1949, 5 (quotations). An announced crowd of 10,000 braved a torrential rain to watch the game, which was played on December 17, 1949 — six days after AAFC and NFL owners agreed upon a partial merger. The Cleveland Browns, Baltimore Colts, and San Francisco 49ers were all sent to the NFL and, in turn, the AAFC was sent to the scrapheap of sport history. The ANP mourned how, “unfortunately, this game set a sad stage for the finale of the All American conference which actually emancipated the Negro football player from oblivion after college.” Indeed, this game was an integrated one: the New York Yankees’ halfback, Buddy Young, amassed 75 yards on 12 carries to lead the All-Star team to victory over the AAFC champion Browns, 12-7.

voice to the ineffable reality of black spectatorship: not even a purchased ticket guaranteed them a right of entry to the stadium on gameday.¹⁴

II

On a sultry Friday night in late November 1950, nearly 45,000 spectators filed into Miami's Orange Bowl Stadium to watch the undefeated Miami Hurricanes play host to a hapless Iowa Hawkeye team. The game would end much as this hometown crowd expected — in another Hurricane victory — but, early on, at least, the stands bristled with frustration as the Hawkeyes showed more fight than anyone anticipated. Racing to a 7-0 lead on its first drive, Miami's defense then faltered as Iowa quarterback Glenn Drahn hit a fluky 39-yard pass to Fred Ruck, hauled down just six yards shy of the Hurricane goalline. On the very next play, Drahn swept to his right, pitching off to sophomore fullback Bernie Bennett, who skirted Hurricane right end Tom Jelley to slip inside the front corner of the end zone for Iowa's first (and only) touchdown of the game. One of five African Americans to suit up for the Hawkeyes that night, Bennett's sprint marked yet another first — an athlete of color scored on the Hurricanes on their own home field — which was precisely what the 4,000 black spectators packed cheek-by-jowl into the east stands paid to see. The "wild cheer" which Jimmy Burns of the *Miami Herald* reported Bennett "inspired" from "the Negro fans" was an unrestrainedly joyous expression of their racial pride, at once celebratory of his athleticism and the symbolism ripe within his feat. In his arms, he cradled all their ideals, hopes, *aspirations*, as surely as the ball itself. His achievement

¹⁴ "The Pigskin Huddle," 5 (first quotation); Marion E. Jackson, "Sports of the World," *ADW*, June 14, 1950, 5 (second through sixth quotations).

was theirs.¹⁵

Nine months later, J. S. Saundle, a rural educator in West Virginia, observed in the *Journal of Negro Education* that this game represented nothing less than a paradigm shift in how whites and blacks interacted at public events. Rather than blithely overlooking the “considerable interest” that this contest — the first interracial sporting event in the city’s history — “stirred . . . among Miami Negro football fans,” Saundle praised the “shrewd” decision of university leaders at Miami to “[take] advantage of it at the turnstiles.” “Instead of preventing Negroes from seeing the game or providing seats for just a few and closing the gates in the face of others,” he contended, “the officials of the University of Miami provided enough seats to accommodate all Negro fans who desired to see the game.” Consequently, “in intercollegiate sports, Miami is beginning to show the Negroes and whites, and indeed to show America, that things can happen there on a large scale even in interracial integration for the best interest of the community.” Nevermind the peculiar juxtaposition of a segregated crowd watching an integrated game: he conjectured that Miami administrators “chose” this contest with the Hawkeyes as “just as good a time as any . . . to give a lesson in total community participation leading toward a realization of the democratic ideal.” And, to his mind, the push toward integration in the South — propelled forward in moments like this one — “will decrease the natural fears of cultural groups that live in the same community,” rendering “to the Negro more and more a feeling of being accepted and belonging to his community as a whole.”

¹⁵ “Undefeated Miami Topples Iowa, 14-6,” *NYT*, November 25, 1950, 22; Jimmy Burns, “Iowa Best Team We Played This Year, Says Gus,” *Miami Herald*, November 25, 1950, A13-14, esp. A13 (quotations). When asked by the press afterwards about the treatment of his black players, Iowa head coach Leonard Raffensperger declared it “a nice clean game.” “We didn’t think those Miami boys from New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey would mind playing against our boys,” he stated. For his part, Miami head coach Andy Gustafson praised Bennett as “fast.” See Lee Evans, “Iowa Coach Lauds Hawks’ Fine Play,” *Miami Herald*, November 25, 1950, A13.

Even the most hopeful soul could not have divined such a radical change in institutional behavior at Miami from a spike in black demand for tickets for a single game — especially one in which the principal draw was the novelty of seeing athletes of color in action. This increase in the seat allocation to black spectators was, instead, a one-off affair, curiously conditioning an increase in the degree of segregation inside the Orange Bowl. One out of every ten tickets sold went to a black patron — a high percentage, indeed — which likewise meant that a full tenth of all of the spectators in attendance were seated in a section of the stadium that existed for one purpose alone: to separate the races. Not exactly wild confirmation that Miami’s university leaders, as Saundle would have it, “sensed the change in race relations.”¹⁶

A segregated section was, at its core essence, a place to keep black spectators in their place. And, whether or not they admitted black fans to their home games, each TWI believed their ticketing policies were a natural extension of the general legal provisions barring African Americans from their classrooms. Although football games were most decidedly non-academic in their nature, “we are assured by legal advisers,” Missouri vice president Thomas A. Brady explained in October 1947, “that the [state] Constitutional requirements for separate schools carries with it the requirement that school activities and functions maintained for the students must operate under the same limitations as the class work.” Hence, “under the Constitution the University cannot allow them to attend” an event like a home game.¹⁷

But as legal challenges to state segregation laws began resulting in court orders, which

¹⁶ J. S. Saundle, “Along the Horizon as One Educator Sees It,” *Journal of Negro Education* 20 (1951): 591-95, esp. 593 (first through eighth and eleventh quotations), 595 (ninth and tenth quotations).

¹⁷ Thomas A. Brady to C. W. Black, October 9, 1947, Folder 2, Box 1, Brady Papers (quotations).

admitted African Americans to some border state TWIs as early as the late forties, university leaders were confronted with a brand new problem on gamedays: where to seat a black student. This very issue was taken up by Kentucky's Athletic Association Board of Directors during its June 23, 1949, meeting. Two days earlier, the university had enrolled a dozen black students after Lyman Jefferson, a 43-year-old applicant to the Graduate School, successfully challenged the validity of the state's separate-but-equal provisions for higher education in Federal Court. University registrar Maurice F. Seay informed the UPI wire service that "most of those enrolling . . . were teachers who wanted to do summer school work on advanced degrees in the College of Education." What's more, by resolving that "the decision of the Federal Court be accepted" without appeal, the UK Board of Trustees made plain that they would not reject any application on racial grounds alone, signaling that black undergraduates were not too far behind. This eventuality spurred the Athletic Association into action. For years, black spectators had been a common fixture in Stoll Field's end zone — the same held true during home basketball games played at Memorial Coliseum across the street. No matter how reliable their attendance each Saturday, the average black ticket holder posed little threat to the existing culture of gameday, fundamentally organized to privilege white spectatorship. However, black undergraduates possessing tickets that seated them in the regular student section would turn this prevailing order on its head. Unwilling to concede such a measure of equality to black students, at least a majority of the Board of Directors were also unprepared to treat them as anything other than normal black spectators: by a vote of four to two, its members determined that "Negro students be assigned to the space in the stands reserved for Negroes" at both Stoll Field and Memorial Coliseum. Astonishingly, African Americans now enjoyed an equality of access to the university's

classrooms that they were denied at its athletic venues.¹⁸

Just how far past the classroom an institution could — or should — push the integration of its campus was an undeniable point of ambiguity, a condition highlighted by these newly declared ticketing practices at Kentucky. Indeed, how far integration proceeded within the classroom itself was a matter of profound uncertainty. After integrating its School of Law in February 1948, Arkansas started the fall semester of its 1948-49 academic year that September by cramming the 125 white students registered for all of its large law seminars into classrooms designed for half that number; meanwhile, the university set up a separate classroom, of the same size, for Jackie Shropshire, the one and only black student enrolled in the same courses. Two weeks and innumerable protests later, Robert A. Leflar, dean of the law school, issued a directive aimed at “continuing [this] segregation policy, but with a segregation system fairer to the white students.” “Hereafter,” he declared, “the colored student will be seated in a separate section of a room, and white students will sit in other parts of the room” — a configuration, he maintained, that would “substantially improve the quality of the instruction.”¹⁹

While his students were acclimating themselves to this new policy, Leflar passed a copy of it along to Oklahoma president George Cross in hopes that “a fairly full statement of our experience might be useful to you in making plans for Negro students to be admitted at Oklahoma.” Cross’

¹⁸ “U. Of Kentucky Enrolls Negroes,” *NYT*, June 22, 1949, 24 (first quotation); Minutes of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees, May 5, 1948; Minutes of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees, April 4, 1949 (second quotation); both in UKBTO; Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the University of Kentucky Athletic Association, June 23, 1949, Folder “Meetings of the Board of Directors of the Athletic Association, July 1947-July 1956,” Box 53, Donovan Papers (third quotation).

¹⁹ Robert A. Leflar to Maurice S. Culp, October 13, 1948; Robert A. Leflar, Policy Regarding Segregation in the University of Arkansas School of Law, undated [October 1948] (quotations); both in Folder “Negro Question #2,” Box 50, Cross Presidential Papers.

Graduate School was mired in a similarly roiling lot: on one hand, it admitted George McLaurin to a doctoral program in Education that October under federal order; on the other, it was bound by state mandate to practice and preserve segregation in each classroom. Later that fall, over McLaurin's protests that separate facilities forced him to study under "humiliating conditions," a three-judge federal panel in Oklahoma City found that it was "within the power of the state to recognize racial distinctions between its citizens and to classify them." Cross and other Oklahoma officials were thus commanded to construct the clearest possible distinctions between white students and McLaurin that, as popularly illustrated in a wire photograph of the time, compelled him to sit outside classrooms in the hallway, out of view of both the professor and the blackboard. These schizophrenic circumstances were not unlike those with which Leflar had to contend at Arkansas — which made him all the more "surprised at the little trouble in a public relations sense we are having as a result of admitting Negroes here." As a rule of thumb, he confided to Cross, "we consistently emphasize our attachment to Southern traditions and customs, but at the same time we are trying to comply with Federal Constitutional requirements and be fair to the individual Negroes involved." Fairness for McLaurin and other black students mattered greatly to Cross — even if state legislators, the Regents, and some of his own subordinates did not share this concern — so he found Leflar's rather rosy accounting of conditions in Fayetteville "reassuring."²⁰

²⁰ Robert A. Leflar to George Lynn Cross, October 13, 1948 (first and fourth and fifth quotations); "Negro Hits Study State," *NYT*, October 26, 1948, 38 (second quotation); "Segregation Held Legal in Oklahoma," *NYT*, November 23, 1948, 27 (third quotation); George Lynn Cross to Robert A. Leflar, October 18, 1948 (sixth quotation); both in Folder "Negro Question #2," Box 50, Cross Presidential Papers. OU executive vice president Carl Mason Franklin told Cross a few days after McLaurin's entry in October that, after personally checking "the rooms and the angles," it was his opinion that McLaurin can "see the blackboard satisfactorily." And yet his complaints persisted. By January, Cross and Franklin had finally "worked out an arrangement" with McLaurin's professors "whereby he sits with a class." "His chair is just at the side of the section occupied by others students," Cross wrote, "and, just as the others, he has a full view of the professor." See Carl Mason Franklin to George Lynn Cross, memorandum, October 18, 1948; and George Lynn Cross to H. M. Newell, January 12, 1949; both in Folder

Such fairness was put to the test five months later. In March 1949, athletics director and head coach Bud Wilkinson asked Cross to “give some consideration to the possibility of setting up a section in the stands for colored people.” “Since in all probability colored students will be attending” the university “within a reasonably short time,” he asserted, “it would be easy for us to designate” an area of Owen Field for such a purpose in advance of their arrival. More important, at a moment when 24,000 seats were being added to the stadium, boosting its total capacity to 55,000, he assured Cross that “the work could be done while the stadium is under construction.” All of these proposals pointed to his belief that, if African Americans were to join the campus community, it was only right — only *fair* — that the institution would “make some provision” at its football games for them. Lumbered as he was with a sobriety of judgment that Cross and the Regents always appreciated, and to which they reflexively deferred, Wilkinson was the one figure in Norman — and perhaps even the whole state — with enough personal clout to make something of this kind happen. So it was not a surprise when Cross reported back to him that the Regents “decided to leave the matter entirely to your discretion.” “Personally,” he wrote, “I believe that a very small section, large enough only to accommodate our Negro students, should be reserved in the student section in a favorable location.” He asked of Wilkinson only that this “rather delicate problem . . . be handled properly.”²¹

Before construction crews could outfit Owen Field with seating for black use, state legislators passed their most Draconian measure yet: they made it a misdemeanor for white and black students to share a classroom. Further complicating matters was a provision under which institutional leaders

“Negro Question #2,” Box 50, Cross Presidential Papers.

²¹ C. B. Wilkinson to George Lynn Cross, March 30, 1949 (first through fifth quotations); George Lynn Cross to C. B. Wilkinson, April 19, 1949 (seventh through ninth quotations); both in Folder “Athletics (#4),” Box 39, Cross Presidential Papers. For Cross’ account of the 1949 stadium expansion, see *Presidents Can’t Punt*, 102-10.

like Cross and even Wilkinson could be charged with the same offense if they failed to obey the letter of the law by not offering “classroom instruction, given in separate classrooms, or at separate times.” But the language of this law was so obtuse that, as it was written, admitting just one black student to Owen Field might violate its essence, meaning that every single person in attendance — from the teams and coaching staffs on the field, to the tens of thousands of spectators in the stands (a crowd which would invariably include the same legislators who wrote this law) — would have committed a crime. Desperate for guidance, Cross appealed to the state Attorney General’s office for an opinion as to its ramifications on campus events, not least of which were these home games. As lawyers at the Capitol read it, the law had “no effect” on attendance at athletic events as it “relates only to the giving of classroom instruction.” The university, then, “possess[ed] the same power or authority to adopt and enforce reasonable rules and regulations” on segregation at Owen Field as it did “prior to the enactment” of this law.²²

Despite these assurances, some administrators in Norman were still skittish. Executive vice president Carl Mason Franklin advised Cross that the Regents — not the Attorney General — should “instruct you with respect to the kind of segregation” they wanted “to carry out in the fall,” especially when it came to “segregation at athletic contests.” Responsible for all segregation efforts on campus, Franklin was downright frantic about how they should act in light of this law, positive that just one misstep at Owen Field might hobble the institution as a whole. Caution was their only salvation — something he did not see much of in Wilkinson’s moralistic convictions on the matter. By discreetly short-circuiting Wilkinson’s influence, Franklin tracked the process instead to his handpicked ticket

²² All quotations in this paragraph are drawn from an excerpt-rich letter from Assistant Attorney General Fred Hanson to George Lynn Cross, June 14, 1949, Folder “Attorney General,” Box 39, Cross Presidential Papers.

manager, a just-graduated law student named Clee Fitzgerald. In this greenhorn, Franklin found a far more sympathetic (and docile) partner for his vision: the most fully segregated environment the university could possibly achieve on gameday. But he realized the impetus for it needed to *appear* as though it originated within Wilkinson's own department; hence his exhortation of Fitzgerald to draft a memorandum, for Cross' eyes only, that detailed how the university might put his mentor's idealism into practice. So, on June 30, when he laid Fitzgerald's recommendations on the president's desk, he attached his own hearty endorsement — "segregation at football games and other athletic contests should be provided along the lines recommended by Clee Fitzgerald" — thereby setting in motion what he thought was a *realistic* means of segregating student seating at Owen Field.²³

What Cross read, then, was a document which uneasily traversed the considerable distance resting between Wilkinson's intentions and Franklin's attentions on segregation. Only Fitzgerald — like a tightrope walker quivering on the line — edged ever so gently away from Wilkinson's pole to grasp Franklin's outstretched hand at the opposite end of the political spectrum. Much as Franklin had hoped, he endorsed the greatest possible distance between white and black students "as required by the statute." Advocating that the university seat African Americans in the highest rows of the student section, which was located on the 50-yard line, he placed before Cross two options by which "these designated rows" could be "separated from the rest of the students." In what he labeled "Plan 1," he submitted a set of hand-drawn designs for a partition "blocking off a row of seats in front of this section," which was removable after each home game. He personally favored "Plan 2": "erecting a temporary solid 'wall' behind the first top row of white students," which was to be "as high as a

²³ Carl Mason Franklin to George Lynn Cross, memorandum, June 28, 1949 (first and second quotations); Carl Mason Franklin to George Lynn Cross, memorandum, June 30, 1949 (third quotation); both in Folder "Negroes," Box 66, Cross Presidential Papers.

person's head when seated on the row in the front of the 'wall.'" "A space must be preserved or a wall erected," he advised the president, "because of the fact that people are in much closer proximity to each other in the stadium than in classrooms."²⁴

Whatever reservations Cross held about this law, he was struck by Fitzgerald's assertion that, under either of these plans, "colored students can be accommodated at football games with the least possible adverse publicity to the University." A Solomon-like compromise, it seemed to him: allowing black students to attend, but keeping them so thoroughly segregated that any notice of their presence would be practically negligible. And he knew this argument was bound to win over the Regents, who desperately wanted to avoid another public embarrassment like the wire photograph of McLaurin. Perhaps this reason alone accounted for his support of these measures — an honest recognition of what little the Regents could or would realistically stand for in this political climate. With Cross' backing in hand, Franklin had engineered a significant administrative victory. In sending notice of the president's approval along to the Regents, who would unanimously sign off on Plan 2 during their July meeting, he believed he had scored a triumph over the more moderate forces inside the university — in whose company he would have placed even Cross himself.²⁵

Then, piece by piece, his vision fell apart. The construction of the wall prescribed in Plan 2 became too cost-prohibitive; in short supply of alternatives, the Plan 1 design for a plywood barrier was hastily built instead. Once this substitute was put in place, however, regular wear-and-tear made it an entirely impractical solution. After an October 15 game with Kansas, Cross' office was flooded

²⁴ Clee Fitzgerald to George Lynn Cross, memorandum, July 1, 1949, Folder "Negroes," Box 66, Cross Presidential Papers.

²⁵ Clee Fitzgerald to George Lynn Cross, memorandum, July 1, 1949 (quotation); Carl Mason Franklin to Emil J. Kraettli, memorandum, July 5, 1949; both in Folder "Negroes," Box 66, Cross Presidential Papers; Minutes of the Regents of the University of Oklahoma, July 13, 1949, OUBRO.

with complaints from black students that, as Franklin explained them to Fitzgerald, the whites who sat “immediately in front of the barrier” used it as a back rest, “with the result that the pipes which hold the barrier [in place] are bent back.” Moreover, the partition was “pushed back to the extent that it is extremely uncomfortable for the Negroes to sit on the first row” directly behind it. Having “checked the matter personally,” he confessed, “the complaint is justified.” This admission signaled a strategic defeat, compounded implacably by the fact that there was “no trouble whatsoever with respect to Negroes attending the football games.” Whether a barrier or a wall, this degree of segregation had proven unnecessary. Yet he remained undeterred, instructing Fitzgerald to “make the present wall more substantial and keep it for the current football season” since the Regents specifically signed off on this mode of segregation — largely at his urging. Given a few options, though, he professed that “my personal preference” would have been to “remove the barrier entirely and mark the seats which are used by the colored students.” The irony here was simply too rich.²⁶

Singly attributing how Oklahoma segregated students at its home games to Franklin’s skills as a bureaucratic infighter *par excellence* fails in one considerable respect to appreciate the internal circumstances preceding his actions: he expertly gamed a system already primed for such an extreme solution. Collectively, the Regents were so rattled by this law that *any* proposal that seemed likeliest to quash the threat of litigation would have won their eager approval; into this policy vacuum, then, stepped Franklin. Yet an irrepressible dissension remained even in their ranks about whether or not Oklahoma should incorporate African Americans into the life of the campus. One Regent railed that “we should do everything we can to keep the colored students to themselves.” Another claimed that

²⁶ Carl Mason Franklin to Clee Fitzgerald, memorandum, October 21, 1949, Folder “Negroes,” Box 66, Cross Presidential Papers.

“participation can be denied without violating court decisions.” But Regents president Don Emery was not quite so sanguine about the virtues of continually isolating black students at home games. To his way of thinking, the institution “cannot make the distinction between purely social and purely educational functions.” “When the University as an agency of the State accords benefits, whether they be social or educational,” he postulated in early August, “it must accord them with substantial equality. It cannot accord social benefits to one class and deny them to another. In fact, it cannot accord benefits of any kind to one class and deny them to another.”²⁷

Oddly enough, the U. S. Supreme Court adopted Emery’s very logic when deciding against the Regents, and in favor of McLaurin, in June of 1950. Writing for a unanimous court in *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*, Chief Justice Fred Vinson — a native southerner — held that McLaurin “must receive the same treatment at the hands of the state as students of other races.” “It is said that the separations imposed by the state . . . are in form merely nominal,” he wrote, yet “they signify that the state, in administering the facilities it affords for professional and graduate study, sets McLaurin apart from other students.” In so doing, the state deliberately sought to “impair and inhibit his ability to study, to engage in discussions and exchange views with other students, and, in general, to learn his profession” — all the behaviors which made an individual a student. “We think irrelevant” the contention that McLaurin “will be in no better position when these restrictions are removed, for he may still be set apart by his fellow students”: “there is a vast difference — a Constitutional difference — between restrictions imposed by the state which prohibit the intellectual commingling of students, and the refusal of individuals to commingle where the state presents no such bar.” If white students

²⁷ Dave Morgan to Emil J. Kraettli, August 3, 1949 (first quotation); Ned Shepler to Emil J. Kraettli, undated [circa August 1949] (second quotation); Don Emery to Emil J. Kraettli, August 1, 1949 (third and fourth quotations); all in Folder “Negroes,” Box 66, Cross Presidential Papers.

did not want to befriend McLaurin, or talk to him, or even acknowledge his presence in their midst, there was nothing the state could do about that as each student possessed a right of free association. But the state, through the university, could not deny him the freedom to interact, either socially or educationally, with those students. “At the very least,” Vinson concluded, “the state will not be depriving [him] of the opportunity to secure acceptance by his fellow students on his own merits.”²⁸

“As George McLaurin was receiving a tangibly equal education,” historian Michael Klarman averred, “the justices were apparently no longer prepared to accept segregation *within* an institution of higher education.” Coupled with the high court’s opinion in *Sweatt v. Painter*, handed down the same day as *McLaurin*, which “had proscribed segregation in *separate* institutions,” there “seemed . . . nowhere left for segregation to remain” at the South’s TWIs. Substantively, Vinson’s decision resolved the question of where black students should watch a football game: in the same section as white ones. In the immediate aftermath of *McLaurin*, a few universities, uncoerced, conceded this point. Texas issued Heman Sweatt a pass for the student section at Memorial Stadium, which he used regularly that fall. When a black applicant sued for admission to Missouri later that June, Brady approached chancellor Frederick A. Middlebush about clearing away the thicket of policies keeping African Americans — both students and non-students — out of campus events. When a Drama instructor asked “whether he may sell tickets for workshop plays to any negro who wishes to purchase them,” Brady alerted Middlebush that “the same problem will arise in connection with the concerts, athletic events, and other things for which we charge admission.” “Personally,” he counseled, “I think it would be wiser for us to drop all the bars in this respect since I take it there is no doubt that we will treat negro students in all respects as we do any other student.” Taking his

²⁸ *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education*, 339 U. S. 637, 640-42 (1950).

views under advisement, then, both Middlebush and the Board of Curators decided in September that “every Negro student admitted . . . shall receive at the hands of the University the same treatment as do students of other races.” Not only did this resolution “apply to the seating of students . . . [at] athletic events,” but, amazingly, “the participation of students in athletics.”²⁹

Later that same month back in Norman, Cross contemplated what, before *McLaurin* at least, was unthinkable: dispensing with segregation altogether. Yet most of his aides pleaded with him to resist this urge, especially on gameday. After a face-to-face meeting on the subject, athletics business manager Kenneth Farris warned him that black patrons “can order [tickets] through the mail and we would never know at the time we received the order whether or not they were colored.” They could obtain a ticket for a seat in a general admission section right in the middle of a sea of white fans, posing a scenario which he and others believed would lead only to trouble. The dilemma, then, was “whether they should be admitted or whether they should be refused admittance and given a refund.” Another of his vice presidents, Roscoe Cate, fiercely advocated the latter course, recommending that “this policy is justified on the grounds that it is necessary in order to protect the general welfare of the student body at football games.” “Because of the rather free expression of emotions found in a football crowd,” he alleged, “the presence of Negroes who are not students might encourage public demonstrations of racial prejudice in a way that would reflect discredit upon the University and its student body even though the disorder might be caused by persons [who were] not students in the

²⁹ Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 204-12, esp. 208 (first through third quotations); Jackson, “Sports of the World,” 5; Goldstone, *Integrating the Forty Acres*, 29; Thomas A. Brady to Frederick A. Middlebush, memorandum, October 30, 1950; Thomas A. Brady to Frederick A. Middlebush, memorandum, August 30, 1950 (fourth through sixth quotations); both in Folder 4, Box 1, Brady Papers; Minutes of the Meeting of the University of Missouri Board of Curators, September 8, 1950, Roll #3, Board of Curators Permanent Records, 1/14/1949-4/8-9/1954, UMC (seventh through ninth quotations).

University.” Bold moves, he counseled Cross, should be saved for “sometime in the future” — and only after most of their white supporters “have become accustomed to seeing Negro students in the crowd.” Policies could not outpace politics.³⁰

Again, Cross arrived at a critical juncture on racial progress at his institution. And, again, he concluded that real change proved a bridge too far. Like Fitzgerald’s balancing act between Franklin and Wilkinson, Cross believed that “for some time those in authority” in Norman, including himself, “have been walking a ‘tight rope’” in their efforts to solve the political conundrum of segregation “in a manner that would be just and at the same time legal.” As *de jure* segregation remained the law of the state of Oklahoma, he believed that there was only so much that the university could do before it reached the outer limits of its capabilities to bring blacks and whites together at campus events. Similarly, he did not want to jeopardize the legal victories of his black students. “Negroes at the University of Oklahoma live under conditions of non-segregation,” he wrote that November, “not because of the whim of the president or other administrative officers, but because of a mandate handed down by the Supreme Court of the United States” — a mandate within *McLaurin*, he added, that was “applicable, of course, to all other state-supported institutions of higher learning” in the South. Yet he was also without any illusions: when an alumna commended him on his leadership in this period of flux, noting how “segregation is archaic,” he responded that “I hope that many people in Oklahoma share your views concerning segregation, but I’m a little pessimistic in this regard.” It was another five years after *McLaurin* before the political circumstances were such that African Americans could purchase any ticket they wanted for a home game. While Cate and Farris attempted,

³⁰ Kenneth E. Farris to George Lynn Cross, September 18, 1950 (first and second quotations); Roscoe Cate to George Lynn Cross, memorandum, September 23, 1950 (third through fifth quotations); both in Folder “Football 1950,” Box 77, Cross Presidential Papers.

once again, to talk Cross out of opening the gates to Owen Field without prejudice, this time the political wind was at his back. “In my opinion,” he instructed Farris in August 1955, “we should no longer try to segregate with respect to any University function.” In allowing a black patron “to buy a ticket to any available seat in the stadium,” he recognized that “we may have some trouble about this, but I see no other way of interpreting the Supreme Court’s action.”³¹

III

Just a few days before North Carolina’s September 22, 1951, home opener with N. C. State, James Walker swung by the athletic ticket office to pick up his much-coveted passbook for the upcoming season’s spate of home games. As a recently enrolled law student, he could not wait for Saturday to arrive so that he could get his first look at the Tarheels in person. What’s more, he hoped that the big game atmosphere of this heated rivalry would solidify his bonds to his new school and its traditions. Imagine his disappointment, then, when he discovered that he was not issued the same passbook as every other student ahead of him in line — in fact, he did not receive a passbook at all. Instead, a thick envelope was slid under the window. Tearing it open, he found a packet of individual game tickets for seats located — *peculiarly* — in Section K, the segregated area in the far corner of Kenan Stadium’s south end zone. Surely, he implored the woman behind the counter, there must be some mistake. But there was no mistake. One of the first African Americans to enroll in the university’s

³¹ George Lynn Cross to Fred McCuiston, October 19, 1950 (first through third quotations); George Lynn Cross to M. L. Mise, November 24, 1950 (fourth and fifth quotations); Eleanor Goodman to George Lynn Cross, September 12, 1950 (sixth quotation); George Lynn Cross to Eleanor Goodman, September 14, 1950 (seventh quotation); all in Folder “Negro,” Box 80; Kenneth E. Farris to George Lynn Cross, August 25, 1955; Roscoe Cate to George Lynn Cross, memorandum, August 29, 1955; George Lynn Cross to Kenneth E. Farris, August 31, 1955 (eighth through tenth quotations); all in Folder “Athletic Dept. — General,” Box 131; all in Cross Presidential Papers.

School of Law since a federal injunction cleared the way for integrated admissions three months earlier, he was now relegated to the same isolated perch from which all black spectators watched the Tarheels play. In so doing, the administration sent him an unmistakable message: *the university feels no obligation whatsoever to treat you as a student.*

Walker was incredulous. He believed that the legal provisions of *McLaurin* guaranteed him the right to participate in campus life with the same freedom as a white student. So, the day before the game, he returned to the athletics department to seek an exchange of these tickets for a customary passbook, but to no avail. The university would seat him — and his fellow black students — in this segregated section only. Denied the equality he knew was his under the law, any excitement and anticipation for the season ahead soured into a welter of outrage and insult. And protest: with no use for the tickets, he mailed them back to the chancellor himself, Robert Burton House. “Please accept the return of the enclosed football tickets as a refusal by me to accept anything less than what is due to me as a student regardless of race creed or color,” he argued in an attached letter. “I demand a student athletic ticket as a privilege [*sic*] due me as a student.” With that, he sent the administration a message of his own: “I am part of the student body.” In an interview with the campus newspaper, *The Daily Tar Heel*, he punctuated this assertion with a public slap at the powers that be. “I . . . want to cheer and express school spirit as a part of the student body,” he said. “Not be set apart down behind the goal post in an undignified and humiliating manner as proposed by the administration.”³²

³² James R. Walker, Jr., to Robert Burton House, undated [circa late September 1951], Folder “Desegregation, Athletics, 1951,” Box 1:4, Records of the Office of the Vice President for Finance of the UNC System, 1923-1972, UNC-CH (first quotation); “Administration Has Qualified Negro Policy,” *DTH*, September 27, 1951, 1 (second and third quotations). I have based my account of Walker’s experience in these two paragraphs on O. Mac White, “UNC Policy Hit By Bowers,” *DTH*, September 28, 1951, 1; and “The Big Difference,” *DTH*, September 28, 1951, 2. On the integration of the university, see William D. Snider, *Light on the Hill: A History of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 246-49.

Hardly a belligerent, Walker confessed that he would have unquestioningly taken a seat in Section K “if the administration feared trouble from white rowdies,” and “even more willing to remain away from the bigger games,” if only the university had first “permitted” him “the normal privilege of an athletic passbook for admittance.” In denying him such rights, however, House and the UNC Athletic Association, which owned Kenan Stadium, revealed that opposition to him sitting amongst white students originated not in the stands but the corridors of power. In his opinion, House, in particular, was “acting in bad faith with the student body for none of it which I have come into contact with has expressed the feelings of the administration.” As it stood, “I would not have gone to any of the games,” even if the chancellor “had given me the passbook” himself. “More important to me,” he affirmed, “is the principle involved.” “Deprived of a student’s privileges,” House and the administration “put up legal barriers between us” — whites and blacks on campus — “so that the Negro student . . . would have to remain separate.”³³

Which was, of course, just the way House wanted it. “Anything we do in regard to Negroes,” he averred, “we do in good will, good faith, and on an extremely conservative basis.” “By law,” Walker was “entitled” to only the barest of student privileges — living in a dormitory, eating in the dining hall, checking books out of the library — which were first, last, and always confined to his studies, not his social life. There, the chancellor contended, any equality of access ended. Given that Kenan Stadium was “not considered an educational service,” Walker possessed no absolute right to sit in the regular student section. Besides, the university already made allowances for him that it would never consider giving its white students: “Negroes are not billed for athletic passbooks in their

³³ “The Big Difference,” 2 (first through third and sixth through eighth quotations); White, “UNC Policy Hit By Bowers,” 1 (fourth and fifth quotations).

tuition and fees,” as were whites, so he was hardly being denied something he paid for. The tickets he did receive were “issued free of charge” — an act of generosity on the institution’s part that it did not have to extend him. After all, House ventured, Walker had much to learn about his circumscribed status, chiefly that “there is a distinction between educational service and social recognition.”³⁴

Yet such a distinction, as the chancellor crafted it, was roughly akin to cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face: in binding his institution ever tighter to the precepts of segregation, House would tear it apart from its own football program. By decisively shifting any gridiron ambitions outside the purview of the institutional mission — especially as it related to academic commitments — he felt he could affect a stronger case for seating black students wherever he wanted inside Kenan Stadium. This breathtaking miscalculation blinded him from realizing that neither Walker nor his fellow black students could be slid from place to place in the stands as though they were pieces on a chessboard. All of the “action and counter-action” in House’s cynical stratagem made “quite clear” (in the words of one student at the time) his desperate efforts to justify the administration’s “desire to segregate as far as possible” within the shrinking latitude it had to hold black students apart after *McLaurin*. The *News and Observer* in Raleigh, which had sided with the university in its bid to keep African Americans out of its law school, thought this logic utterly ridiculous. “When did football games,” its editors wondered, “get to be social events?” Mocking House’s “classification,” they noted that he “has some reason, personally, for considering football games social occasions” as “they are just that in the guest box, where the chancellor is a gracious host.” Otherwise, “games are commercial

³⁴ “Administration Has Qualified Negro Policy,” 1.

ventures” to which students discover that “their purchase of tickets is compulsory, not voluntary.”³⁵

On campus, most students were similarly mystified. The editor of *The Daily Tar Heel* sneered that “to state that the university and the athletics activities it sponsors are separable elements is to engage in the most brazen form of casuistry.” It was “sheer delusion,” he contended, to “distinguish between Negroes sitting in Lenoir and Memorial Halls” — the two campus dining facilities — “and Negroes sitting in Kenan Stadium.” Although some students argued that House was simply “abiding by an unwritten law here in the South that is often as powerful as written laws,” many more regarded his tough-minded stance as incomprehensible. “Negro students go to school here with us,” one upperclassman asked, “why shouldn’t they go to football games with us?” A young co-ed could not “see any reason why they shouldn’t sit with us” or “be allowed to participate in all activities” since “they have been admitted to the University as students.” Even a babyfaced freshman named Charles Kuralt had a hard time understanding the chancellor’s rationale. “It has been long accepted here,” he asserted, “that all forms of extra-curricular activities are a vital part of the educational process.”³⁶

Student body president Henry Bowers went even further: House’s “false” and “unfortunate” characterization of a black student’s rights was “far out of phase with the ideals and traditions of fair play which have been so long cherished in the University.” Flatly contradicting what “has long been accepted here,” he believed “the unwise handling of the situation” imperiled every student’s rights. “When the administration refused to allow certain students the right to watch their team play football from the same advantageous position occupied by other students,” he submitted, “it not only did an

³⁵ James Herbert Vaughn, Jr., “The Integration of Negroes in the Law School of the University of North Carolina,” M. A. Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1952, 68-71, esp. 71 (first through third quotations); “Social,” *News and Observer*, October 6, 1951, 4 (fourth through tenth quotations).

³⁶ Dick Murphy, “A Student,” *DTH*, September 29, 1951, 2 (first through third quotations); “Students Give Opinions on Controversy,” *DTH*, September 29, 1951, 1 (fourth through ninth quotations).

injustice to those who were denied, but insulted the rest of the student body as well by insinuating that our students have neither the moral character nor the intelligence to conduct themselves as law-abiding citizens.” For Bowers, and for others, Walker’s plight reinforced a fundamental premise: anyone enrolled at Chapel Hill deserved all the rights and privileges of a student, regardless of their race. A striking consensus thus emerged on campus around this point. The Independent Coed Board called on House “to respect the rights of every student with equal privileges and responsibilities for all.” The YMCA chapter complained that “we feel that a decision has been made without the consideration of students in a matter which is of primary concern to students, and by those removed from the problem.” “The segregation of and discrimination against some of the students now enrolled in the University,” proclaimed the Baptist, Episcopal, and Methodist foundations, “compells [*sic*] us to rise in defense of the dignity and rights of these students.” All of these organizations held collectively that the actions “taken by the Administration in segregating some of the members of our student body” amounted to “an affront to every student in the University.”³⁷

No matter how “sincere and well motivated” their efforts, House was firm that nothing these student groups might do or say “would alter the situation.” Even an October 4 meeting in his office was less an opportunity for them to argue the merits of their objections than a face-to-face forum for him to reiterate that “my position remained unchanged.”³⁸ Nor, indeed, had Walker’s. The day before

³⁷ White, “UNC Policy Hit By Bowers,” 1 (first through sixth quotations); Martha Byrd to Robert Burton House, October 3, 1951 (seventh quotations); YMCA Resolution, undated [October 1951] (eighth quotation); Resolution of Wesley Foundation, Baptist Student Union, Westminster Fellowship, YMCA, YWCA, and Interfaith Council, undated [October 1951] (ninth and tenth quotations); all in Folder “Desegregation, Athletics, 1951,” Box 1:4, Records of the Office of the Vice President for Finance.

³⁸ Robert Burton House to Gordon Gray and W. D. Carmichael, Jr., October 5, 1951, Folder “Desegregation, Athletics, 1951,” Box 1:4, Records of the Office of the Vice President for Finance. House invited ten student organizations to his office for this meeting; he told UNC System president Gordon Gray and comptroller Billy Carmichael that, after this conversation, “I believe that the students concerned realize that the

this confab between House and student leaders, four other black students — J. Kenneth Lee, Harvey Beech, William Marsh, and James Lassiter — joined with Walker in making a direct appeal to North Carolina governor W. Kerr Scott. Each of them received the same tickets for Section K as Walker; each of them wanted, as did he, to take their rightful place in the student section — a case they now laid out together in a wire to the governor. “We the students so segregated,” they petitioned, “humbly implore his excellency . . . to request of [the] attorney general a ruling on legality of administration’s action in this matter.” From the start, the threat of litigation hovered over Walker’s predicament: a NAACP lawyer argued enough in a statement to *The Daily Tar Heel* in late September; Walker himself responded that “I know nothing about it except what I have heard” in the papers. Here, he and this foursome again declared that “we sincerely desire to avoid further litigation.” Of course, in conveying their apprehensiveness about taking this matter to court, they shrewdly dangled the option over the state’s head. And why not? The law was on their side. “It is our belief,” they avowed, “the administrations [*sic*] announced policy is not in keeping with the law as declared in the case of *McLaurin v. Board of Regents*.”

It was highly doubtful that Scott would heed their contention that “the question presented” was “one of sufficient importance and public concern to warrant [a] ruling or opinion by [the] attorney general.”³⁹ Yet this wire — on which they copied House and others in Chapel Hill — tipped the balance inside the corridors of power toward giving them the passbooks they wanted, if only to

situation is far more complicated than they had at first thought.” As for Bowers, the chancellor noted that he “was not present, nor has he at any time consulted with me on this situation.”

³⁹ J. Kenneth Lee, Harvey E. Beech, William S. Marsh, James Lassiter, and James R. Walker to W. Kerr Scott, telegram, October 3, 1951, Folder “Desegregation, Athletics, 1951,” Box 1:4, Records of the Office of the Vice President for Finance (first and third through fifth quotations); White, “UNC Policy Hit By Bowers,” 1 (second quotation).

make the issue disappear. Many administrators, including House, also wanted to hold their feet to the fire, seeing if they might live up to their public protestations that “the University give us football tickets in the student section and leave it to our good judgment as to whether or not we use them.” On those terms, then, House invited them to his office on Thursday, October 12. After exchanging pleasantries, he handed each of them the passbook they fought for. But there was a catch: *they were never to use them*. In a letter that accompanied each passbook, he told them that “we are following your suggestion . . . and trust your good judgment.” Given that “we believe you understand the wisdom and prudence of our position” on segregation, he once again argued that “these games are public occasions” and “not wholly student affairs” or “student extra-curricular activities.” “Only twelve percent of the people who attend football games are students,” making them “‘state-wide’ assemblages” that “the people of North Carolina do not regard . . . as exclusively University functions.” Nevertheless, the passbooks were now theirs and — cynically turning their own words on them — he ended with the admonition that “the University has faith in you. We believe you will cooperate with us during this period of difficult adjustment.” In other words: *stay away*.⁴⁰

And they did, for that Saturday’s game with South Carolina anyway. “Privately,” one of their white friends recounted, “the students said that they did not have any real choice in the matter.” By Monday, however, Beech announced that they had “no intention of staying away from all of the games,” especially when only two more home dates remained on Carolina’s schedule. As they weighed their options, some whites advised that they toss their hard-won passbooks in a drawer and allow the season to end without ever showing their faces at Kenan Stadium. Any other action, they

⁴⁰ University News Release, October 13, 1951 (first quotation); Robert Burton House to James R. Walker, October 12, 1951 (second through ninth quotations); both in Folder “Desegregation, Athletics, 1951,” Box 1:4, Records of the Office of the Vice President for Finance. Beech, Lassiter, Lee, and Marsh also received this letter.

argued, would have been needlessly provocative. “Wise Negroes,” the *News and Observer* editors claimed, “have been able to handle such situations before, without sacrificing any of their rights on the one hand or making themselves conspicuous or offensive on the other.” “A similar course” in this case meant Walker and his friends cloistering themselves in their dorm rooms on gamedays — a severe sort of self-segregation that, at its base, would spare an already battered white pride any further injury.⁴¹

Naturally, such counsel radiated from white suspicions about these students’ motives. Despite exhortations that “the University has faith in you,” a total absence of faith — and trust — guided the institution’s treatment of them. The soul of political subversion beat at the heart of their struggle for these passbooks — or so the power structure in Chapel Hill believed. Picking fights with white fans, staging protests against administration policies, exploiting their access for the cause of civil rights: paranoid delusions were in heavy abundance when administrators speculated on what the students might do if they were ever to be admitted to the student section. That black students might just want to *watch football* was wholly unfathomable. “These people are primarily interested in being accepted as social equals,” one trustee warned, “and all this clamor for equal educational opportunities is just a ‘front.’” Even UNC System president Gordon Gray regarded their “considerable agitation” a stunt. Of course, the greatest and most steadfast fear of all was that they might actually use their passbooks. Indeed, for all the putative “wisdom and prudence” of the administration’s stand on segregation, even House knew that, once they had the passbooks in hand, there was no chance they would stay at

⁴¹ “5 Obey Segregation Rule,” *NYT*, October 14, 1951, 39; Vaughn, “The Integration of Negroes in the Law School,” 70 (first and second quotations); “Social,” 4 (third and fourth quotations).

home.⁴²

And they didn't. On November 3, as the Tarheels took the field to the deafening roar of a hometown crowd, these students ever-so-quietly took their seats in the student section. No placards, no protest, no pretense, their attendance was decidedly low-key and "did not create the slightest stir" amongst the whites sitting alongside them. Nor did any of the other 41,000 fans pay them any mind. They were transfixed instead by what was happening on the field, which was understandable as the visitors that day were the top-ranked Tennessee Volunteers. Not that Carolina partisans would have minded a few distractions while watching the Vols make short work of their team, 27-0. So hapless was their play that, except for two late-game "forays" inside the Vols' 15-yard line, Ed Miles of the *Atlanta Journal* noted, the Tarheels "had been no closer to Tennessee's goal than the 36 and then only once." In the stands, by contrast, these black students pushed deeper into those customarily white-only sections than any one of their race ever had at any of the region's major college venues. It was, to be sure, a remarkable victory, but one confined to them — and them alone. As Walker and his friends sat with their fellow students, Kenan Stadium became a patchwork of varying ticketing policies: black students were preferably sent to Section K, but allowed access to the student section; the average black ticket holder was sold seats in Section K only; and white spectators of all stripes continued sitting wherever they wanted without witnessing any substantive change in their privilege as integration crept ever closer. This arrangement prevailed at southern stadiums for the decade to come, as ever more TWIs were compelled to admit black students — and, at the same time, searched

⁴² Robert Burton House to James R. Walker, October 12, 1951 (first and fourth quotations); John Kerr, Jr, to Robert Burton House, October 16, 1951 (second quotation); both in Folder "Desegregation, Athletics, 1951," Box 1:4, Records of the Office of the Vice President for Finance; Gordon Gray to Lt. Col. Albert E. Barrs, April 25, 1952, Folder 23, Box 1, Records of the Office of the President of the UNC System: Gordon Gray Files, 1950-1955, UNC-CH (third quotation).

for ways to hold the line on segregation. The best that any of these universities could hope for was what Carolina achieved: a defeat, yes, but one which left the color line bent, not broken.⁴³

IV

A month to the day after playing in Chapel Hill, this same Tennessee team was crowned national champions by voters in the Associated Press Top 25 poll. Their reward: a trip to New Orleans for a New Year's Day tilt with the third-ranked Maryland Terrapins in the Sugar Bowl. Interest in this "collision of the football powerhouses" at Tulane Stadium was so tremendous that Morris Siegel of the *Washington Post* marveled how fans on both sides "bought up every ticket almost as soon as they were placed on sale." Indeed, Maryland's athletics department sold out its allotment by the first week in December; Tennessee fans quickly snatched up every available seat, despite complaints that most of them were too high and in the end zone. In their frantic scramble for these \$5 commodities, many buyers overlooked what was printed on the back. There, amid the fine print, the Mid-Winter Sports Association, which operated the Sugar Bowl, slipped in a new caveat to its litany of legal provisos: "This ticket is issued for a person of the Caucasian Race." Not a single one of the 85,000 available passes went to a black patron — a statistic that tempered Marion Jackson's interest in the outcome. "You can't get too excited about whether Maryland or Tennessee win the Sugar Bowl," he advised *Daily World* readers, "when you know that the tickets are labeled for 'Caucasians only.'" That "this disgraceful edict" aroused "no outraged protest" from either president — "Curly" Byrd of Maryland or C. E. Brehm of Tennessee — was proof enough for him that they "are condoning a bigotry." By

⁴³ "Stadium Drops Race Bar," *NYT*, November 4, 1951, 85 (first quotation); Ed Miles, "Lauricella Head Man as Vols March Through Carolina, 27-0," *AJ*, November 4, 1951, C2 (second and third quotations).

“joining forces” with racists, by clapping hands with organizers who had “the morals and ideals of a Fagin,” by letting this game become “a sentinel of jimcrow [*sic*] and intolerance,” both men “will be watching the Volunteers play the Terrapins under segregated and un-American conditions.”⁴⁴

Jackson wagered that there could be only one compelling reason why “a college president condones a prejudice against a minority”: because, materially, they agreed with it. As major players in the world of southern football, Byrd and Brehm’s programs were ineluctably complicit in the same sort of policymaking that accepted white-only tickets as a matter of course rather than a cultural outlier in this post-*McLaurin* environment. So long as they kept their mouths shut, he argued, they supplied “approval and sanction” aplenty for “promoters in the South” to continue spinning their web of “deceit and duplicity” — “which is like gall to the average American who believes in fair play.” Perhaps the inescapable incongruities of these policies explain why, by the mid-fifties, TWIs found that their northern counterparts were expressing real misgivings about playing in segregated venues, anxieties that irrevocably impacted how their programs interacted competitively and commercially. In selling his conference on a round-robin intraleague schedule in June 1956, SEC commissioner Bernie Moore warned against “the insistence of some institutions outside this area that tickets and seating be de-segregated even if there are no negro players” on their varsity squads. This hadn’t ever been a consideration when one southern team played another: it was simply assumed that the only fans who would accompany their teams on the road were white ones. In advance of the 1958 Sugar Bowl, the Mid-Winter Sports Association would declare that any of Texas’ 173 black students, who

⁴⁴ Maryland spoiled the Volunteers’ perfect season, routing them 28-13 in what most commentators thought a major upset. “Tennessee Eleven Wins Title in Poll,” *NYT*, December 5, 1951, 60; Morris Siegel, “Top-Rated Tennessee Rules 6-Point Choice,” *WP*, January 1, 1952, 8 (first and second quotations); “Terps Stop Taking Orders For Tickets to Sugar Bowl,” *WP*, December 8, 1951, A12; “Most of Vol Fans Will Sit In End Zone,” *WP*, December 21, 1951, B4; Jackson, “Sports of the World,” *ADW*, January 1, 1952, 5 (third through eighth quotations).

might travel from Austin to New Orleans for its match-up with Ole Miss would be segregated from their white classmates — a demand with which its leaders unquestioningly complied. Relegated to Section O, which Jackson declared “one of the worst sections in the entire stadium,” this “complete reversal of form” shocked him. “After making noble strides in integrating its student body,” he was devastated that Texas “bowed” to Louisiana’s segregation laws. Yet Sugar Bowl officials never thought twice about asking UT administrators to sell black students tickets for segregated seats: a southern institution, Texas could be trusted to toe the color line when push came to shove.⁴⁵

Eleven months later, on November 8, 1958, a Texas undergrad named Lovie Williams drove up the blue highways from Austin to Waco to watch the Longhorns’ showdown with Southwest Conference rival Baylor. In his pocket were a pair of tickets — one for him, another for his girlfriend — which would put them right behind the Longhorn bench, at the 45-yard line. Choice seats, to be sure. Parking his car in the massive lot encircling Baylor Stadium, and fording the river of fans streaming inside, he and his date excitedly presented their tickets to the usher at the turnstiles. No, no, he told them, they were at the wrong gate: the Negro section was in the end zone. Williams was taken aback. These seats were drawn from the Texas allotment, he explained, and, since they were both UT students, the tickets entitled them to sit amongst their classmates. That didn’t matter, the usher insisted, black ticket holders were admitted to the end zone bleachers only. Somewhere amidst their back-and-forth, and Williams’ repeated accusations that he was being “discriminated against,” five Waco policemen and even Baylor’s athletics ticket manager appeared on the scene. He pleaded his case once more, but these officials weren’t buying it: he was black; there was no way a black man

⁴⁵ Jackson, “Sports of the World,” January 1, 1952, 5 (first through fifth quotations); Bernie Moore to Richard O. Baumbach, June 20, 1956, Folder “Southeastern Conference, 1956-1960,” Box 13, Harris Papers (sixth quotations); Jackson, “Sports of the World,” December 26, 1957, 5.

could ever get his hands on seats in the Texas section; and, besides, Baylor Stadium was a segregated venue. So, *forcibly*, he and his date were escorted to the segregated section — for which they did not even have tickets — and made to watch from there.⁴⁶

By Monday morning, word of what happened to Williams spread across the Austin campus like wildfire. In the days and weeks to come, outrage would turn into action. After inviting him to recount his ordeal in person, the Human Relations Committee lodged a formal protest with Baylor's administration, calling for an immediate investigation. The Student Assembly passed a resolution demanding that Baylor officials "take necessary steps" to prevent further acts of discrimination against UT students "at any affair" — "athletics, scholastics, or any activity whatsoever" — in which both institutions were "jointly involved [*sic*]." Even UT administrators were working, in the words of Dean of Student Services H. Y. McCown, "to avoid future misunderstandings of this nature" when the Longhorns hit the road. "When an out-of-town football game is scheduled," he told his assistant, "we should notify the home game authorities that we have Negro students . . . and there is a possibility that some of them may draw tickets in the University of Texas student section." Given that most teams on the Longhorns' schedule were fellow SWC members, the majority of which were still segregated, a black student's right to hold a ticket to these contests went only so far. It became part of the "pre-game procedure for out-of-town games" in McCown's office to "inquire if the other institution has any objections to our regularly enrolled Negro students sitting in our student section" — the implication being that, if objections were raised, then the black student would be denied their

⁴⁶ "Baylor Due Protest on Negro's Case," *Dallas News*, undated clipping [mid-November 1958], found in Folder "Desegregation, 9/1/58-8/31/60," Box 69, UT Chancellor's Office Records. Ever since the university started issuing tickets to black students in 1950, athletics director D. X. Bible told UT president Logan Wilson in May 1953, "seating at out-of-town football games is in the student section and the result of [a] lottery draw." So, with this policy still in place in 1958, it was by pure chance that Williams even had these two tickets. See D. X. Bible to Logan Wilson, May 13, 1953, Folder "Negroes," Box 9, UT Chancellor's Office Records.

ticket. Misunderstandings between UT and its students were still preferable to misunderstandings between UT and its SWC brethren.⁴⁷

In a dog-eat-dog league like the SWC, petty squabbles easily escalated into all-out brawls. The universally-accepted conference standard bearer, Texas only wanted to fight over the big issues; rest assured its leaders did not see a *casus belli* in where its black students sat in opposing team's stadiums. For Baylor, however, it provoked the wrath of a giant like UT at its own peril, something which its president, W. R. White, kept in mind when moving to squelch any hard feelings between the two institutions. Bowing and scraping as furiously as he could, "of course," he assured Texas president Logan Wilson, "the University of Texas has a right to seat whom they desire in their section and sell tickets for the same" for games at Baylor Stadium. "No official in authority, either [in] the Stadium Corporation or Baylor University, knew anything about the incident," and, if they had, "we would have taken care of the situation" in Williams' favor. Overlooking (conveniently) the involvement of his ticket manager, he heaped all the blame on the policemen, who "acted upon the general mores of the community." Apparently, "they did not realize they faced a completely new situation" — something that could have been said of everyone involved in the matter, including both presidents. Wilson appreciated this, telling White that "we are not in any way blaming you or your institution" for all that had transpired. While he did "regret that both of our institutions were inadvertently involved in this unfortunate occurrence," "in this whole difficult area" of integration,

⁴⁷ "A Resolution Presented in the Student Assembly of the University of Texas," undated [mid-November 1958], Folder "Negro Students," Box CDL2/E22, UT Dean of Students Records (first through fourth quotations); H. Y. McCown to W. J. Hill, memorandum, November 17, 1958, Folder "Desegregation, 9/1/58-8/31/60," Box 69, UT Chancellor's Office Records (fifth through seventh quotations).

he confided, “none of us can anticipate every contingency.”⁴⁸

“Minor and inevitable incidents of this sort,” as UT chancellor Harry Ransom termed them, added up to a significant problem for the SWC as a whole, particularly when some members were enrolling black students while others clung fast to segregation. After all, Texas itself only resolved how it should handle seating for its opposition’s black students in 1956. That fall, UT’s first black undergraduates would arrive on campus and, beyond determining that “a student, regardless of race, is entitled to a seat in the student section,” administrators sensed how it “would be difficult to control the sale of tickets by visiting schools.” Wilson’s assistant, Lanier Cox, advised that July that the university should resign itself to the reality that “little could be done other than to admit Negroes holding tickets in the visiting team section.” But home games for its own black students were no walk in the park, either. By anyone’s measurement, Memorial Stadium was no bastion of tolerance and restraint on gamedays: Cox projected that “one can visualize (with a shudder) the disturbance arising because a Negro attempted to sit next to or near a white person who had definite adverse feelings in such matters.” Four years later, conditions were no better. “I was assigned a seat next to a white woman and her son,” Joan McAfee told *The Daily Texan* in December 1960, “and every time I got up to yell for the team, she yanked her son close to her so that I wouldn’t happen to touch him.” That was the one — and only — game she attended that season. Such treatment did not exactly inspire unwavering affection for the university or its football program. Another student, Huey McNealey, explained that, “no matter how you try, going to pep rallies and things, you can’t get any real school spirit, especially when you think about everything that is denied you” — among which was, indeed,

⁴⁸ W. R. White to Logan Wilson, November 14, 1958 (first through fifth quotations); Logan Wilson to W. R. White, November 15, 1958 (sixth through eighth quotations); both in Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/58-8/31/60,” Box 69, UT Chancellor’s Office Records.

a fair and equitable crack at tickets. A faculty committee report issued two months later, in February 1961, revealed that, “although ticket sales to football games by mail and by drawing are non-segregated,” this was so merely because those tickets were distributed blindly. On gameday, comparatively, “discrimination continues to be practiced in box office sales.”⁴⁹

Reports of this sort, as well as a slew of critical headlines about the continuing segregation practices on campus in *The Daily Texan*, stoked the fires of contempt inside Regents chair Thornton Hardie for what he called “the minor subject of integration.” “We must not allow The University of Texas to be downgraded through ignorance,” he challenged Ransom and his fellow Regents in mid-September. “We should see that our side is well presented” since, as he saw it, they had accumulated “a magnificent record” that illustrated how “The University is a long way out in front” of “the other colleges and universities of the South, and more particularly in Texas.” At the top of that record, he placed their conviction “that students are sold football and other tickets without reference to their seating locations and without reference to color.” “While we do have sections in the football stadium where Negroes predominate” — a halcyonic view of segregation, if ever there was one — he wanted it emphasized by everyone connected to the university that “we have just recently made a rule that any negro can purchase, by request, tickets in such location as he desires on the same basis as white customers.” That a black patron’s seat “will on request be assigned without regard to whether it may be in the middle of a section occupied by white spectators” singly attested to “the lack of . . . social prejudice at The University.” “As far as we Regents are concerned,” he reminded them, “we gladly

⁴⁹ Harry H. Ransom to W. R. White, November 17, 1958, Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/58-8/31/60,” Box 69 (first quotation); Lanier Cox to C. P. Boner, memorandum, July 2, 1956 (second through fourth quotations); Lanier Cox to Tom Seely, July 2, 1956 (fifth quotation); both in Folder “Desegregation, 1954/56,” Box 34; Rusch, “One Big ‘Cannot’ — a Negro Student’s Life,” 4 (sixth and seventh quotations); Interim Report of the Committee on Minority Groups, February 1961, Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/60-8/31/62,” Box 85 (eighth and ninth quotations); all in UT Chancellor’s Office Records.

take Texas with all of its faults and its present and future destiny.”

Interested in exploring “the status of integration” at other SWC institutions, one Regent, Wales Madden, Jr., flew to Fayetteville in advance of the Longhorns’ October 21 game there to talk things over with Arkansas president David Mullins. Just as Leflar wrote Cross a decade-and-a-half earlier, Mullins informed Madden that “there have been very few incidents” since the time of integration, with only limited protest on either side of the question. Even though some faculty and student groups called on Mullins “to increase the pace of integration,” he claimed his administration “had succeeded in convincing the supporters of more rapid integration that the gradual approach is the proper one.” Moreover, Madden learned that “no colored student has participated” in “drama productions and University talent shows” — and, in what was surely music to many Regents’ ears, there were “no plans for integrating” Razorback football. Asked “what he thought might be the reaction” from fans “if the University or other Southwest Conference schools were to play football in Fayetteville using colored students,” Mullins replied that “if the matter were improperly handled an unpleasant incident could occur” inside Razorback Stadium.⁵⁰

Mullins had good reason to suspect that athletes of color would receive a rude welcome from his fans. Aside from the fact that hardly any of its black students could get hold of tickets, Arkansas never subscribed to the notion, so widely held in league circles, that “the reputation of the Southwest Conference has been built to a large extent upon intersectional contests”: since the end of the Second World War, the Razorbacks had only played two regular-season games with non-southern opponents, both in 1951, and none with black student-athletes. For their fans, college football was nothing but

⁵⁰ Wales Madden, Jr., to Thornton Hardie, October 23, 1961, Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/60-8/31/62,” Box 85, UT Chancellor’s Office Records.

a white boy's game. When, in the summer of 1962, a series of newspaper articles in major Texas dailies dared to question such popular pieties one alumnus wrote Arkansas governor Orval Faubus — who, during the Little Rock crisis of 1957, made himself the poster boy for southern demagoguery — that no players drawn from a race “only some two hundred years out of the jungles and savagry [*sic*] of Africa” should “deprive some white boy of a college education if that boy had to depend on an athletic scholarship for an education.” He asserted — wrongly — that “the head coaches of Rice, Texas A&M, SMU, Baylor, TCU, and Texas U. appear to be egging this filthy movement on,” threatening to visit upon “your fine Arkansas boys” the “blight” of interracial play. And, so far as he could tell, “their sole argument seems to be that Negro players would tend to increase the attendance at athletic events” — a “conclusion” which, he argued, was “subject to questioning.”⁵¹

The reprehensibility of his language and logic aside, this alum did have a point. Why would whites make a run on the box office to see blacks playing on the field if they wouldn't even sit next to them in the stands? For the SWC brethren — or so he heard — the correlation between integration and commerce was so inexorable that he demanded Arkansas “withdraw from the Southwest Conference rather than countenance the use of Negro athletes by the other members.” Idle chatter, indeed: if his letter proved anything, it was how rumor drove any and all talk about integrating the SWC, a result, ironically, of the reluctance of one member to speak to the others about its plans. The pastor at Fort Worth's University Baptist Church, for instance, reported to Abner McCall, White's successor at Baylor, in November that “some of the professors at TCU who were greatly burdened

⁵¹ “Reasons the SMU Faculty Committee on Athletics has Opposed the Expansion of the Southwest Athletic Conference,” undated [circa 1955], Folder “SWC Conference Meeting, December 1955,” Box 2, SMU Athletic Committee Files (first quotation); Harry Newton to Orval Faubus, August 16, 1962, Folder “Desegregation, 1960-66,” Box VF32/B.b, UT President's Office Records (second through eighth quotations). The Razorbacks hosted Arizona State on September 29, 1951; and, in Little Rock, Santa Clara on October 27, 1951.

about their segregation policies have secretly hoped that TCU could lead the way” on recruiting black athletes; but they held their tongues instead, their desires unrealized.⁵² Writing to Hardie that same month, UT Regents vice-chair W. W. Heath proclaimed that reaching any accord on integration hinged first on *coordinating* plans with other members, which, of course, required Texas officials to *articulate* their intentions. “In my opinion,” he proposed, “the other Southwest Conference schools would quickly give us permission to integrate our teams as long as they had no responsibility to do so.”

Acquiring such permission meant asking for it — and no one in Austin seemed ready to do that. Rather, their unbroken silence stonewalled each and every opportunity for a discussion inside the league. Even UT’s own coaches were not in favor of raising the issue at SWC meetings for fear that their words would be used against them on the recruiting trail. Heath reported to Hardie that athletics director and head coach Darrell Royal was “greatly concerned about the effect” that any sort of announcement about integration “would have on our recruiting,” with other members potentially launching a whispering campaign, sabotaging the Longhorns in the living rooms of white prospects across the state, telling them and their parents that, at an integrated Texas, “our colored boys” would be “living in the same athletic dormitory and associating with the team.” Better, then, to keep their mouths shut, a policy that was not so much motivated by silence than a need to duck-and-cover.⁵³

⁵² Harry Newton to Orval Faubus, August 16, 1962, Folder “Desegregation, 1960-66,” Box VF32/B.b, UT President’s Office Records (first quotation); James G. Harris to Abner V. McCall, November 5, 1962, Folder “Athletic Department,” Box 254, Abner V. McCall Papers, BU (second quotation). The pastor was not exaggerating the level of support for integration in the TCU faculty: in a report to the Board of Trustees in January 1964, chancellor M. E. Sadler noted that 262 of the 278 faculty members on campus had voted in favor of admitting black students. See Jerome A. Moore, *Texas Christian University: A Hundred Years of History* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1974), 225.

⁵³ W. W. Heath to Thornton Hardie, November 5, 1962, Folder “Desegregation, 1962-1964,” Box VF32/B.b, UT President’s Office Records. Royal used this same excuse some three years earlier. McCown told

But conversation was precisely what Chris Groneman at Texas A&M hoped to spark. Seven months later, in June 1963, A&M's faculty athletic representative sent each of his SWC colleagues a series of questions that would justly chart "the thinking of other Conference schools" on the most contentious issues — recruiting and seating. As SWC president, too, it behooved him to find some common ground among them. Direct and to the point, he invited them to reveal as much of their mind as possible. First, in looking to the near future, "is your institution now, or do you anticipate in the next two or three years, to admit and accept colored (negro) athletes to participate in intercollegiate athletics?" Recruiting was naturally a long-term matter, no matter the color of the prospects; on the other hand, the 1963 season was two-and-a-half-months away. Accordingly, "what will be the policy of your institution this coming year concerning the sale of reserved seat tickets to colored people?" Pitched at revising athletic policies at A&M — the first black students had just arrived in Aggieland that month — his letters had the effect of extracting an honest declaration from each member, eliminating any speculation, or suspicion, about their intentions. Furthermore, his inquiry lent credence to the notion that unilateral action was not in the best interests of any individual member or the conference as a whole. "While it is true that some of these matters fall under the category of 'institutional policy,'" he and the Athletic Council "think we are in a position to at least make recommendations to our administration" — but not before being "guided by the general attitude of Conference members." A&M was effectively opening itself to the desires of these institutions, synchronizing the pace of change inside its own program with that witnessed throughout the league.

Wilson that, after a conversation on the prospect of integration, "Darrell was quite pronounced in not wanting any Negroes on his team until other Southwest Conference teams admit them," saying that, after coaching them at the University of Washington, he was convinced that black student-athletes "create problems." See H. Y. McCown to Logan Wilson, memorandum, November 10, 1959, Folder "Negro Students," Box CDL2/E32, UT Dean of Students Records.

And, to spur further interchange in league circles, he declared that he was “glad to forward” them “a copy” of the “composite report of the responses,” leaving little question as to what was afoot in their midst.⁵⁴

If reaction was what Groneman wanted, reaction was what he got. All but SMU responded to his letter; although “discussion was had,” SMU’s Faculty Committee on Athletics wasn’t prepared to talk to the rest of the league about race. When his composite report was sent out in mid-July, the results astonished just nearly everyone: as UT Athletic Council chair M. L. Begeman put it, “present policies concerning these matters are about the same at all conference schools” (table 3.1). Not a single member, not even Texas, was intrepid enough to claim anything other than “no future plans” for recruiting black prospects. But seating was another matter. An African American could, by this accounting anyway, walk up to about any ticket window at any conference venue and purchase a ticket for any seat in any section. Only TCU and Baylor clung to segregated seating, with the latter quick to point out that its opponents’ black students were “admitted with rest of visiting students” — evidence that the Williams debacle five years earlier was still fresh on their minds. “You will note,” Groneman wrote, highlighting the last column on his chart, “that your responses have affected our thinking.” Indeed, with these results in hand, the Athletic Council successfully persuaded A&M president Earl Rudder that “reserved seat tickets for athletic events” at Kyle Field “should be sold . . . with no discrimination to race or color of the purchaser.” In adopting this resolution, Groneman indicated, A&M was able to “stay within the general policies of other Conference schools,” which, as his report demonstrated, perceived no contradiction in putting a segregated team on the field inside

⁵⁴ Chris H. Groneman to J. S. Waters, June 19, 1963, Folder 2, Box 1, Athletic Committee Records, 1959-1991, Rice. Groneman asked a third question out of simple curiosity: “Will your home football games have the usual pre-game invocation?” Only Baylor, Texas, TCU, and Texas A&M answered affirmatively.

an otherwise integrated stadium.⁵⁵

Back in Austin, UT officials saw in these results a sort of peace dividend to be reaped. The broad agreement on integrated seating indicated an openness previously undetected — or unknown — in league circles, suggesting to them that an announcement on athletic integration might not be as hostilely received as once believed. So it was no coincidence when, in November, the Regents revised their standards for athletic participation: black students were not only “entitled” to “the use of all facilities” on campus, but “voluntary participation in any student activities.” Heath, who was, by then, the Regents chair, announced that this change of heart sought “to remove all student restrictions of every kind and character based on race and color heretofore imposed by the board.” When the Athletic Council met to review and discuss how to implement the Regents’ action, even Royal played along. “Any academically and athletically qualified students,” he stated, “. . . would be welcome to come out for any of the intercollegiate teams.”⁵⁶

But this policy supplied nominal relief, at best, for the 150 or so African Americans at Texas. Actions spoke louder than words — and no one actually believed that either the Board of Regents or the Athletics Department would allow black participation in the football program any time in the

⁵⁵ Minutes of the SMU Athletic Committee, August 29, 1963, Folder “Committee on Athletics, 1963-1964,” Box 7, SMU Athletic Committee Files (first quotation); M. L. Begeman to Norman Hackerman, September 4, 1963 (second quotation); Chris H. Groneman to SWC Faculty Representatives, memorandum, July 23, 1963 (third through fifth and seventh quotations); both in Folder “Athletic Policies, 1962-1964, Folder 1 of 2,” Box VF32/F.a, UT President’s Office Records; Chris H. Groneman to Earl Rudder, memorandum, July 19, 1963 (sixth quotation); Minutes of Meeting of the Texas A&M Athletic Council, August 5, 1963; both in Folder 20, Box 62, Records of the President’s Office, TAMU. See also Carey Croneis to J. S. Waters, June 24, 1963, Folder 2, Box 1, Athletic Committee Records, 1959-1991.

⁵⁶ Minutes of Meeting of the Athletic Council, November 18, 1963, Folder “Athletic Policies, 1962-1964, Folder 1 of 2,” Box VF32/F.a (first through third and fifth quotations); Dawson Duncan, “UT Regents Order Full Desegregation,” *Dallas Times-Herald*, November 10, 1963, clipping found in Folder “Desegregation, 1962-1964,” Box VF 32/B.b (fourth quotation); both in UT President’s Office Records. Royal told the UPI wire service after this meeting that “any bona fide eligible student is welcome to try out in any sport.” See “All Programs in Athletics Integrated at U. Of Texas,” *NYT*, November 19, 1963, 24.

near future. (Indeed, an African American would not win a spot on the varsity roster until 1971.) And, yet, the announcement removed the albatross hanging around the institution's neck, while restoring a modicum of leadership to the program among its SWC brethren. As one alum told Heath, "the University of Texas has shown courage and leadership when it might have been easier to wait for some other school to take the lead." A Longhorn fan in Houston — who clearly did not see this announcement for what it was — worried in a letter to Chancellor Ransom that Royal, in his "dream" to "produce a football team second to none," had not "given thought to the necessity of absorbing these negroes in the social life of Texas University." "Close relationship in athletics . . . would undoubtedly result in negroes marrying white women," he alleged, because, as big men on campus, "they will be placed on a pedestal before young women." Ransom assured him that neither Royal nor his assistants "intend to 'search the nation for football material' with any such purpose as you have in mind." Nonetheless, he observed that "we are all aware of the problems which confront university students in the social aspects of their career at the University, including relationships which participation in athletics involve." Privately, Ransom, Royal, and the Regents were determined to forestall the circumstances by which these kinds of relationships between whites and blacks were engendered on the playing field as long as possible. Their relationship with the SWC membership still mattered more.⁵⁷

Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Baylor — a sizeable portion of the league was willing to follow Texas' cautious lead, passing dummy resolutions of their own in the next month declaring, in the

⁵⁷ E. J. Schutze to W. W. Heath, November 14, 1963 (first quotation); A. Rogers Mielly to Harry H. Ransom, November 19, 1963 (second through sixth quotations); Harry H. Ransom to A. Rogers Mielly, December 16, 1963 (seventh and eighth quotations); all in Folder "Desegregation," Box 102, UT Chancellor's Office Records.

formulation of the A&M Athletic Council, “all intercollegiate athletics . . . open to all eligible undergraduate students, regardless of race, creed, or color.” But, unsurprisingly, none of them acted. Meanwhile, at SMU, its refusal to answer Groneman’s inquiry concealed a plan already underway: its young head coach Hayden Fry — who was far more interested in winning the SWC than winning friends amongst its coaching fraternity — “pretty much had my cap set that we were going to offer . . . a scholarship” to a fleet-footed halfback from the gritty east Texas refining town of Beaumont named Jerry LeVias, who was a high school junior that autumn. Fry would have to get in line — 91 other programs, all from outside the South, were vying for his services. “I had never heard of SMU,” LeVias would later admit. “We never paid much attention to the [SWC]. For what? There were no blacks.” He would change all of that with the stroke of a pen a year-and-a-half later, signing — over the objections of his own parents — with SMU, becoming the conference’s first black player, and bringing with him a new birth of glory for a program still indulging long-faded memories of Doak Walker blazing to the end zone inside a jam-packed Cotton Bowl. In 1966, his first varsity season, LeVias’ brilliant play — in the face of racist taunts and slurs hurled at him by fans, cheap shots from opposing players, and death threats from anonymous cranks — lifted the Mustangs to their first SWC title since Walker’s junior season in 1948. “If the Cotton Bowl was ‘the house that Doak built,’” LeVias quipped, “I remodeled it.” And what did it matter, then, if blacks and whites sat together in the stands at that storied stadium if they were now lining up alongside one another on the field?⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Minutes of Meeting of the Texas A & M Athletic Council, November 26, 1963, Folder 19, Box 68, Records of the President’s Office (first quotation); “Texas Tech Integrates Its Athletic Program,” *NYT*, December 8, 1963, 14; “Negro Athletes Welcome,” *NYT*, November 20, 1963, 34; Pennington, *Breaking the Ice*, 83 (second and third quotations), 88 (fourth quotation).

V

On January 22, 1963, the U. S. District Court in Anderson, South Carolina, struck a mortal blow to the cause of segregation in the Palmetto State: after a three-year fight, Iowa State sophomore Harvey Gantt — a Charleston native — at last won the right to enroll at Clemson that spring semester. In his order, Judge C. C. Wyche “enjoined and restricted” Clemson administrators from “discriminating against [Gantt] . . . solely because of his race,” mandating that “he be treated as any other transfer student.” Three days later, the college’s chief legal counsel, William L. Watkins, set about “to define the restrictions imposed by the injunction . . . a little more completely” for Clemson president Robert C. Edwards. “As to Harvey Gantt,” he instructed, “you must become ‘color-blind.’” The president’s “application of this restriction . . . should be done by completely ignoring the fact that he is a Negro,” with the understanding that “any discipline or control that you would exercise over a White student can be exercised over Harvey Gantt.” As for how his white peers treated him, “you are not required and it would not be appropriate to direct the students as to their attitude toward another student, or to try to dictate individual policies of association or social contact.” With that said, Gantt “shall have the right to have a friend, whether Black or White, to accompany him to any College activity to which a White student might bring a friend” — be it a dance, a concert, or, yes, even a football game. The basic principles of *McLaurin* had finally come to the so-called Deep South. “However,” Watkins reassured a nervous Edwards, “this does not remove from the College the right to exclude other Negroes from the general public from attending the same or a similar function.”⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Gantt enrolled at Clemson on January 28, 1963. *Harvey B. Gantt, a minor, by his father and next friend Christopher Gantt v. Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina*, Case File 4101, General Case Files, United States District Court for the Western District of South Carolina, Anderson Division, Records of the District Courts of the United States, NARA-SRU (first through third quotations); William L. Watkins to Robert C. Edwards, January 25, 1963, Folder 191, Robert C. Edwards Correspondence, CU (fourth through tenth quotations).

By the time Watkins wrote these words, even he recognized that this right was evaporating. Sure, the most enduring image from this tortured period in southern higher education came that June, when Alabama governor George C. Wallace made his symbolic stand in the schoolhouse door, quixotically blocking the foreordained entrance of James Hood and Vivian Malone to the University of Alabama. Regardless of Wallace's bombast that "Alabama is winning this fight against Federal interference," his increasingly appeared to be a lost cause: despite the white South's best efforts, when the 1963-64 academic year began, 171 of the region's 240 publicly-supported TWIs accepted both white and black applicants, chiefly at the behest of federal courts, like the one in Anderson, or in anticipation of a widely (and wildly) feared federal intervention. As one might expect, when one came to expect it, the repercussions of these changes were felt even on gameday. While Wallace boldly positioned himself between Hood and Malone and the registrar's office at Alabama, administrators of all stripes were moving aside from the stadium gates on their own volition, allowing African Americans — be they students or spectators — to occupy any seat in any section. More important, with the feeling that the federal judiciary was on their side, African Americans themselves were actively, openly, and unabashedly pressing TWIs to adapt to these changing circumstances, unwilling to brook the stall tactics of a bureaucratic culture loath, by its very nature, to act in opposition to the prerogatives of white privilege. "A Negro doesn't have a timetable for wanting equal rights," Gantt would argue. "He just wants it."⁶⁰

Yet the timetable for fully integrating the South's remaining segregated venues shrunk as the

⁶⁰ E. Culpepper Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 230 (first quotation); Claude Sitton, "South Accepts Integration at College Level," *NYT*, February 18, 1963, 14; "First Negro To Go To Clemson Is Graduated With Honors," *Washington Star*, May 30, 1965, clipping found in Folder 233, Edwards Correspondence, 1959-1965 (second quotation). Statistical data on desegregation drawn from *Statistical Summary of School Segregation-Desegregation in the South and Border States* (Nashville: Southern Education Reporting Service, 1963), 3.

1963 season approached. Less than three weeks after Wallace's act of political theater, Tulane athletics director Rix N. Yard hailed an order issued by the U. S. District Court in New Orleans that the city desegregate its Municipal Auditorium, which, as he read the decision, "would extend to all public seating in the State of Louisiana and, consequently, knock out the 1956 Louisiana state legislation with regard to segregated seating." He was now operating under the assumption "that this court decision will, in effect, desegregate the seating at Tulane Stadium," too. "This, as you probably know, will open up some doors for us," he excitedly advised president Herbert E. Longenecker, "and will particularly remove one of the stumbling blocks which I understand we have had in scheduling the various service academies." Longenecker was far more circumspect. He agreed that this order presented significant ramifications for how Tulane seated its black fans and students, but he was less certain than Yard as to what they were. And, while tickets for a pre-season Cowboys-Lions/Browns-Colts doubleheader on September 7 would be sold so that "there will be no separation of seating for any group" inside Tulane Stadium, he was ambivalent about whether the same should hold true for the Greenies' home games that season. Furthermore, the university's Board of Administrators had not yet taken up the issue, so, for him, the status quo was still very much in effect. "The problem for Tulane games," he informed Yard in mid-August, "will, I think, be much as it has been in the past."⁶¹

Yard was having none of it. The court order said what it said and, to his mind, Tulane could not keep selling tickets on a segregated basis when every other venue in town was made to abandon the practice. The urgency for "a policy decision at this time" only increased the longer Longenecker dithered. By early September, Yard reminded him that "we are rapidly approaching the time when

⁶¹ Rix N. Yard to Herbert E. Longenecker, July 5, 1963 (first through third quotations); Herbert E. Longenecker to Rix N. Yard, August 16, 1963 (fourth and fifth quotations); both in Folder "Athletic Advisory Committee, 1960-61-63," Box 51, Longenecker Papers.

we will be selling tickets to Tulane games over the counter” and he needed to know — one way or another — how he could offer them to black patrons. “I am quite certain,” he averred, “that some of the people who have been buying tickets for the professional game will want to know whether or not they can buy the same seats for the Tulane games later this year.” With this likelihood in mind, he could not afford to await a decision from the top; something had to be decided — and soon. Wanting for any direction, Yard took it upon himself to instruct his ticket manager that “any person presenting a ticket at the gates on the day of a game is to be admitted and allowed to hold the seat for which the ticket calls.” What’s more, he no longer felt it was the responsibility of his department to enforce segregation. “I do not feel that we can place our gatemen or ushers in a position of having to determine whether or not a person is colored,” he argued to Longenecker, “or to make a judgement [*sic*] as to whether such a person is a member of our student body, either graduate or undergraduate.” A black ticket holder, then, would be regarded by the athletics department as *only* a ticket holder.⁶²

So persuasive, so definitive, so *logical*, did Longenecker and the Board of Administrators find Yard’s plan that, as the president wrote, they concluded that it was “the one to be followed.” (And, if it did not work out, or protests grew too loud, they would not have to shoulder the blame.) This shift in policy at Tulane came from agitation within; at Georgia Tech, it resulted from agitation without. After reading of the desegregation order in New Orleans in the Atlanta newspapers, Curtis R. Cosby, a local postal worker who Marion Jackson dubbed “the No. 1 letter writer in Atlanta on sports subjects,” wrote the state Board of Regents to request “that this body take prompt action to ‘voluntar[ily]’ desegregate Grant Field” and “permit these facilitys [*sic*] to operate on a desegregated

⁶² At the time Yard wrote to Longenecker, the first home game with Texas was two-and-a-half weeks away, so his sense of urgency was warranted. Rix N. Yard to Herbert E. Longenecker, September 3, 1963, Folder “Policy — Athletics [1956-79],” Box 42, Longenecker Papers.

basis for the public.” He directed their attention to the fact that “in many, many cases Negroes are not admitted to the section of the stands they have a good bonafide ticket for” or they are “refused entrance at the gate” outside the stadium. He knew this practice all-too-well for he had been a victim of it. In the summer preceding the 1962 season, he corresponded with Tech’s athletic business manager, “indicat[ing] *[sic]* to him that I was a Negro citizen of Atlanta and wished to buy some of these tickets that would go on sale to the General public.” Tech officials instructed him to mail them a check by the summer deadline for season ticket sales; “this I did,” but “upon receipt of my tickets, they were all for the All Negro segregated section at Grant Field, the section I did not ask or request tickets for.” He never used these tickets — and, he coolly revealed, they “have been turned over to a lawyer.” “I assure you that normally I am not a trouble maker,” he wrote the Regents, “but if you choose Gentlemen not to ‘voluntar[ily]’ desegregate Grant Field forthwith, you will leave me no choice but to ask the Federal courts for relief in this matter for myself and others of my race and class.”⁶³

Cosby was nobody’s fool. Like Walker and his fellow black students at North Carolina more than a decade earlier, he knew the threat of litigation was the one and only way to make the Regents take his letter seriously, let alone contemplate any change in the ticketing practices at Grant Field. And, just as he hoped, his threats had the desired effect — or, as Jackson put it, “something was cooking but no one knew that the pot was boiling.” James A. Dunlap, the Regents chairman, passed

⁶³ Herbert E. Longenecker to Rix N. Yard, September 11, 1963, Folder “Policy — Athletics [1956-79],” Box 42, Longenecker Papers (first quotation); Jackson, “Sports of the World,” *ADW*, April 8, 1964, 5 (second quotation); Curtis R. Cosby to the Board of Regents, September 13, 1963, Folder 4, Box 1, Board of Regents Records (third through tenth quotations). Cosby indicated in the text of his letter that he had enclosed clippings about the federal order in New Orleans, as well as those in Richmond and even Atlanta, in the envelope in which he sent his letter to the Regents. While these clippings have not survived, he was undoubtedly moved to compose this letter, in no small part, because of the events they detailed.

Cosby's letter along to Georgia Tech president Edwin Harrison, who confessed that "the handling of ticket requests" by local blacks "has been a problem for a number of years." "The section of Grant Field set aside for Negroes," he explained, "was established primarily to permit Negro employees of Georgia Tech to attend the games." Given their "generally low pay scales," the price of these tickets were set at \$1.50, much lower than the regular \$5.50 rate, which was about all that these seats were worth. Black spectators endured temporary bleachers set low and in front of the east stands, running "from approximately the goal line posts to a little beyond the end zone at the north end zone of the field." (In Jackson's description of them, these seats amounted to "benches on the sidelines.") Understandably, "a number of them were most unhappy" about these "very poor seats," and their frustration was compounded still further by a greater number of requests for tickets in 1962 than ever before "and still the demand was not filled." Moreover, those blacks "who obtained tickets in areas of the stadium other than the segregated section" were denied entry because "we knew in fact that the tickets were not sold to the individuals who held the tickets and that they had been transferred" — a violation of "the law prohibiting the resale of tickets."⁶⁴

Harrison raised no objections to enrolling Georgia Tech's black employees in the priority system on which all season tickets were determined. Nor did he harbor any personal opposition to selling tickets to African Americans, like Cosby, who had no link to the university. But he foresaw complications. "The presence of Negroes at some games," he forewarned Dunlap, "especially where football enthusiasm runs high and emotions are felt deeply, could touch off incidents within the stands

⁶⁴ Jackson, "Sports of the World," April 8, 1964, 5 (first and sixth quotations); Edwin D. Harrison to James A. Dunlap, September 19, 1963, Folder 4, Box 1, Board of Regents Records (second through fifth and seventh through twelfth quotations; all of the quotations in the following paragraph are derived from this same letter).

detrimental to everyone concerned.” Georgia, Alabama, Auburn — if blacks were plunked down in a crowd of drunken whites during the Yellow Jackets’ meetings with their traditional rivals, he worried it might only exacerbate an already bad scene. (After all, no less than “Bear” Bryant, in 1964, would be forced to don a football helmet to walk from the sideline to the Alabama locker room to avoid taking a direct hit from all the whiskey bottles that Tech students threw at him.) “In other instances,” he conceded, “it might very well be true that incidents would not arise.” Any move toward integration on gameday would have to be very deliberate — and *subtle* — for, if it were not, then this shift might “receive publicity which would probably spur Negro sales” and infuriate Tech’s white season ticket holders. But that was a risk that the university would have to face, he advised Dunlap, since it was his conviction that “we should admit Negroes who can afford to pay the ticket costs at Tech and not get ourselves placed under an injunction.”

A messy public scuffle over racial issues did not suit Harrison, who, just two years earlier, choreographed the arrival of the first black students on the Georgia Tech campus right down to the kind of cookies reporters would be served in the press room. He also declared that any student who even spoke up against integration that morning would be expelled at once. When the Atlanta media chastised him for what seemed a breach of free speech, he was unrepentant. “All in all,” he said later, “it appeared to be a small price to pay for the prevention of a disgusting occurrence that would blot the history of the institution.” But that stain would have been caused by whites; here, embarrassment would come from a black man in the midst of a summer of civil rights fervor. Better just to get on with the inevitable than see the matter swell into a *cause célèbre*, he reasoned. Dunlap concurred, agreeing to send Cosby a letter drafted by Harrison himself. “The Georgia Tech Athletic Association,” Cosby was told, “would be willing to sell tickets to Negroes on the same priority basis

as that used for all other citizens.” In this priority system, however, black ticket seekers would be among those Tech supporters ranked at the very bottom — classified as “non-alumnus” — with Tech students, employees, and alumni given “first consideration” for the best seats. “Many Tech alumni have not been able to obtain season tickets,” he was counseled, “or tickets for certain individual games where great institutional rivalry exists in the athletic programs.” All of which was to say that Cosby was not going to see the Yellow Jackets take on Georgia, at least not any time soon. Nor would his seats be any better, ironically, than the north end zone, where all non-alumni priority season ticket holders sat. His tickets also came with what Dunlap-cum-Harrison characterized as a great onus: “I sincerely hope that Negro citizens who avail themselves of these tickets will use great discretion in avoiding incidents of any kind which could very possibly occur and which would involve non-Tech personnel.” If they could be trusted to do so, then Cosby and other blacks were free to buy tickets on an integrated basis, although the practice was not fully disclosed to the public until the next spring. A messy public scuffle over racial issues did not suit Harrison, after all.⁶⁵

South Carolina president Tom Jones, for one, was an admirer of “the very quiet and excellent way” in which Harrison “managed to integrate Georgia Tech.” He even went so far as conducting a series of phone conferences with Harrison to talk about all the logistics of Tech’s efforts to control

⁶⁵ Thomas F. Jones, memorandum for the record on “Integration and the Press, September 4, 1962, Folder “Integration,” Box 5 (1962-1963), Records of the Office of the President: Thomas F. Jones Series, 1962-1974, USC (first quotation); James A. Dunlap to Curtis R. Cosby, September 20, 1963, Folder 4, Box 1, Board of Regents Records (second through fifth quotations). With his September 19, 1963, letter to Dunlap, Harrison attached a draft response to Cosby that he suggested the chairman use; his language appears word-for-word in the letter Dunlap sent to Cosby. See Proposed Draft, Folder 4, Box 1, Board of Regents Records.

Dunlap passed a copy of his response to Cosby along to Georgia president O. C. Aderhold. I have been unable to firmly establish whether the Regents’ endorsement of integrated seating at Grant Field pushed Aderhold and others at Georgia to do the same at Sanford Stadium. However, Jackson exhorted his *Daily World* devotees in April 1964 that, while it was his understanding that seating there was still segregated, “Georgia has always taken a liberal viewpoint toward spectators and this should not disillusion you” from making an attempt to see the Bulldogs play at home in Athens. See James A. Dunlap to Curtis R. Cosby, September 20, 1963, Folder 6, Box 77, Aderhold Papers; Jackson, “Sports of the World,” April 8, 1964, 5.

the situation surrounding the initial moment of integration. And he tried to replicate these successes when Henrietta Monteith and Robert G. Anderson, Jr., entered under federal order that September 11 — the first African Americans to enroll in USC since Reconstruction. And, for the most part, he did. A meticulous seven-page memorandum went out to each administrator on campus in mid-August, detailing every aspect of Monteith and Anderson's first months as students. Most vital to keeping a lid on any protest was in making the presence of both students as unremarkable as possible, as soon as possible. "The sooner it becomes a matter of routine and regular occurrence for these Negro students to be seen on or about the campus," the memorandum conjectured, "the less likely becomes any possibility of disturbance." Of course, that was easier said than done, especially when many inside the administration were hesitant to see integration become either routine or regular on their campus. A group of them advised Jones over the summer that Monteith and Anderson "should certainly be housed on campus for their own security and our reputation," but that they "should be requested to eat in [the] Main Dining Hall" in the student union, where they could be closely watched after by security personnel. Theirs was to be an isolated, and isolating, experience, sure enough.⁶⁶

But this working group left open one major decision: "to admit or not to admit Negroes to football games." Few of its members wanted to touch the issue. Still others waited to see how events played out during the Gamecocks' September 28 home date against Maryland, whose coaches were expected to start wingback Darryl Hill — the Atlantic Coast Conference's first black player. While USC officials proclaimed to one and all that "the milestone" of the state's first interracial sporting

⁶⁶ Thomas F. Jones, memorandum for the record on "Integration and the Press, September 4, 1962, Folder "Integration," Box 5 (1962-1963) (first and second quotations); Internal Plan [for Integration], August 21, 1963, Folder "Integration: Final Plan for Integration" (third quotation); R. G. Fellers to Thomas F. Jones, memorandum, July 29, 1963, Folder "Integration: General" (fourth and fifth quotations); both in Box 7 (1963-1964); all in Jones Series.

event was “expected without incident,” the use of National Guard troops to protect the Maryland team, as well as rain-soaked stands and muddy field, only contributed to the general sense of menace that hung low over Carolina Stadium. Leading his squad onto the field, Maryland head coach Tom Nugent recalled how “there was so much anger and hatred in the air” that “it was truly frightening.” Making matters worse was Hill’s 19-yard touchdown run right before halftime, giving his team a 13-7 lead as they headed into the locker room. Before they could get there, though, a solid wall of policemen made them wait as they struggled to restore order on the field, herding an angry, surging mob of Carolina students back into the stands. Halftime itself lasted almost an hour, giving whites plenty of time to gather outside Maryland’s locker room door, calling for Hill. Coming out for the second half, Nugent believed that “there was going to be a terrible riot.” By game’s end, there was: capturing a comeback 21-13 victory, the Gamecock faithful again poured onto the field, rushing toward the downtrodden Terrapins, screaming “Kill Hill, Kill Hill.” Some even got within swinging distance of Hill. Tailback Jerry Fishman and his teammates “took off our helmets and held them by the face mask and swung wildly at a couple of hundred fans who were blocking our way to the locker room. We’d actually gotten used to their shouts of ‘Kill Hill, Kill Hill,’ but when it got physical we had no choice but to fight back.”⁶⁷

Afterwards, Jones overlooked the postgame chaos when writing Maryland president Wilson Elkins. Instead, he was more concerned that Elkins know that “we are embarrassed” by “an incident . . . in which a man in the stands threw a drink into the face of one of the Maryland players.” “You

⁶⁷ R. G. Fellers to Thomas F. Jones, memorandum, July 29, 1963, Folder “Integration: General,” Box 7 (1963-1964), Jones Series (first quotation); Martie Zad, “Gamecocks Touchdown Pick Over Maryland,” *WP*, September 28, 1963, D17 (second quotation); John Greenya, “Black Man On A White Man’s Field,” *Black Athlete Sports Network*, October 16, 2006, http://www.blackathlete.net/artman/publish/article_0810.shtml (third through fifth quotations).

and your coach,” Jones noted, “would want to know” that, after being “investigated thoroughly,” “he has been arrested and prosecuted.” “The man was found not to be a University student,” but a drunken fan who “evidently had a grudge against the Maryland team.” More heartening for Jones was that “there were no racial overtones or undertones involved in the affair” — making it perhaps the one and only event that day that had nothing to do with race. If anything, the reception Hill received at Carolina Stadium effectively scotched any chance that Jones, with his carefully calibrated security plan for integration, would abide Monteith and Anderson attending home games. The restive mood in the stands offered confirmation aplenty that Carolina Stadium was still no place for African Americans. Just two-and-a-half weeks later, the bursar’s office refunded both students’ \$8.50 athletic fee, which paid their way into home games, and they were asked by the administration to stay away from the stadium. Given this melee, Monteith and Anderson were only too happy to oblige. For her part, Monteith told the local AP reporter, Del Booth, in late November that, long before she entered the university, she had made up her mind against ever setting foot inside Carolina Stadium. She and Anderson were advised by USC officials at the time of their enrollment that “they were free to attend games if they wished to,” but “they both agreed not to go.” Striking a conciliatory tone, she informed Booth that, even if she had wanted to attend a game, “studies are taking up just about all the time available” in her schedule. “Next semester (when basketball will be in progress) there may be time and I might go to some of the games.”⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Thomas F. Jones to Wilson H. Elkins, October 5, 1963, Folder “Football: Maryland,” Box 6 (1963-1964) (first through eighth quotations); C. H. Witten to B. A. Daetwyler, memorandum, October 16, 1963; Refund Check issued to Robert G. Anderson, Jr., October 17, 1963; Copy draft, “2 Negro Students Agreed to Miss S. C. Games,” November 22, 1963 (ninth and tenth quotations; parenthetical interjection in tenth quotation in original quotation); both in Folder “Integration: General,” Box 7 (1963-1964); all in Jones Series. An internal memorandum of the university’s Department of Public Relations noted how the local UPI correspondent wanted to know “whether the refunded fees also represented other University events such as concerts.” USC officials reported “the refund was related to athletic events” alone. See Internal Memorandum on “Replies to queries concerning

Whatever spin Monteith put on the matter, all that Jones and other USC officials cared about was dispelling any impressions that the institution “had arbitrarily refused” her and Anderson “game attendance.” Their concern — or so they claimed — was always Monteith and Anderson’s personal safety. It was a neat trick: appearing to tend to their black students’ interests while meeting the expectations of their white supporters to preserve segregation. But subterfuge of this sort was on its way out. The long-feared, large-scale federal intervention every TWI dreaded finally materialized that July, in the form of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Any legal or extralegal claim these institutions had to deny black patrons tickets went out the window: Title II of the Act would guarantee African Americans “the full and equal enjoyment . . . of any place of public accommodation,” including, in part, “any motion picture house, theater, concert hall, sports arena, [or] stadium.” “Those who are equal before God,” Lyndon Johnson told the nation before signing the bill into law, “shall now also be equal in the polling booths, in the classrooms, in the factories, and in the hotels, restaurants, movie theaters, and other public places that provide service to the public.” Yet, as we shall see, it would only be through the federal enforcement of the Act’s Title VI that the playing field itself was finally added to this list.⁶⁹

refunds of Monteith and Anderson fees,” November 22, 1963, Folder “Integration: General,” Box 7 (1963-1964), Jones Series.

⁶⁹ Copy draft, “2 Negro Students Agreed to Miss S. C. Games,” November 22, 1963, Folder “Integration: General,” Box 7 (1963-1964), Jones Series (first quotation); Civil Rights Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 241, 243) (second and third quotations); Lyndon B. Johnson, “Radio and Television Remarks Upon Signing the Civil Rights Bill,” July 2, 1964, *Public Papers of the President of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64* (Washington: GPO, 1965), 842-44, esp. 843 (fourth quotation). On the impact of Title VI on integrating campus facilities — including stadiums — see, for instance, Norman Hackerman to Deans, Chairmen, and Other Administrative Officials, memorandum, June 1, 1964, Folder “Desegregation, 1962-1964,” Box VF32/B.b, UT President’s Office Records; University Answer to Accusation #3 in Turner-Lawson Letter, undated [circa April 1965], Folder 48, Box 4, Humphreys Presidential Collection; and, R. Taylor Cole to Deans, Directors, Departmental Chairmen, and Others, memorandum, September 9, 1965, Folder “Black Athletes,” Box 2, Edmund M. Cameron Records, Duke.

CHAPTER FOUR
“To attract Negroes where they have been traditionally absent”

In June 1965, a San Antonio sportswriter drove over to College Station to interview Texas A&M's newly-hired head coach, Gene Stallings. An Aggie himself, Stallings played for Paul “Bear” Bryant in the mid-fifties — and was called back to his alma mater from Alabama, where he was serving as an assistant on Bryant's coaching staff. His seemed a hopeless challenge: the Aggies hadn't posted a winning record since the Bear left for Tuscaloosa in 1957; the 1964 squad tallied just one victory. So, this writer asked, what was Stallings' plan for righting this ship? “Let's face it,” he quipped, “I'm no magician. I can't make a contender out of this ball club. But I do think we will be improved.” At least one fellow Southwest Conference cellar-dweller, SMU, had pinned its hopes for a turnaround on Jerry LeVias, the league's first athlete of color, who signed a scholarship offer only weeks earlier. Were there any similar plans in the offing in Aggieland? “I've got nothing against the Negro athlete,” Stallings responded. “But I don't believe he fits into our plans here at A&M right now. What we need is a team that will work and pull and fight together and really get a feeling of oneness. We need to be a complete unit. I don't think we could accomplish this with a Negro on the squad.” As if an afterthought, he added, “Maybe we'll recruit them later.”¹

Whether an embarrassing verbal gaffe or a revelation of deeply held racism, Stallings' candor astonished, even *infuriated*, Aggie fans. “We at A&M wonder sometimes why our ‘image’ is not as it might be,” one history professor complained to president Earl Rudder. “Statements such as Mr. Stallings' is one good reason” — particularly as it “publicly makes Texas A&M look like a school

¹ Charlie Vincent, “Ags To Be Improved, But Not Contenders,” *San Antonio Express-News*, June 20, 1965, 2C (quotations).

primarily interested in keeping the Negro in his place.” “In my opinion,” a supporter in San Antonio protested, “Mr. Stallings has set the civil rights movement back a number of years”: “I am not a Negro but it seems to me that anyone from Texas who would make such a statement is either plain stupid or . . . utterly indifferent to the policy that our president is trying so hard to effect.” An alum living in Wichita appealed directly to Stallings himself to “reconsider your opinion on this matter.” “If a Negro athlete could contribute to the effectiveness of our football team,” he posited, “I would think that his fellow players would readily accept him not as a Negro but as an athlete.”²

While Rudder reassured angry Aggies that the university “shall adhere to a policy of equal opportunity for every person” on campus, most of them believed Stallings’ remarks supplied a fairly accurate accounting of its policy on athletic integration. “I have always felt that A&M was symbolic of the type of institution that would give a boy a chance not based upon his background but rather his desire to make something of himself,” the Wichita alum told Stallings. Now, he wasn’t so sure. Even though, in November 1963, A&M was one of the first SWC members to pass a resolution that, in theory, desegregated its athletics program, the Aggies sat by and watched their SWC brethren — except Texas, of course — pursue black prospects throughout the remainder of the decade. True to his word, too, Stallings, who added athletics director to his title in 1968, fiercely held out against recruiting African Americans. Although he offered up a boilerplate defense of his policy — that he would “recruit the most qualified athletes in all sports, regardless of race, creed or color” — his past words still haunted A&M. In a show of how “unbiased” he was, he informed students in the Afro-American Society, in March 1969, that he had “recently tried to recruit six colored high school

² Michael J. Francis to Earl Rudder, June 22, 1965 (first and second quotations); Ike Marblestone to Earl Rudder, June 22, 1965 (third and fourth quotations); J. Irwin Jordan, Jr., to Gene Stallings, July 21, 1965 (fifth and sixth quotations); all in Folder 3, Box 74, Records of the President’s Office.

football players” — but without success. These students were unimpressed: they believed he wasn’t just dragging his feet on integrating Aggie football; he was standing still. By May, they issued a provocative set of demands, among which was a challenge to A&M’s administration to either begin the “immediate recruitment of Black athletes in all major sports” or fire Stallings. A&M’s Board of Directors rejected all their demands, especially those made on athletics, declaring that “change thrust upon this institution under the ugly veil of threat or demand will not be considered or tolerated.”³

But the university did not just reserve such defiance for dismissing the racial protests of its own students. Its leaders treated efforts by the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) to make them comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with equal contempt. Not an especially smart move. This cabinet-level department was charged with bringing every American university into conformity with the legal provisions of Title VI, which outlawed racial bias in the distribution of any and all federal funds. With nearly \$8 billion at its control, HEW proved the single largest source of federal patronage for American higher education, making compliance an issue of both legal *and* financial consequence. Or, at least, it should have. Indeed, in that same month of May, field agents from HEW’s regional office in Dallas traveled to College Station to assess how closely A&M was toeing the line on Title VI. What they discovered, as reported by HEW’s deputy regional director, Clarence Laws, in a letter to Rudder, was a university severely lacking a commitment to integrating African Americans into the life of the campus — nowhere more so than on the gridiron. “Recruitment for athletes by members of the athletic staff must be conducted in such a manner as to

³ Earl Rudder to Michael J. Francis, July 2, 1965 (first quotation); J. Irwin Jordan, Jr., to Gene Stallings, July 21, 1965 (second quotation); both in Folder 3, Box 74; Minutes of the Meeting of the Athletic Council, March 25, 1969, Folder 4, Box 109 (third through fifth quotations); Afro-American Society, “Justice on Campus,” undated [circa May 1969] (sixth and seventh quotations); Press Release, May 9, 1969 (eighth quotation); both in Folder 20, Box 110; all in Records of the President’s Office.

assure at least as much emphasis in recruiting Negro as white athletes,” Laws instructed. As it stood, the only emphasis among Stallings’ coaching staff was in signing white boys. What’s more, Laws’ field agents were confronted “by faculty members and both white and Negro students” with allegations of “discrimination against Negro athletes in athletic recruitment” — the only real charges of discrimination they encountered during their visit. At the heart of these accusations were “news stories in the past” that “made mention of Negro recruitment views by the athletic department” — particularly Stallings’ 1965 statements — which were the rhetorical equivalent of posting a whites-only sign over the locker room door. Action, Laws ordered Rudder, was the only remedy. Within 30 days, the university was legally required to submit detailed plans for addressing each and every Title VI violation, including “the names and addresses of Negro athletes to whom athletic scholarships were offered” within this timeframe. Impractical, perhaps, but the mandate couldn’t have been any clearer: recruit black athletes *now*.⁴

Yet, for all of the legal exigence resting behind Laws’ command, Rudder brushed him off. When, after three months of silence from Aggieldand, Laws pressed Rudder to “know what steps have been taken or are contemplated to implement each recommendation,” the president counterpunched, calling this inquiry “almost coercive in nature.” Since first admitting black students in 1963, Rudder insisted, “there has not been a single incident of any sort whatsoever to indicate that integration is not complete and total, both legally and in spirit.” He baited Laws to supply “some specific incident of noncompliance.” Firing back, Laws said HEW’s own studies “do not support” Rudder’s claims: with

⁴ Created on March 12, 1953, HEW was eventually divided into two different federal departments in 1979 — the U. S. Department of Education and the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. Clarence A. Laws to Earl Rudder, May 29, 1969, Folder 30, Box 108, Records of the President’s Office (quotations). On the volume of HEW patronage, see Graves W. Landrum to Harry Ransom, memorandum, May 17, 1965, Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/64-8/31/66,” Box 123, UT Chancellor’s Office Records.

still “no Negro regulars on the football team,” noncompliance was on display every autumn Saturday. Sharpening his critique of Stallings’ handling of black recruitment, he reminded Rudder that “there were black and white students and faculty members who expressed the opinion that the University did not and would not seriously recruit Black football players.” Thus, in judging whether A&M — where African American undergraduates comprised one percent of the total enrollment — was committed to the obligations of this federal law, “we must look for specific actions which have a high probability of assuring equal educational opportunity” for black students *and* student-athletes.⁵

Irritated and aggrieved by what he believed was an aggressive degree of federal intervention, Rudder appealed to a local U. S. congressman, Houston oilman George H. W. Bush. “Appalled” by what he agreed was excessive regulation, Bush wrote Rudder in January 1970 that “it looks to me like somebody is just trying to pick a fight.” “I hope I have as fine a sense as to what constitutes fair play in a situation as anybody else,” he contended, “but, certainly these letters from HEW appear to me to be of a harassing nature.” Well connected inside the Nixon administration, Bush pressed HEW secretary Robert Finch to “slow the zealots down” in desegregating A&M. He was “confident that Finch is somewhat sympathetic” — but, in the end, nothing Bush did threw HEW off A&M’s scent. By month’s end, the university was bowing and scraping before its regulatory power. Rudder knew he would have to substantively demonstrate A&M’s progress in satisfying Title VI, particularly in football. In advance of a meeting with Laws in late January, the university’s director of personnel advised Rudder that he should emphasize how Stallings “had dinner in Seguin, Texas with a Negro

⁵ Clarence A. Laws to Earl Rudder, August 14, 1969 (first quotation); Earl Rudder to Clarence A. Laws, August 25, 1969 (second through fourth quotations); both in Folder 30, Box 108; Clarence A. Laws to Earl Rudder, October 20, 1969, Folder 17, Box 117 (fifth through eighth quotations); all in Records of the President’s Office.

football prospect on the evening of January 21st, played golf with another in Houston on January 22nd, and visited in the Houston home of a third on the evening of January 22nd.” All told, HEW pressure forced Stallings and his staff to bring five black prospects to campus for an official visit that spring. In March, when A&M finally filed its action plan with Laws’ office, its administration could report that, “as of February 16, 1970, two negro football players had signed letters of intent to enroll at Texas A&M.” The mere specter of federal intervention, foreshadowing a potential loss of federal funding, did what nothing else was able to do: integrate Aggie football.⁶

Entrenched racial interests, campus protest, political intrigue, capitulation to federal pressure — there was very little about how the desegregation of Texas A&M football unfolded that was all that unusual. In fact, as Laws assured a truculent Rudder, it was downright “routine.” “The identical procedure,” he asserted, “has been followed by [HEW’s] Office for Civil Rights in the conduct of more than 300 university and college reviews over the Nation.” A&M, in other words, was not being singled out. Rather, the recruitment of black student-athletes was only a piece of a larger compliance initiative, with HEW strong-arming traditionally white institutions into reversing their longstanding discriminatory practices. “Educational institutions which have previously been legally segregated,” argued OCR director Leon Panetta in December 1969, “have an affirmative duty to adopt measures to overcome the effect of past segregation” — namely, by decisively leveling the playing field for African Americans. Or, as another HEW regional director, Eloise Severinson, observed from her Charlottesville, Virginia, office just six months earlier, “it is not sufficient to recruit Negro students,

⁶ George H. W. Bush to Earl Rudder, January 20, 1970 (first through third and fifth quotations); Notes of a January 27, 1970, phone call from George H. W. Bush to Earl Rudder (fourth quotation); Robert L. Gulley, Jr., to Earl Rudder, memorandum, January 26, 1970 (sixth quotation); T. D. Cherry to Clarence A. Laws, March 4, 1970 (seventh quotation); all in Folder 17, Box 117, Records of the President’s Office.

Negro athletes, and Negro faculty equally with whites, but that extra effort should be made to attract Negroes where they have been traditionally absent.” And, by the late sixties and early seventies, the regular admission of African Americans to the South’s TWIs made the continued absence of black players on the gridiron all the more glaring. Inviting African Americans into the racially exclusive realm of southern football was the *very last thing* most administrators and coaches wanted to do; but, ordered to redress Title VI violations, recruiting and, then, signing black prospects was, structurally at least, the surest area of noncompliance to remedy. Although some historians have contended that the emergence of the black athlete in these programs “reflected a growing acceptance of integration across the region,” such a triumphal note was rarely (if ever) played in the administrative decision-making that preceded the recruitment of African Americans. When push came to shove, universities from College Station to College Park were far more willing to jettison racial principles than forfeit federal dollars. Moral imperatives meant nothing at all to them when their bottom line was at stake.⁷

I

For Ralph Long, the opportunity gap in athletics was two miles wide — that is, the distance between the campuses of Georgia Tech and Clark College in downtown Atlanta. A state tennis champion at Atlanta’s all-black Turner High, and the son of one of the city’s leading black educators, Long was among a handpicked trio of African Americans to integrate Georgia Tech in September 1961. Their admission established an entirely new pattern in the integration of publicly-supported TWIs in the so-

⁷ Clarence A. Laws to Earl Rudder, October 20, 1969, Folder 17, Box 117, Records of the President’s Office (first and second quotations); Leon Panetta to Mills E. Godwin, December 2, 1969, Folder 1365, Box 36, Thomas Marshall Hahn, Jr., Papers, VT (third quotation); Eloise Severinson to Gen. George R. E. Shell, May 14, 1969, Folder “Civil Rights, 1950-1970,” Box 0002, VMI Administrative Subject Files, VMI (fourth quotation); Charles H. Martin, “The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow in Southern College Sports: The Case of the Atlantic Coast Conference,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 76 (1999): 253-84, esp. 283 (fifth quotation).

called Deep South: a university *voluntarily* opening its doors to black applicants. While “peace and good order” ruled the day that Long and his fellow black students, Ford Greene and Lawrence Williams, arrived on campus for freshman orientation, vestiges of the old order hamstrung their lives throughout their brief enrollment at Tech. Before entering, Long hoped his distinction on the city’s public courts might earn him a spot on the Yellow Jackets’ varsity tennis team; by the time he left, in the fall of 1963, he had learned, all too well, that his athletic abilities were no match for his race, which disqualified him from competing on any of the university’s intercollegiate teams. He quietly enrolled instead at Clark, a traditionally black institution clustered alongside Morehouse, Spelman, and Atlanta University just blocks away on Atlanta’s West End. “I withdrew from Georgia Tech,” he later explained, “because I was convinced that I not only could achieve my academic aims to major in math and physics, but I could become a more well-rounded individual if I could pursue my educational goals in an environment in which no restriction would be placed upon my participation in the total school program.”⁸

At Clark, Long found such an environment, not only in his academic life but also in athletics. He was wholeheartedly welcomed on the tennis team — so much so that athletics director L. S. Epps took the unprecedented step of requesting that he be permitted to compete immediately. In March 1964, he appealed to Burwell T. Harvey, Jr., commissioner of the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, to waive the requisite year of residence which Long, like every transfer athlete, would have to fulfill before gaining eligibility. When athletics directors and tennis coaches from around the SIAC denounced Harvey’s decision to grant this request as “incomprehensible,” he asked them for

⁸ Bruce Galphin and Barbara Milz, “Tech Campus Calm As 3 Negroes Enroll,” *AC*, September 19, 1961, 1 (first quotation); Ralph A. Long, Jr., to Burwell T. Harvey, Jr., April 11, 1964, Folder 1, Box 3, Burwell T. Harvey, Jr., Collection, AUC (second quotation).

a measure of compassion for a young man who he felt was used “as a ‘pig’ of intergration [*sic*].” “He passed all his work [at Georgia Tech],” he asserted, “but was not given an opportunity to try out for the Varsity Tennis Club in an athletic field in which he has been interested in for many years . . . feeling the effects of being in a situation which denied him an opportunity.” To his mind, Long’s experience at Georgia Tech warranted, epitomized even, “a true hardship case.”⁹

If Long faced such “hardship” in his attempts to play tennis for Georgia Tech, imagine what he might have encountered had football been his sport. Tech athletics director and head coach Bobby Dodd had no problem playing against athletes of color — in fact, he advocated Tech’s withdrawal from the Southeastern Conference that same year so the Jackets might face more intersectional (*and* integrated) opposition. But bringing them into his own program was quite another thing. Perhaps that was why Tech president Edwin Harrison thought it a good idea, in January 1965, to remind Dodd of the new legal provisions every TWI faced under Title VI. As the language of the law ordered that “no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance,” Harrison offered Dodd a brief primer in “interpretations of the law as applied to colleges.” Whether “admissions practices or . . . any other practices of the institution,” he observed, every university “which applies for any Federal financial assistance of any kind must agree that it will make no distinction on the ground of race, color, or national origin . . . relating to the treatment of students.” Those “other practices,” he added, “include

⁹ L. S. Epps to Burwell T. Harvey, Jr., March 20, 1964 (first quotation); Burwell T. Harvey, Jr., to L. S. Epps, March 26, 1964; both in Folder 1; Edward L. Jackson to Burwell T. Harvey, Jr., May 19, 1964 (third quotation); Burwell T. Harvey, Jr., to James R. Lawson, May 21, 1964 (fourth through seventh quotations); both in Folder 2; all in Box 3, Harvey Collection.

the affording to students of opportunities to participate in any educational, research, cultural, athletic, [or] recreational [activities].” For Tech to demonstrate some progress toward Title VI compliance, he warned, it had to “permit any student to go out for any sport without restriction of any kind” — and that meant according an equality of opportunity to both white *and* black boys.¹⁰

If Dodd understood the message Harrison was sending him, he certainly didn’t act like it. A year later, he told a local sportswriter that his program was preparing to widen its viewfinder when looking for new gridiron talent. “We have had occasional players in the past, of course, from up in Pennsylvania and other northern states,” he averred. “But, by and large, they came to us. Now, we are going for them.” High talk, indeed, yet he and his staff never took a single look at Jack Pitts, a highly-touted quarterback at Decatur’s Trinity High, even though he played his games just ten miles from the Tech campus. Driving across town was, evidently, too far for Dodd to travel to scout a good quarterback. In fact, Michigan State head coach Duffy Daugherty enthusiastically called Pitts “the finest quarterback prospect we’ve ever seen on film.” And ten miles was, evidently, too far for Dodd to travel to sign a great athlete. But, in May 1966, Daugherty flew to Atlanta personally to sign Pitts, so that he might beat out Big Ten rivals Minnesota and Wisconsin for his services. With “more all-around ability” than anyone then on his roster, he was overjoyed Pitts would “go on to greatness” wearing a Spartan uniform. Such praise didn’t register with Dodd. Highlighting his national appeal, an *Atlanta Constitution* editorial complained that Pitts “hasn’t heard a whisper from Georgia Tech.”¹¹

This wasn’t negligence on Dodd’s part; it was open defiance of the law. Nearly two years

¹⁰ Civil Rights Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 241, 252) (first quotation); Edwin D. Harrison to R. L. Dodd, January 14, 1965, Folder 3, Box 13, Harrison Papers (second through seventh quotations).

¹¹ Bill Clark, “Tech Widens Talent Search,” *AC*, January 6, 1966, 43 (first quotation); Jack Logue, “Mich. State, Wake Forest Battle Over Jack Pitts,” *AJ*, May 10, 1966, S2 (second quotation); Bruce Galphin, “Tech, Georgia Fumble; Michigan State Scores,” *AC*, May 5, 1966, 5 (third through seventh quotations).

after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, and a year-and-a-half after Harrison's memorandum, Dodd was still only seriously recruiting white prospects because, for the most part, he could. He wasn't alone: one university after another pledged cooperation in putting the statutory guarantees of this law into effect on their campuses — and then went right back to practicing business as usual. It was all an elaborate ruse, calculated to exhibit just enough earnestness of purpose, just enough progress toward compliance, just enough dedication to change, that the federal authorities would leave them alone. Furman president Gordon Blackwell wrote one observer that, had his university not signified its "willingness to follow the provisions of the Civil Rights Act," then it "would have lost its ROTC program, federal loan funds for students, the opportunity to secure federal loans on dormitories, surplus government property, grants for research, grants for summer teacher education institutes, and other forms of federal assistance." Indeed, land-grant colleges — such as Clemson and Auburn — discovered that their ability to win research grants from the U. S. Department of Agriculture was now inextricably tied to avowing their compliance with Title VI. The region's two major military colleges, VMI and The Citadel, confronted the same problems with the Pentagon. "As you know," General Hugh P. Harris of The Citadel informed one alum, "because of our ROTC affiliation, we had no choice but to sign the federal compliance agreement." Universities with medical schools feigned similar accord with Title VI to satisfy various science-based agencies. "We must demonstrate that we are complying with the law as of this time," Alabama vice president Joseph F. Volker told medical center administrators in Birmingham in April 1965. "Please keep in mind that we have certified to the Federal Government through statements to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the National Science Foundation, that we are in compliance." With \$5 million in research funds already received that academic year, as well as \$10

million in pending construction grants, Volker counseled these administrators, “the relationship of the aforementioned events is obvious.” Regardless their guarantees, some institution heads believed the whole practice of Title VI enforcement ineffectually designed. William and Mary president Davis Paschall asserted that “our non-discrimination was done because we felt that it was right rather than being done under the iron heel of tyrannical compulsion.” But, once these standards were put into place, he contended, “no one would really know whether an institution followed non-discrimination [rules] because of the rightness involved or because of the compulsion.”¹²

In other words, even after most TWIs began regularly enrolling African Americans, the vast majority of them were taking only minimum pains to meaningfully desegregate past a change in their admissions policy. All of which pointed to the sensibility rife among administrators that HEW lacked any actual regulatory authority — that the agency’s constant drumbeat about compliance amounted to a mere annoyance. Furthermore, many believed a signature on a compliance affidavit sufficed as a guarantee that their institution would respect the law. But HEW leaders — both in Washington and the three southern regional offices in Atlanta, Charlottesville, and Dallas — doggedly batted down this perception. After all, more than 190 federal programs, controlling \$18 billion in federal funds, were now looking for more than just promises on Title VI compliance, precisely the point regional officers conveyed throughout the 1964-65 academic year in symposia for college administrators on the implications of this law for their own institutions. After attending one such gathering in Dallas in

¹² Gordon W. Blackwell to W. L. Williams, November 22, 1965, Folder “Colleges and Universities: South Carolina Colleges: Furman,” Box 3 (1965-66), Jones Series (second and third quotations); Hugh P. Harris to Alderman Duncan, January 16, 1967, Folder “D,” Box 44, Hugh Pate Harris Papers, Citadel (fourth quotation); Joseph F. Volker to Matthew F. McNulty, Jr., et al, memorandum, April 10, 1965, Folder 4, Box 24, Vice President for Health Affairs Records, Joseph F. Volker Papers, UAB (fifth and sixth quotations); Davis Y. Paschall to F. A. McDonald, memorandum, August 17, 1964, Folder “W&M — Civil Rights Legislation — 1964,” Box 12, Davis Y. Paschall Papers, W&M (seventh and eighth quotations).

May, an aide to Texas chancellor Harry Ransom reported that HEW officials repeatedly stressed that “the Federal dollar is color blind.” Make no mistake, he warned, “the rules have been changed”: “government agencies recognized that there will be difficult problems to work out, but the requirements of Title VI are in effect requirements.” Although there was nothing keeping TWIs like Texas from foregoing funds from any sector of the government, “if you do” take federal money, he told Ransom, “you must comply.” Despite such changes, he did detect a silver lining: “we will have no trouble with other federal agencies if we satisfy HEW.” As one HEW staffer guaranteed him, “it is our purpose to force compliance and not our purpose to cut off funds.”¹³

Yet this policy was so toothless that most TWIs continued their high stakes game of chicken. An assistant to Virginia president Edgar Finley Shannon reminded athletics director Steve Sebo that “the university’s policy of non-discrimination in the awarding of all scholarships and other student aid regardless of race, color, religion or national origin should be well known,” although “its application to athletic grants-in-aid . . . apparently is doubted” in Sebo’s own department. At Duke, a Pharmacology professor in the medical school begged president Douglas M. Knight to “clarify our position” on recruiting African Americans, as anything other than a well-publicized commitment to integrate Blue Devil athletics “certainly creates an unfortunate impression of the attitudes of most of the members of the University community with regard to matters of this kind.” But Knight scoffed at the idea. “I am honestly not certain which annoys me more,” he reacted, “to have it said that we do not recruit Negro athletes or to have it said that we do.” When a Citadel alumnus protested that “I would favor doing away with intercollegiate athletics altogether rather than have Negro players

¹³ Graves W. Landrum to Harry Ransom, memorandum, May 17, 1965, Folder “Desegregation, 9/1/64-8/31/66,” Box 123, UT Chancellor’s Office Records (quotations). On these Title VI symposia, see also Paschall memorandum in Footnote 12.

on our teams,” General Harris offered his solidarity. “I assure you,” he averred, “that we have no plans to recruit Negro athletes even though many of our recent defeats have been in competition with teams which feature one or more Negro blue chip athletes.”¹⁴

In short, these institutions were not afraid of HEW or of being found Title VI noncompliant. After reading how Pitts signed with Michigan State in the *Constitution*, Charles Morgan, Jr., regional director of the American Civil Liberties Union, knew he had found the silver bullet that would fire enough fear through the world of southern higher education to force compliance. Writing from the ACLU’s Atlanta offices in May 1966, he demanded HEW’s Commissioner of Education, Harold Howe, II, “begin an investigation to determine whether or not these institutions of higher learning practice racial discrimination in their athletic programs.” It wouldn’t be too hard to do so. Indeed, in a mere matter of days, he and his associates put in enough phone calls to the ACLU’s state offices throughout the South that they had rounded up solid evidence that the members of the Southeastern Conference, in particular, were doing nothing at all to abide by Title VI. Of the 113 football players at LSU, for instance, there were “55 varsity, 34 freshmen, and 24 red-shirted team members” — and “no Negroes.” “Although each of LSU’s white coaches [scout] secondary schools to procure talent for athletic scholarship admission,” he informed Howe, “these activities seem limited to white schools.” The ACLU’s Louisiana branch reported that, while New Orleans’ all-black St. Augustine High captured the Negro state championship in 1965, “no Southeastern Conference member school scouted the members of that team.” And the total absence of any LSU coach at St. Augustine games

¹⁴ Paul Saunier, Jr., to Steve Sebo, memorandum, March 16, 1966, Folder “Athletics — General, 1965-1966,” Box 5, President’s Papers, RG-2/1/2.691 (1965-1966), UVA (first and second quotations); D. C. Tosteson to Douglas M. Knight, January 6, 1966 (third and fourth quotations); Douglas M. Knight to D. C. Tosteson, January 12, 1966 (fifth quotation); both in Folder “Athletics, 1966-1969,” Box 3, Douglas M. Knight Records, Duke; Alderman Duncan to Hugh P. Harris, January 9, 1967 (sixth quotation); Hugh P. Harris to Alderman Duncan, January 16, 1967 (seventh quotation); both in Folder “D,” Box 44, Harris Papers.

was especially hard to justify, Morgan asserted, since “the athletic department at LSU owns its own two-engine, eight-passenger Cessna airplane” that was ready to fly at a moment’s notice.

With universities profiting handsomely each autumn Saturday — according to Morgan’s sources, LSU cleared \$2.1 million in gross income in 1965 alone — hitting discriminatory practices in football recruiting, he urged Howe, was the *only* way to make them sit up and take notice of the gravity of Title VI compliance. He argued that “athletic scholarships which pay room, board, tuition, books and laundry expenses are, of course, important to those seeking a college education who are too poor to attend college otherwise.” And, yet, “they are equally important to young Negro athletes seeking an education,” who were being denied not only the chance to compete, but also the financial advantages concomitant with that opportunity, solely because of their race. Though the SEC brethren were the worst offenders, they weren’t the only ones — a fact that made Morgan’s call for “a full investigation of discriminatory practices in athletic recruiting of athletic departments of all state- and privately-supported educational institutions” all the more potent. He knew what penalty they should face, too: “we request that you withhold all federal funds from each institution which presently discriminates on the basis of race in its athletic programs.” A stiff yank on the federal purse strings, he predicted, would hastily pull these universities into line.¹⁵

It is difficult to pinpoint just how integral Morgan’s entreaty was in shaping Howe’s decision, in early 1967, to authorize these very kinds of investigations, though it was undeniably a contributing factor: in March, Dave Brady of the *Washington Post* reported that Howe’s agency — HEW’s Office of Education — “has been under pressure from the American Civil Liberties Union and from

¹⁵ Charles Morgan, Jr., to Harold Howe, II, May 12, 1966, Folder “Southeastern Conference, 1965-66,” Box 20, Colvard Papers (quotations). See also “Rights Group Asks Probe of SEC Grants,” *AC*, May 14, 1966, 55.

confidential sources in the South to act against major state universities with no Negroes on athletic scholarships.” One such informant speculated for Brady that, “armed with word from HEW” that “discrimination in the dispensation of athletic scholarships would no longer be tolerated, and that annual compliance reports are required, it is hard to imagine the university president would not call in his athletic department and order that affirmative steps be immediately taken” to sign athletes of color. Indeed, the advent of this institution-by-institution review — at public *and* private universities — left more than one administrator quaking in his boots. “I think the key question from a legal point of view,” Duke chief counsel Ed Bryson calmed Knight, “is whether Duke University knowingly carries on or permits a university organization . . . to engage in discriminatory practice.” To his mind, “one event or a series of events would not be conclusive but would be evidence to be considered if charges were made.” Say allegations were brought against Duke for not recruiting any black athletes: the discrimination, in this case, would have rested in the routine of overlooking these prospects in favor of white ones, rather than the mistreatment of a particular recruit by its coaches. By HEW standards, there was little substantive difference between the absence of racial diversity on the football team and the denial of opportunity to *all* black students; either way, these exclusions were predicated solely on racial grounds. And being hit with an all-inclusive charge of discrimination was precisely what worried Knight. After consulting with HEW’s Office of Civil Rights, Bryson told him “that if a charge should be filed . . . the investigator would look at the *total picture* to determine whether such discriminatory acts established a pattern or a practice of discrimination” by the institution.¹⁶

For HEW investigators, then, establishing a practice of discrimination required a significantly

¹⁶ Dave Brady, “Dixie Football Turns Color,” *WP*, March 12, 1967, C4 (first and second quotations); E. C. Bryson to Douglas M. Knight, November 21, 1967, Folder “Bryson, E. C. — University Counsel, 1967-1969,” Box 4, Knight Records (third through fifth quotations; emphasis added in fifth quotation).

higher burden of proof than did a pattern. That did not mean, however, that a pattern proved any less discriminatory than an actual practice. Sometimes the pattern *was* the practice. Thus, a principal aim of this first round of compliance reviews — which ran sporadically from early 1967 to late 1968 — was in holding a mirror up before administrators and convincing them that, despite admitting black students to their academic programs, their universities still *looked* white. And they remained invested in practices that reinforced such perceptions. Ole Miss head coach John Vaught acknowledged that the violence accompanying the enrollment of James Meredith in September 1962 “shaped an image of our university as a last citadel of white supremacy” — “the legacy” of which “cost us some black athletes.” Then, again, so did his own reluctance to pursue any. Rest assured, he told Brady in spring 1967, “we will fill out a form to show we have looked at one” to satisfy these new HEW dictates. Nevertheless, “we have not found one good enough yet. None have been invited to the campus. By the time we find one good enough, I’ll be gone. Let somebody else do that.” In fact, the only talk of recruiting blacks in Oxford were rationalizations as to why there were none on the Rebel team a half-decade after Meredith’s graduation. “The ones we wanted,” chancellor J. D. Williams insisted, “did not want to come to Mississippi. They wanted to go to Michigan State and places like that.” Athletics director Tad Smith lamented how “we found a big quarterback at a Negro high school in southern Mississippi” — Bill Triplett of Vicksburg — “we were interested in who threw the ball like an aspirin. He was just what Coach Johnny Vaught needs, but Duffy Daughtery came and got him.” Unfortunately, “when we find one — one of the better ones — he wants to go to the Big Ten.”¹⁷

¹⁷ John Vaught, *Rebel Coach: My Football Family* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1972), 6 (first quotation); Brady, “Dixie Football Turns Color,” C4 (second quotation); Brady, “Ole Miss Awaits Government Check, Says Good Negro Athletes Leave State,” *WP*, April 1, 1967, D1 (third through fifth quotations).

Not that TWIs were all that upset this black talent was getting away. If anything, the pipeline of black athletes out of the South to northern programs, or shunted to the traditional powers of black football, made evasion simpler. Now, HEW was forcing them to focus on these homegrown athletes by at least giving them an honest look. But many coaches and administrators simply refused to play along. With race subtracted as an automatic disqualifier, they sought a new excuse for maintaining all-white teams: they found it in an unlikely place — academics. “Like all coaches,” Auburn athletics director Jeff Beard attested, “ours want good athletes and scholars.” And, his staff reported to him, “Negroes often are better athletically than academically.” Indeed, the allegedly poor scholastic record of black recruits was repeatedly held against them while similar (or worse) deficiencies were papered over for white ones. Although “there are some unpolished diamonds in all schools,” Memphis State president Cecil Humphreys admitted, it was a matter of quality over quantity for most administrators: the risks were far too great, as they saw them, to grant a black prospect a scholarship only to see him fail academically. “It’s no good kidding ourselves,” Florida president Stephen O’Connell declared. “The Negroes who have been able to meet our entrance requirements have not been athletes.” Porter Fortune, Williams’ successor at Ole Miss, claimed that “it’s not easy to find Negro athletes who can meet our entrance requirements.” Paul “Bear” Bryant reported to Alabama president Frank Rose that “we have not actively attempted to recruit any colored athletes in the State because we have had none that we felt qualified both athletically and academically.”¹⁸

Even Dodd, in a statement to Brady just ten months after Daugherty scooped Pitts, exclaimed

¹⁸ Brady, “Dixie Schools Slow Down on Sports Integration,” *WP*, June 11, 1967, D7 (first and second quotations); Robert Johnson, “Good Evening!,” *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, July 6, 1964, clipping found in Folder 48, Box 4, Humphreys Presidential Collection (third quotation); “Negroes Can’t Qualify — SEC Official,” *Charlotte Observer*, January 26, 1968, A29 (fourth and fifth quotations); Paul W. Bryant to Frank A. Rose and Jeff Bennett, memorandum, March 20, 1967, Folder “Athletics Department 1967,” Box 2, 084-078, Rose Papers (sixth quotation).

how “Georgia Tech will recruit any athlete we feel is good enough both athletically and in school.” Yet finding that athlete, he insisted with his next breath, was like searching for the proverbial needle in a haystack. He claimed that he had recently attempted to recruit a black athlete from south Georgia — only to see him fall short of Tech’s lofty academic entrance requirements. Harrison advised Brady that, when this recruit took his entrance exam, “his score was not only low, it was very low.” These results suggested to him that this athlete “was not prepared by the school he had” to be a student at an engineering institute: “their teachers and schools are not good enough . . . and every student at Tech must take mathematics through calculus, and physics and chemistry.” Since “many [black] high schools do not even offer those subjects,” he contended, “I think it will be quite a while” before an athlete of color might qualify to compete at Georgia Tech. For his part, Brady was mystified by these “palpable fictions.” “The nonsense that homegrown Negro athletes cannot qualify academically at Southern colleges, when they gain admittance to higher-rated institutions in other areas of the country,” he observed ruefully, “would be laughable if it were not so tragic.” A tragedy, yes, but one that some administrators — and even a few boosters — were beginning to regard as unsustainable.¹⁹

II

In late March 1967, a pair of HEW field agents visited the Georgia campus to review the pace of that university’s compliance efforts. As Brady would report later that spring, their review of its athletics program proved “much less than enthusiastic” — a judgment that resulted largely from the agents’ discussion with UGA athletics director Joel Eaves, whose resistance to recruiting African Americans

¹⁹ Brady, “Dixie Football Turns Color,” C4 (first, seventh, and eighth quotations); Brady, “Georgia School System Limits Negro Prospects,” *WP*, July 11, 1967, D2 (second through sixth quotations). See also Brady, “Ga. Tech’s \$398,679 Elude Negro Athletes,” *WP*, July 11, 1967, D2.

was vehement. In fact, his adamance was so emphatic that word of it funneled back to his president, O. C. Aderhold, who was three-and-a-half months from retirement. “It has been reported to me,” he wrote Eaves in early April, “that as a result of their conversation with you, ‘you or a coach’ were reported to have said that we would not recruit Negroes for the purpose of awarding them athletic grants-in-aid.” While an assistant “assures me that he heard you make no such statement,” Aderhold was unconvinced: he was well acquainted with Eaves’ position and the conviction with which he had charged his department — particularly his young head football coach, Vince Dooley — to enforce it. The president appreciated the potential consequences of such truculence; his athletics director evidently did not. Since its 1961 integration, he instructed Eaves, the university had operated “under a court order not to indulge in any act of discrimination on the basis of race, creed, or color” — which similarly “applies to all phases of the University, including its program of intercollegiate athletics.” Legally, UGA could not violate this injunction, nor run afoul of HEW and its Title VI compliance efforts. Consequently, he ordered that “all aspects” of Bulldog athletics, “including the recruiting of prospective student athletes who will be placed on grants-in-aid, will be conducted without regard to race, creed, or color.” So vital was this directive, to his mind, that he admonished Eaves to “bring the contents of this letter to the attention of all members of your staff” — especially Dooley and his assistants — so that the university might prove itself equal to the task of integration.²⁰

Yet Aderhold didn’t trust Eaves to do so. After all, Eaves could only muster a noncommittal reaction to any speculation that African Americans might suit up at UGA in the near future. “We will

²⁰ Brady, “Dixie Schools Slow Down on Sports Integration,” D7 (first quotation); O. C. Aderhold to Joel Eaves, April 8, 1967, Folder “Athletic Association (1969),” Box 13, Frederick C. Davison Papers, UGA (second through seventh quotations).

expand our scouting of Negro athletes,” he stated. “They will be seriously considered, if qualified.”²¹ So, Aderhold took it upon himself, in his last appearance before the Athletic Association Board of Directors in early May, to explain the “facts of life” to its members about recruiting blacks. He told them, as plainly as he could, that the university should begin pursuing athletes of color as soon as possible — in particular all of those who were leaving the state to play on northern teams. It was an odd time for Aderhold to declare his true feelings on the matter — he had one foot already out the door — but his plea for a change in direction registered an impact on a few board members, none more so than Harold Walker. Lockheed’s chief counsel at its suburban Atlanta division, Walker was a Bulldog through-and-through; he hadn’t missed a home game since the mid-twenties, when his father, Clifford, then serving as the state’s 61st governor, started taking him. And, as he confided to Aderhold after this meeting, “my basic views on the race question stem from the same sort of environment and background as the great majority of other native Georgians.” But, for almost a year, he was the most outspoken advocate of recruiting black prospects in the Athletic Association. “I am simply ready and willing,” he declared, “to face up to the fact that, whether we like it or not, we are living in this century and not the past one.” Part of living in a changed time was acknowledging that times were changed. “I am strongly opposed to the willful waste of natural resources in any form and, as I see it, this is exactly what our policy has amounted to with respect to ignoring these negro athletes who are qualified to enter the University and to represent it creditably, both on and off the playing field.” It was “just plain silly,” then, for UGA “to sit back and watch Michigan State rise to the top of the heap in football, almost entirely by virtue of the talented colored athletes they have

²¹ Brady, “Dixie Schools Slow Down on Sports Integration, D7 (quotation). There does seem to be some evidence that Eaves did, at least, notify his department of nondiscrimination policies; see Footnote 25.

recruited from this section of the country, without any effort on our part to keep them at home.”

And Walker knew of one local black athlete who did want to stay at home in Georgia. James Hurley graduated with honors from Atlanta’s segregated Harper High, then went onto to Phillips Andover Academy in Massachusetts for a postgraduate year, where, Walker noted, he proved himself “tops in every respect.” Moreover, he informed Aderhold, “I am told that Hurley is an outstanding [running] back, with all the requisites of size, speed, etc., to play Southeastern Conference football,” having drawn attention from both Michigan State and Notre Dame. However, “he has always wanted to attend one college” — Georgia. So far as he could tell, “I doubt seriously if we will have a better all-around applicant in this category any time soon.” All that was required was the will to act. “It occurs to me that if we really want to enter this field gracefully now, instead of waiting to be inevitably dragged in by the heels, kicking and screaming, at some later date, we should give very serious consideration to enrolling this boy on some basis or other.” With a prospect who showed, athletically *and* academically, that “he is not an ordinary youngster,” “it seems possible to me that this case presents us with an almost providential opportunity to begin the solving of a complex problem which I believe we are all ready to admit that we must face up to, sooner or later.”²²

Sooner came that August, when Hurley arrived on campus. Before even stepping foot in a classroom, he won a coveted spot on the freshman football team. This occurrence, in and of itself, seemed, at first glance, like a step toward precisely the sort of change that Walker had championed. But appearances were deceiving. Journalist Charlayne Hunter, who, together with Hamilton Holmes, integrated UGA in January 1961, reported in the *New York Times* how, “as the year wore on and

²² Harold M. Walker to O. C. Aderhold, May 16, 1967, Folder “Athletic Board, 1964-67,” Box 27, Chancellor’s Subject Files (quotations).

[Hurley] began looking with anticipation toward playing with the Bulldogs, a sympathetic coach called him aside one day and told him that Georgia would probably dress him, but that if he was really serious about playing football, he'd better look elsewhere." Consequently, by the next spring, "Vanderbilt offered him a scholarship — and a chance to play — and he took it."²³

Hurley's departure was a wound that wouldn't heal for Georgia's black students: one more indignity they had to endure at the hands of the university and its new president, Fred Davison. "As usual," senior Joe Sales observed of the UGA administration, "they try to token you to death." Much of their frustration with the state of affairs on campus coalesced in the Black Student Union (BSU), a group that, throughout the late sixties, sought what Sales called "a fair break" by overhauling their associations with the institution in general. "After all this time," he argued, "we still feel like aliens in a strange land." And they were beginning to raise their voices loud enough that the administration could no longer afford to ignore them. So, on the evening of January 30, 1969, the BSU hosted a two-hour forum at their house with Suthern Sims, acting dean of student affairs. Discussing a wide-ranging spate of concerns with its members — the hiring of black professors, the recruiting of black students, the creation of courses in black history — more than a half-hour was devoted to athletics. Sims reported to his superiors how they expressed "bitterness over the fact that no black athlete had been signed" to date to an athletic grant-in-aid "and that Jim Hurley had been denied a scholarship even though he played on the Varsity Freshman Team." More than anything else, in his view, "they seemed to be saying that they wanted black role models at the various levels (administration, faculty,

²³ Joan Paul, Richard V. McGhee, and Helen Fant, "The Arrival and Ascendance of Black Athletes in the Southeastern Conference, 1966-1980," *Phylon* 45 (1984): 284-97, esp. 285; Charlayne Hunter, "After Nine Years — A Homecoming for the First Black Girl at the University of Georgia," *New York Times Magazine*, January 25, 1970, 58 (quotations).

staff, student body) in the University community,” repeatedly asking him, “What is the University doing to insure the meaningfulness of our education?” While they were in favor of “first attacking the problems through the proper channels,” he judged them “extremely disenchanting and pessimistic that anything would or could be done in the areas of their concerns.” Nevertheless, “many of their concerns are justifiable and . . . we would be wise to not only discuss them but to act.” “I would certainly hate for us to have a confrontation,” he warned, “when we could avoid it with some discussion, planning, and action.”²⁴

Yet compromise wasn't what Davison had in mind. A month after their session with Sims, the BSU sent the president a 22-point set of demands aimed at “fostering a sense of group identity among black students” — chief of which was “the active recruitment of black scholars and athletes.” “We demand no more than what we deserve,” they argued, “and we will settle for no less than for what we demand.” To Davison, even what these black students deserved by virtue of their status as students was far too much to ask. “As President,” he pledged to BSU leader Robert Bentham, “I will always be deeply interested in helping students as individuals or groups solve or adjust to the many problems they may face while attending the University of Georgia.” That said, as the BSU was “not an officially recognized campus organization,” he was beholden to neither principle nor precedent in dealing with its members — a caveat that recast this response to their demands as something akin to an indulgence. One by one, he turned down their requests for a black academic advisor, a program to attract African-born students, even part-time jobs for black students at the library. All of which prepared the ground for his refusal to authorize any special recruiting of black athletes, insisting that

²⁴ Hunter, “After Nine Years —,” 53 (first through third quotations); O. Suthern Sims, Jr., to George Parthemos, memorandum, January 31, 1969, Folder “B. S. U.,” Box 55, Davison Papers (fourth through tenth quotations).

“Eaves has advised all coaches” that UGA “would recruit regardless of race, creed, or color.” Balking at the idea that the problem was in execution, not policy, he showed himself to be every bit as dubious as Eaves of the necessity for racial diversity in the Bulldog ranks — Title VI be damned. Seeking refuge instead in the well-worn habits of tokenism, he boasted how, with 21 in-state black prospects previously “screened and evaluated by our coaches,” “six Negro athletes have been offered full scholarships (three in football, two in track, and one in basketball) or would have been had they been academically eligible.” Still, that sounded like progress to his ears. To Hunter, by contrast, “this sounded vaguely reminiscent of the series of technicalities on which Hamilton and I were denied admission to the university for a year and a half.”²⁵

Equivocation, then, remained the official policy of the university when it came to recruiting African Americans to its football program. By October, Davison could tout the signing of one black athlete, Ron Hogue, to a basketball scholarship. Yet he reiterated to HEW field agents that, in using a “recruiting procedure” which contacted “about 800 high school athletes, 400 coaches, and many principals and counselors every year,” Dooley and his coaching staff were unable to turn up a single eligible black prospect since running Hurley off a year-and-a-half earlier. Never mind that one of the athletes they scouted, a quarterback from Gainesville, Florida, named Eddie McAshan, became the first athlete of color signed to a grant-in-aid at Georgia Tech. It went without saying that McAshan’s clearance to enroll there should have made any attempt to admit him at UGA a snap. But the failure to make the slightest effort to do so evinced how easily institution heads like Davison could slough off the onus of Title VI compliance: the empty enforcement effort by HEW hastened empty gestures

²⁵ Members of the Black Student Union to Fred C. Davison, February 26, 1969 (first through third quotations); Fred C. Davison to Robert Bentham, March 8, 1969 (fourth through twelfth quotations); both in Folder “B. S. U.,” Box 55, Davison Papers; Hunter, “After Nine Years —,” 63 (thirteenth quotation).

from administrators and coaches, who still cynically mocked the basic urgency undergirding this law. When the penalty for noncompliance wasn't a revocation of funds, as Morgan had urged, but stern assurance of further review, TWIs could discriminate all they wanted with relative impunity. Time seemed to be on their side, too. "Getting Negroes who qualify," Auburn's Jeff Beard announced, "is going to be gradual . . . a matter of time." Yet, as it began a second round of compliance reviews in 1969, under a new Nixon administration abetted by southern conservatives, HEW would push further in desegregating the South's TWIs, football and all, than both administrators and coaches could ever have dreamed — or feared. Gradualism in athletic integration was about to be relegated to the past.²⁶

III

"Every student shakes with the same pair of dice": this "proposition" was how Mississippi State president William Giles described his university's desegregation policy to HEW's regional chief, Paul Rilling, in April 1969. When field agents from Rilling's Atlanta office visited Starkville, from December 16 to 18, 1968, what they found didn't surprise them. The color line had been poked and prodded, but not pierced. Progress was slowgoing in addressing the lingering inequities in recruiting African Americans to both its academic and athletic programs. And it didn't appear that Giles or his administration had any real plans for reversing these trends. Now, after four months of delay, Giles was at last arguing his side, reassuring Rilling that the central aim of this "proposition" was "not exclusion" of black undergraduates, "but rather standards" which enabled them "to profit from the instruction of this institution." Lip service, indeed: truth be told, Mississippi State was unprepared

²⁶ Fred C. Davison, Draft Response to HEW Findings, undated [October 1969], Folder "Health, Education, and Welfare, Department of (1967)," Box 32, Davison Papers (first and second quotations); Brady, "Dixie Schools Slow Down on Sports Integration," D7 (third quotation).

to see African Americans competing for opportunity alongside whites in its classrooms. The gridiron was now another story. There, he reported, Rilling's information that segregation was still intact was "erroneous, or at least out of date." On December 18, one day — coincidentally? — before the field agents met with Giles and the state Board of Trustees in Jackson "to give a critique of the visits," "announcement was made in the press and over radio and television of our having signed two Negro athletes to Southeastern Conference grants-in-aid." "The story was well covered," he noted wryly. "I hardly see how your staff members missed it."²⁷

Giles could afford to be a wee bit surly, or so he thought. HEW's campus visit came in the waning days of the crusading Johnson administration: a month after leaving Starkville, these same agents would report to a new, Nixon administration, whose marching orders on desegregation were supposedly far different from their predecessors. For starters, the overwhelming expectation from all sides was that Title VI enforcement would be scaled back sharply, given over to just the sort of "benign neglect" that Nixon advisor Daniel Patrick Moynihan suggested the issue of race deserved. What Moynihan saw as "extraordinary progress" for African Americans was regarded by those in the Johnson camp as unfinished work. The judgment of outgoing HEW Commissioner of Education, Harold Howe, II, that "we haven't gone far enough" supplied a rueful epitaph for all that white southern educators like Giles giddily presumed would disappear with the Johnson presidency: excessive federal oversight; aggressive restrictions placed on a university's power to conduct its own affairs; unmitigable support for civil rights causes. "I think we had to dive in and do it," said Howe

²⁷ William L. Giles to Paul M. Rilling, draft letter, April 15, 1969, Folder "U. S. Government — HEW — Civil Rights," Box 53, William L. Giles Presidential Papers, MSU (quotations). At least one of the black prospects to which Giles references was Frank Dowsing of Tupelo, Mississippi, who originally committed to Alabama before changing his mind and staying in state. See "'Must Tide Negro Be O. J. Simpson?,'" *AC*, December 20, 1968, 70.

of Title VI enforcement, “and that’s what we did.” His defense of HEW’s record merely highlighted what measured progress the Johnson administration managed on this score, which, as LBJ admitted two months prior to leaving office, placed desegregation “nowhere in sight of where we must be before we can rest.” A respite from HEW activism, though, was exactly what TWIs yearned — and they believed they would get it with Richard Nixon in the White House. A man who owed his presidency to the strategic support of southern Republicans, especially Strom Thurmond, surely wouldn’t abide such strident civil rights enforcement on his watch. Settling into office, it appeared that a price of Nixon’s “Southern Strategy” was, as Rilling mournfully surmised, that “this Administration will not enforce Title VI with vigor and consistency.” Debts had to be repaid.²⁸

Knowing all this, Giles felt reasonably comfortable in flouting HEW guidelines, proclaiming to Rilling that, “since this barrier is broken” in Mississippi State football, he would make certain that “our coaching staff are at liberty to visit those schools where the prospects are, white or black,” rather than waste their time on every high school in the state — even those “where they do not have prospects” — simply because Title VI dictates required it. A directive which, if it stood, would wrest control of gridiron integration from federal bureaucrats in Atlanta, only to put it back in the hands of the very Mississippi State coaches who resisted black athletes in the first place. Autonomy was now the name of the game and nowhere did TWIs anticipate greater latitude than in interpreting their legal obligations under Title VI, believing a Nixon administration would grant them ample leeway so as to desegregate on their own timetable rather than that of HEW. Giles counseled patience to Rilling

²⁸ Peter Kihiss, “‘Benign Neglect’ on Race Is Proposed By Moynihan,” *NYT*, March 1, 1970, 1 (first and second quotations); “Howe Foresees ‘Slow Progress’ in Desegregation,” *NYT*, November 15, 1968, 20 (third and fourth quotations); Roy Reed, “Johnson, In City, Challenges G. O. P. on Rights Record,” *NYT*, November 20, 1968, 1 (fifth quotation); Reg Murphy and Hal Gulliver, *The Southern Strategy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), 1-20; John Herbers, “2 Quit at H. E. W. Over Civil Rights,” *NYT*, March 4, 1970, 1 (sixth quotation).

in awaiting any change in race relations on campus as a result of Title VI compliance — or in seeing it from his own administration. “Though strong and real,” he argued, “this thing” — racial progress — “is delicate and frangible. We prefer to nurture and let it grow. We think you can break it with too much talk.” Not that he, nor anyone else in the university’s power structure, was talking about change: “we do not believe that anything can be gained — and that much can be lost — by speculating on the future.” Just talking about the future, it seemed, made it all the more inevitable.²⁹

At the statewide level in Mississippi, too, M. M. Roberts — chair of the Board of Trustees, to whom Giles and every other institution head in the state system reported — informed Rilling that “every effort will be made to comply with the law as we understand it; and we believe that is now being done with sufficient academic efficiency as your department has a right to require.” In other words: don’t hold your breath. Roberts, an inveterate segregationist, didn’t believe HEW had much right to require anything at all of him, his board, or his universities. Nor did he think Nixon would ultimately require that much, either: a presumption based on his campaign rhetoric on desegregating public schools, *not* any specific knowledge of what his administration had in mind for the South’s colleges and universities. In fact, Nixon, who would label himself “one of the greatest desegregators” ever, decided before taking office that white southerners deserved a break. “It’s my philosophy,” he told his top aides, “that it’s best to go with a low profile — I don’t believe in kicking the South around.” He loathed the holdover mentality of Johnson era true believers who, as his assistant John Ehrlichman explained, “persisted in rubbing people’s noses in a social mess that wasn’t their fault.” Demanding that “we won’t brag or try to make political points from desegregation,” the president

²⁹ William L. Giles to Paul M. Rilling, draft letter, April 15, 1969, Folder “U. S. Government — HEW — Civil Rights,” Box 53, Giles Presidential Papers (quotations).

directed his administration to “do what the law requires — nothing more.” His attorney general, John Mitchell, similarly instructed a gathering of southern educators to “watch what we do instead of what we say.” And, yet, there developed an ineluctable disconnect between their rhetoric and their action. Because what the Nixon administration was actually *doing* — refusing to cut off federal funding to southern school districts in violation of the law; giving the worst offenders additional time to file their long-past-due desegregation plans; forcing out those HEW officials in its Atlanta office who were considered knee-jerk liberals — was, as the historian Matthew Lassiter writes, “offering little more than rhetorical comfort and temporary delay” to white southerners, “holding out false hope that racial segregation could be maintained.”³⁰

The problem was that no one could say for certain what Nixon’s desegregation policy was. “A hint here, a vague something there, a shadow glimpsed out of the corner of the eye,” was how one observer described it. Beyond that, within HEW, its secretary, Robert Finch, and his staff were “holding to the letter and the spirit” of Title VI, asserting responsibility to the law. Yet, as columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak reported, “Southern Republicans . . . will not be satisfied with band-aids instead of major surgery.” Whatever Nixon’s diagnosis for the law, particularly as it applied to public schools, there was no denying that, for colleges and universities, his administration proscribed the same regimen of enforcement that existed under Johnson — an approach which hardly signaled the beginning of the end for Title VI implementation, but, rather, the end of its beginning.

³⁰ M. M. Roberts to Paul M. Rilling, September 16, 1969, Folder “U. S. Government — HEW — General,” Box 53, Giles Presidential Papers (first quotation); John Ehrlichman, *Witness to Power: The Nixon Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 225 (second quotation), 231 (third and fourth quotations), 226 (fifth quotation), 227 (sixth quotation); Kenneth O’Reilly, *Nixon’s Piano: Presidents and Racial Politics from Washington to Clinton* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 290 (seventh quotation); Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 244 (eighth quotation).

An extraordinary contradiction, perhaps, but one that may well have resulted from a singular reality: African Americans were enrolled in each TWI by the time Nixon first took the oath of office. Priority rested elsewhere. What's more, in allowing enforcement to continue, his administration fortified all the zealotry and social experimentation that Nixon said he so bitterly opposed. Yet James Farmer, the co-founder of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), who became assistant secretary at HEW in 1969, believed the administration's contradictions of policy "in the civil rights area" originated in Nixon's own profound contradictions of character. "He was capable of doing very bad things and very good things with equal facility," Farmer posited, "because he believed in nothing." Expedience, *not* ideology, reigned.³¹

Whatever the policy shortcomings — and there were numerous, including what ousted OCR director Leon Panetta would call a lack of "moral leadership" on civil rights — these didn't matter to TWIs half as much as the Nixon administration's choice to throttle forward on desegregation. Imagine Giles' chagrin, for instance, when, in December 1969, Rillings' colleague, Dewey E. Dodds, came back to him to say that Mississippi State hadn't done *enough* to satisfy its Title VI obligations. Sure, the signing of two black football players was among a handful of "positive results" for which Dodds felt Giles' institution was "to be commended." But these developments amounted to a good start, not a good finish, for Mississippi State's desegregation efforts. Dodds sought hard proof of "additional success" in granting football scholarships to other African Americans since Giles' April letter — "the names of black athletes contacted for recruitment purposes"; "the names of Negro

³¹ Herbers, "Ambiguous Moves on Desegregation," *NYT*, April 6, 1969, E7 (first quotation); Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Last Minute Appeal Prevents Clash Between White House and Dixie GOP," *WP*, March 5, 1969, A15 (second quotation); Gerald S. and Deborah H. Strober, *Nixon: An Oral History of His Presidency* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 114 (third and fourth quotations).

students offered athletic grants-in-aid”; “the number awarded.” Evidence, in sum, that attested to the sincerity of Mississippi State’s intentions to integrate athletes of color into its program: were its coaches really committed to recruiting the best athletic talent or just that which was white? Similarly, in graduate admissions, in membership to student-led organizations, even in dorm assignments, Dodds wanted Giles to prove that black students weren’t rolling a pair of weighted dice, reminding him that “the University has the legal responsibility to carry out its own affirmative program which will effectively disestablish past patterns of racial segregation.”³²

Not exactly the language of an administration looking to appease hard-bitten segregationists — whites like Roberts, who, upon news of Dodds’ letter, railed that “accelerated changes must do violence” to the basic “needs” of state universities like Mississippi State. For him, Dodds’ request for additional data was the subtle yet certain handiwork of an activist government. “These federal agencies do press in their respective fields,” he grouched, “to the detriment of quality education.” So far as he could tell, “we are doing everything expected of us under the law” — or, more accurately, everything they expected this new administration to expect of them under the law — “but these federal agencies are accustomed to the Rooseveltian red tape which tends to engulf us in details beyond capacity.” That said, if the Nixon administration would press on in desegregating TWIs, then “we must give serious consideration thereto.” All of which pointed to a fundamental realization that swept over Roberts and the rest of the board: a university like Mississippi State wasn’t any likelier to strike a deal with Nixon officials than they were with Johnson ones — a shock which left Roberts

³² “Ousted Rights Aide Says Nixon Fails To Give Moral Leadership,” *NYT*, February 28, 1970, 13 (first quotation); Dewey E. Dodds to William L. Giles, December 24, 1969, Folder “Health, Education, and Welfare, October-December 1969,” Box 40, Office of the President Records: William D. McCain Subgroup, 1955-1975, USM (second through eighth quotations).

feeling as if he and the rest of the white South were hoodwinked by Candidate Nixon into thinking a restoration of the old order would occur under President Nixon. “I shall not change my views,” he wrote in early 1970, “that total integration, intermarriage, and a general socialization between the races will reduce us to a very low level in American life. To me there is no compromise but a strong central government continues to become dangerous in totalitarian trends. This makes me unhappy.” And, yet, his unhappiness was multiplied on campuses throughout the South, where HEW became an unwanted — and unanticipated — agent of change in the Nixon years; in some cases, its role was positively adversarial. In turn, gridiron integration went from a strong probability to an inevitability, leaving institution heads, athletics directors, and coaches to figure out how they might do something they had never done before: identify, recruit, and sign black athletes.³³

IV

“The continued absence of any Negroes on the athletic teams of the University,” lectured Dewey E. Dodds, “is . . . inconsistent with a nondiscriminatory athletic grant-in-aid program.” But the absence of diversity in the locker room, he averred, “can most readily be remedied by comparable recruiting efforts.” Indeed, HEW officials, like Dodds, pressed two fundamental notions about black recruiting: that signing an athlete of color was the quickest, surest step any TWI could make toward Title VI compliance; and, that it could be done virtually overnight. The first assertion was wholly ephemeral; the second proved merely impractical. And, yet, these precepts were the crux of HEW’s enforcement efforts as they related to desegregating southern football. It all came down to a matter of how rapidly

³³ M. M. Roberts to Porter L. Fortune, Jr., et al, December 27, 1969, Folder “Health, Education, and Welfare, October-December 1969,” Box 40 (first through fourth quotations); M. M. Roberts to William D. McCain, January 7, 1970, Folder “Roberts, M. M., 1969,” Box 62 (fifth quotation); both in McCain Subgroup.

a TWI could build its network of contacts. “If a coach or scout visits a predominately white high school in a city or area to hold discussions with the high school coaching staff and meet with athletes,” Dodds ordered, “visits must be arranged to the all-Negro high school in that city or area to hold discussions with coaches of its various teams and to interview prospective athletes.” Such tit-for-tat was vital given that the “recruitment for athletes by members of the athletic staff must be conducted in such a manner as to assure at least as much emphasis in recruiting Negro as white athletes.”³⁴

In spite of such instructions, most TWIs started from square one in searching out athletes of color, often relying on some unlikely sources for help. In late November 1970, for instance, Florida president Stephen O’Connell received a phone call from his wife’s cousin in Iowa. An ear always to the ground, this relative styled himself, as O’Connell jokingly told his head coach, Doug Dickey, “an assistant recruiter for the University, so far without success.” This time, though, he called with what he thought was a solid lead on a black prep star in Sioux City that Dickey should investigate for himself. Intrigued, O’Connell passed the prospect’s name on to Dickey, with the pledge that “I will let you determine whether it is worth pursuing.” But, he noted, “this young man is an all-State high school player and is being recruited by Notre Dame as well as other northwestern schools.” A month later, the cousin phoned again with the name of another black player, which O’Connell, again, relayed to Dickey. This prospect, an All-American at Iowa Central Community College, was offered a scholarship to Florida State. If their rival was interested enough in him to trek all the way to wintry

³⁴ Dewey E. Dodds to William D. McCain, February 18, 1969, Folder “HEW Letter, 1971-72,” Box 40, McCain Subgroup (quotations). The language of this letter is fairly standard to all HEW instructions on recruiting.

Iowa, he said, nudging Dickey out the door, then “you might want to consider” doing the same.³⁵

This exchange reveals some important truths about the recruitment of African Americans to the Florida program at the dawn of the seventies. Only that season did the Gators’ first black players, Willie Jackson and Leonard George, rise to the varsity level, ushering Florida into the swelling ranks of the South’s integrated teams. But that didn’t mean that its coaches knew any better than they did before how to find and evaluate black talent: that O’Connell valued a relative’s advice as a hot tip signaled how its efforts to locate black athletes were little more than a shot in the dark. Family ties aside, he had further reasons to lend some credence to this cousin’s eager beaver legwork. Earlier that year, HEW agents concluded, after visiting Gainesville, that a conspicuous “paucity of Negro faculty and students and athletes” was hindering attempts “to change the image of the University from all white to that of a fully desegregated university.” Though “it seems apparent that efforts are being made to recruit Negro students in a manner comparable” to that of whites, HEW pressed O’Connell to place “special emphasis” on this search, particularly in finding “members of minority groups who have been deprived of adequate preparation for college.” Reading over these conclusions, O’Connell determined that “our responsibilities extend beyond the simple fulfillment of the requirements of the Civil Rights Act”: regardless of his ardent conservatism while a justice on the state Supreme Court in the fifties and sixties, he framed HEW’s findings as both a legal and moral test of his university’s commitment to diversity. “As we proceed to insure our compliance with the Civil Rights Act, and the regulations of HEW,” he proclaimed, “it ought to be obvious to all the administrative decisions and actions are not in themselves sufficient to create the attitudes and reflect the personal relationships

³⁵ Stephen C. O’Connell to Doug Dickey, November 24, 1970 (first through third quotations); Stephen C. O’Connell to Doug Dickey, December 17, 1970 (fourth quotation); both in Folder “Recruiting, Negro Athletes, 1967-1971,” Box 25, Stephen C. O’Connell Presidential Papers, UF.

between persons of different races, colors and national origins that are essential to producing acceptance and proper treatment of and by persons of these different groups on this campus. It requires a personal effort on the part of all here to so act as to be worthy of acceptance as equals and to so treat others that they are and feel accepted as equals.”³⁶

A charming notion, indeed, but it was the very denial of this standard by O’Connell’s football program that contributed, in part, to the image problems his university suffered. Since January 1967, Florida’s coaching staff— then under the leadership of Ray Graves, who retired in late 1969 to serve as athletics director — had been visiting black high schools across the state in search of athletes. The depth of their efforts, however, was undermined by a judgment that African Americans were unequal to the task of being a college student *and* a college athlete. This assumption was reinforced when, that November, Graves’ top assistant, Gene Ellenson, pursued a highly-rated black recruit from Jacksonville. The coach used all the usual steps “in trying to sign him to a grant-in-aid”: “called him twice on the phone”; “had lunch with him in the school cafeteria”; “had him as my guest at . . . the most fashionable restaurant on Jacksonville Beach.” Then Ellenson received his transcript, at which time “I made a decision to drop him.” “Our coaching staff, after viewing your game films, had voted to offer you a scholarship,” he wrote the recruit, but, “I am afraid that your scholastic average is just not high enough for admittance here.” This was, he averred, “a real shame,” but not as shameful, in his eyes, as admitting someone who couldn’t cut it academically. Instead, the young man signed with Miami. No matter to O’Connell. “We sign only those who can meet the standards required of other

³⁶ Dewey E. Dodds to Stephen C. O’Connell, January 28, 1970, Folder “Controversies: Civil Rights, 1969-73” (1 of 2) (first through fifth quotations); Stephen C. O’Connell to Members of the Administrative Council and HEW Participants, memorandum, February 18, 1970 (sixth quotation); Stephen C. O’Connell, Statement on HEW Team Report, undated [circa February 1970] (seventh quotation); both in Folder “Controversies: Civil Rights, 1969-73” (2 of 2); all in Box 37, O’Connell Presidential Papers.

students. Only thus can we keep and maintain a fair and steady course that is indefensible.”³⁷

It also supplied the university with a convenient excuse not to diversify its football roster, which its coaches invoked at every turn. Seven months after Ellenson drafted this rejection letter, in June 1968, Graves ordered a full accounting of the black prospects his staff had scouted, in accord with the first round of HEW compliance reviews. One after another, his assistants informed him that not a single black recruit in the whole state could meet the university’s standards. “I have talked with a lot of good colored athletes,” one coach reported, “but the vast majority do not have the academic background to be further considered.” Another assistant bragged that “last year we had several colored boys from over the State visit our campus, see some of our football games, and eat at our training table.” But not a one of them was given any real consideration since “no prospects . . . could meet our entrance requirements.” In submitting an analysis of the six blacks he tracked in Miami Beach, still another coach advised that none of them warranted a serious look: “not fast” was his complaint about one kid; another “looks like a fair player,” but wasn’t smart enough; “no grades” was his verdict on two other boys. Glancing over his notes, one more assistant tendered perhaps the most revealing conclusion of all: “I was not impressed with any [black athletes] as SEC football material.” For his part, O’Connell clung fast to his own explanation. “The complaint of all who have spoken on the matter of the Negro athlete,” he argued in January 1969, “has been that our scholastic requirements are such as almost to prohibit our signing Negro athletes.” Over his own objections — he advised Dodds he was dubious desegregation was achievable “through administrative decree or

³⁷ Gene Ellenson to Ray Graves, June 5, 1968 (first through fifth quotations); Gene Ellenson to [name redacted], November 20, 1967 (sixth and seventh quotations); Stephen C. O’Connell to Dean Boggs, January 14, 1969 (eighth quotation); all in Folder “Recruiting, Negro Athletes, 1967-1971,” Box 25, O’Connell Presidential Papers.

fiat” — he nevertheless allowed a limited number of exceptions, all in the name of racial diversity. So, when Graves and his staff signed their first black players — Jackson and George — later that spring, they did so only after receiving a pair of special waivers from the Registrar, thereby branding the very circumstances of their admission with the stigma of inequality.³⁸

Yet, with HEW breathing down his neck, O’Connell came to see extraordinary measures — “experimental programs,” in his words — as the only available means by which Florida could reach its diversity goals. If the institution had an image problem, then he would recast such exemptions as a sign that Florida was a place interested in opportunity for all, nowhere more so than in football. While even Graves trotted out the old party line — that his program, now in Dickey’s hands, would “recruit as many and any black athletes” as it could, so long as they “meet the entrance requirements” — O’Connell cheerfully told one black recruit around the time he was fielding calls from his cousin that “whatever you ultimately decide to be and do, you can prepare for it here.” Making the hard sell, the president promised him that Dickey and his staff “will be dedicated first to your success as a student and second to assisting you to become the greatest athlete your capacity and good coaching can produce.” Moreover, if he should “decide to become a Gator,” O’Connell argued, he would join a football program that “contributes to the morale of all, and aids the progress of this University.”³⁹

³⁸ Don Brown to Ray Graves, June 5, 1968 (first quotation); Rabbit Smith to Ray Graves, June 10, 1968 (second and third quotations); Bubba McGowen to Ray Graves, June 4, 1968 (fourth through sixth quotations); Lindy Infante to Ray Graves, June 4, 1968 (seventh quotation); all in Folder “Recruiting, Negro Athletes, 1967-1971,” Box 25; Stephen C. O’Connell to Dewey E. Dodds, February 4, 1970, Folder “Controversies: Civil Rights, 1969-73” (1 of 2), Box 37 (eighth quotation); all in O’Connell Presidential Papers; Julian M. Pleasants, *Gator Tales: An Oral History of the University of Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), 123.

³⁹ Stephen C. O’Connell to Thomas R. Ames, March 18, 1970 (first quotation); Ray Graves to Carl Lispius, September 9, 1971 (second quotation); both in Folder “Student Affairs — Minority Matters: Recruitment, 1970-72,” Box 71; Stephen C. O’Connell to [name redacted], December 7, 1970, Folder “Recruiting, Negro Athletes, 1967-1971,” Box 25 (second through fifth quotations); all in O’Connell Presidential Papers.

While Dickey and his coaches failed to win over this athlete, such acts of personal diplomacy, in O’Connell’s mind, paid dividends as an increasing number of African Americans did choose to become Gators. His letter was likewise illustrative of the lengths to which Florida was quickly trying to make up ground in recruiting black athletes, hastily building networks and lines of communication with black high school coaches, who were treated as purveyors of talent, so that the university might partially satisfy HEW demands that its policies “encourage the enrollment of and participation of minority groups in programs throughout the institution.” However enthusiastically he committed his university to this endeavor, O’Connell privately felt HEW expected too much too quickly of Florida — that desegregation couldn’t be achieved overnight. “It is, of course, true,” he told one alum, “that HEW officials would like to see black enrollments . . . increase more rapidly than they are at all the previously white universities.” Black enrollment within Florida’s undergraduate programs, he admitted, “has grown slowly, but grow it has, and the rate of growth is increasing.” He boasted of “another increase” by the beginning of the 1970-71 academic year — just in time for the debut of an integrated Gator varsity. And, yet, he complained of how his assurances that “this university is . . . completely committed to the policy of nondiscrimination” hardly registered with HEW. In the service of their mission, he griped, its officials were blind to the subtle signs of progress and “by no means consistent in their opinions and advice as to how best to speed the process.”⁴⁰

Measuring progress was an uneven proposition, yes, but the onus of making progress rested on the individual institutions, not HEW. Deflections like these belied the inevitable resignation that

⁴⁰ Dewey E. Dodds to Stephen C. O’Connell, January 28, 1970, Folder “Controversies: Civil Rights, 1969-73” (1 of 2), Box 37 (first quotation); Stephen C. O’Connell to Thomas R. Ames, March 18, 1970, Folder “Student Affairs — Minority Matters: Recruitment, 1970-72,” Box 71 (second through sixth quotations); both in O’Connell Presidential Papers.

accompanied Title VI compliance. “The success of our University in achieving its objectives in the field of Civil Rights,” O’Connell resolved, “will depend upon the combined efforts of faculty, staff and students as well as administration.” True, but, Dodds advised him, the challenge “to disestablish past patterns of segregation” was to match words with actions. The process moved forward *only* if the university itself advanced it. One faculty member reminded O’Connell that “references in the HEW report to the racial climate at the University” should pinpoint “the increasing evidences of sensitivity” among black students to any suggestion the institution was less than enthusiastic to bring them into the life of the campus. Hiding behind bureaucratic vagaries wouldn’t do. Desegregation had to be executed as authentically as possible. Otherwise, the very coalescence of these various constituencies represented little more than window-dressing, tailoring what Dodds labeled “these patterns of the past” to match the fashions of the day.⁴¹

V

When HEW agents came calling in July of 1969, Virginia president Edgar Finley Shannon knew his university was bound to have a rough go of it. With only 17 black undergraduates, compared to more than 4500 whites, it was abundantly clear that integration at UVa had occurred in name only. This ratio, Charlottesville regional chief Eloise Severinson chided him in early September, was “so small as to have little or no significance.” The “purposes and intents” of nondiscriminatory policies, she bitterly noted, were decisively contradicted “if the student population continues to reflect the formerly

⁴¹ Stephen C. O’Connell to Members of the Administrative Council and HEW Participants, memorandum, February 18, 1970, Folder “Controversies: Civil Rights, 1969-73” (2 of 2) (first quotation); Dewey E. Dodds to Stephen C. O’Connell, January 28, 1970, Folder “Controversies: Civil Rights, 1969-73” (1 of 2) (second and fifth quotations); both in Box 37; Richard H. Hiers to Stephen C. O’Connell, April 3, 1970, Folder “Controversies: Songs, ‘Dixie,’ 1967-70,” Box 43 (third and fourth quotations); all in O’Connell Presidential Papers.

de jure racial identification of [the] institution.” With whole “areas” of campus life “where very little desegregation has been accomplished,” it was little wonder UVa’s image was “generally forbidding to the Negro community,” as “principals, counselors, athletic coaches, and graduating seniors” at black high schools throughout the state repeatedly expressed “disbelief . . . in their welcome at the University.” Indeed, its most pervasive public image — its football team — supplied reason enough for such skepticism: “the only Atlantic Coast Conference member which has not enrolled the first Negro athlete on an athletic grant-in-aid,” the absence of diversity on the varsity squad was “a result of what seems to the Negro to be an atmosphere unfavorable to his welcome and comfort.” Considering also how mediocre the Cavaliers were in the late sixties, whiteness evidently took precedent over winning. All of these exclusions — in academics *and* athletics — undermined what she called “the affirmative obligation” of each TWI: “to attract and to involve in the total life of the school members of racial groups historically barred from these institutions.”

Shannon himself avowed that “it is important that people from all backgrounds and from minority groups be made to feel welcome at the University.”⁴² Everything about UVa demonstrated just the opposite: “a comfortable haven where sons of the wealthy and prominent pursued pleasure,” as one writer described it, the university’s elite academic stature and exclusively white athletics were off-putting by their very nature. And, for most of the late sixties, UVa had withstood the barbs of its black critics for the indiscreet lack of color on its football team. In March 1966, for instance, the state chapter of the NAACP charged that UVa was guilty of practicing “overt racial discrimination” in awarding those athletic grants-in-aid funded by the Virginia Student Aid Foundation, the athletics

⁴² Eloise Severinson to Edgar Finley Shannon, Jr., September 5, 1969, Folder “U. S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1969-1970,” Box 60, President’s Papers, RG-2/1/2.731 (1969-1970) (quotations).

department's fundraising arm. That same month, a group called Students for Social Action picketed a Harlem Globetrotters basketball game played on campus, and sponsored by the VSAF, asserting that "discrimination in athletics points up the fact that the University has still not decided to go beyond the tokenism which the law requires." When they urged "equal and fair recruitment," allocating VSAF funds "without regard to color," Shannon promptly espoused similar principles — that recipients of athletic grants-in-aid would be "based wholly on ability and scholarship" — but nothing changed. Nearly two years later, in February 1968, HEW agents, on their first visit to campus, turned up evidence that all 104 athletic scholarships went to whites. Paul Saunier, Jr., Shannon's top deputy in charge of UVa's equal opportunity programs, pinned this disparity on black athletes themselves. That year, he claimed, four black prospects were offered grants-in-aid, yet "none of the four accepted." He pointed out how "the only Virginian in the group" — Walter Bowser of Newport News, the first athlete of color selected as the state's most outstanding prep player — turned his back on the state university by "decid[ing] to enroll at the University of Minnesota" instead: one more homegrown black star lost to the Big Ten. Nevertheless, the mere offer, Saunier posited, was a sign of UVa's newfound racial openness. "Most of the rumors about discrimination at the University are proving unfounded," he contended, "and those with any basis at all are being acted upon."⁴³

Yet such openness was chimerical. Upon word that HEW agents were due to visit again in the late summer of 1969, Saunier began constructing the illusion that the administration was actively

⁴³ Helen Dewar, "University of Va. Head Retiring," *WP*, June 9, 1974, B1 (first quotation); "Racial Bias in Sports Denied by Virginia," *WP*, March 5, 1966, E4 (second and fifth quotations); Handbill from Students for Social Action, undated [circa March 1966], Folder "Athletics — General, 1965-1966," Box 5, President's Papers, RG-2/1/2.691 (1965-1966) (third and fourth quotations); Brady, "Virginia Reports Four Negroes Rejected Athletic Scholarships," *WP*, February 8, 1968, F1 (sixth and seventh quotations); "Race Bias Refuted by Virginia U.," *WP*, May 31, 1968, B8 (seventh quotation).

pursuing diversity in its athletic ranks. Of particular concern to him was talk around the state that a fair number of black high school coaches informed HEW that “they have never seen a University of Virginia scout.” This was, of course, true, but such truth was highly damaging. So, Saunier drafted a letter, dated July 3, 1969, that the university eventually showed HEW investigators, which made it appear Shannon was aggressively advocating the integration of Cavalier athletics. Addressed to athletics director Steve Sebo, the president lauded the “earnest efforts” of, “among others,” head coach George Blackburn “to recruit black student-athletes by use of grants-in-aid financed by the Student Aid Foundation.” “It seems to me,” Shannon-cum-Saunier all-too-conveniently opined, “that a potential problem for some colleges” — like UVa — “is the fact that reports made by coaches at predominately black high schools, or coaches at schools with outstanding black athletes, may list the colleges and universities whose representatives have scouted their games or practices or made other contact with them.” Since few offers were extended to black prospects by UVa, these coaches likely underreported the activities of its scouts, making the university look as though it was doing nothing. While “we ourselves may feel that we are handling the matter properly,” Shannon ordered Sebo to maintain “accurate records of all actions in this regard,” especially “as proof if required.” As such evidence didn’t previously exist, Saunier was quite proud of his handiwork. “I hope I have written the letter,” he confided to Shannon, “in a way that I hope will pass all tests.” Indeed it did: HEW agents were so convinced of these actions that Severinson concluded the lack of diversity in UVa athletics was “not altogether due to a lack of effort on the part of the Athletic Department.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Paul Saunier, Jr., to Edgar Finley Shannon, Jr., June 30, 1969 (first and ninth quotations); Edgar Finley Shannon, Jr., to Steve Sebo, July 3, 1969 (second through eighth quotations); both in Folder “Athletics — General, 1969-1970,” Box 8; Eloise Severinson to Edgar Finley Shannon, Jr., September 5, 1969, Folder “U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1969-1970,” Box 60 (tenth quotation); all in President’s Papers, RG-2/1/2.731 (1969-1970).

Nearly a month after Saunier fashioned this letter, the university hosted a recruiting weekend for more than 50 athletic prospects — the vast majority of which were being courted by Blackburn and his staff. Among this group were four black recruits, whose invitation was made in large part to keep up appearances about how “earnest” UVa’s efforts to desegregate athletics really were. Upon receiving HEW’s findings in September, this quartet went from tokens to commodities. Within days, Zeke Fantino, UVa’s football recruiter, was talking up his program’s chances of landing these four athletes — and more. “Our coaches are now in the process of following up on the boys we already know about,” he wrote Shannon, “and will continue to work on new names of black athletes for the University.” He was highly optimistic that “we can encourage one or more of these boys to sign our grant as early as the Atlantic Coast Conference will permit.” A growing number of UVa alumni were similarly eager to snatch up these prospects. One Richmond alum, for instance, demanded his alma mater place greater emphasis on “recruiting in-state players — both white and black.” “Frankly,” he leveled with Shannon, “most alumni are getting tired of the University being defeated by non-Virginia teams with a significant number of Virginia players.” Sacrificing the whites-only preserve of Cavalier football was a small price to pay for “a more Virginia University.” Sebo assured him that “more time is being spent in the State of Virginia,” with coaches “looking for qualified athletes.” By January, in fact, the VSAF could tout the early commitment of four black recruits — John Rainey, Stanley Land, Darrell Thompson, and Harrison Davis — who, as reported in its booster newsletter, were all “from Virginia, an indication of the strong job the football staff is doing in-state.” “I chose Virginia,” said Davis, the first to sign, “because it is the state university of my state. By going there I might be a pioneer. But if I can do well maybe it will convince good athletes, and not just black athletes, that

they should stay at home.”⁴⁵

“Our main emphasis has been on recruiting in-state boys,” Fantino advised Bill Brill of *The Roanoke Times*. “We’ve been well aware of the criticism we have gotten when the good Virginia boys went elsewhere. We are realistic enough to know we won’t get them all, but we know we’re trying.” The one in-state star that the Cavaliers wanted most — Charlottesville’s own Kent Merritt, an All-American halfback at Lane High — was still up for grabs when Fantino spoke with Brill, but the latter observed that, if UVa could win him, “it will be a banner recruiting year and not because that would mean five blacks on the freshman squad.” “Speed merchants” like Merritt were in popular demand and nearly every major program in the Atlantic Coast Conference believed they could get him: indeed, North Carolina head coach Bill Dooley reported to Severinson’s office that he expected his tally of six black athletes on scholarship to increase by one when Merritt signed there. Virginia officials were keenly aware of what the loss of a hometown standout like Merritt to a league foe — especially to a hated rival like the Tarheels — would mean in terms of competition *and* public relations. They simply couldn’t afford to let him slip through their hands.⁴⁶

“The Merritt matter has a now time element,” Saunier fretted, and the clock was ticking. Certainly, securing “a black Virginia high school athlete of his caliber” would suggest to HEW that

⁴⁵ William Hobbs to Edgar Finley Shannon, Jr., July 31, 1969; Anthony Fantino to Edgar Finley Shannon, Jr., September 10, 1969 (first and second quotations); C. Eugene Angle to Edgar Finley Shannon, Jr., December 18, 1969 (third through fifth quotations); Steve Sebo to C. Eugene Angle, January 5, 1970 (sixth quotation); “Football Staff Pens Fifteen Top Prospects to Date,” *University of Virginia Athletic News*, January 1970, 1 (seventh quotation); Bill Brill, “Cavaliers Strike It Rich In Landing Black Athletes,” undated clipping [circa January 1970] (eighth quotation); all in Folder “Athletics — General, 1969-1970,” Box 8, President’s Papers, RG-2/1/2.731 (1969-1970).

⁴⁶ Brill clipping, Folder “Athletics — General, 1969-1970,” Box 8, President’s Papers, RG-2/1/2.731 (1969-1970) (quotations); Bill Dooley to Walter Rabb, memorandum, February 26, 1970, Folder “HEW: General, March 1970,” Box 51, Records of the Office of the President of the UNC System: William C. Friday Files, 1957-1986, UNC-CH. Dooley also indicates in this memorandum that he and his staff had already lost out on Harrison Davis to UVa.

the administration was serious about desegregation. It would also mean pulling out all the stops. So it fell to Saunier to lobby the state's black power brokers for help. Chief among them was Richmond physician William Ferguson Reid, the first African American elected to the Virginia State Assembly, who, in early December, called on the Merritt family at their Charlottesville home with Blackburn and a few assistant coaches in tow. His message to Merritt was clear: the sight of him in the Cavalier backfield would symbolize a giant leap forward for black Virginians. As Saunier reported it, Reid was asking him to pick up the banner for "the cause of public recognition of equality." The university had another motive in mind: to keep "this fine young man . . . in our State for his college education and further athletic training." In the recruitment of Merritt, then, both causes found useful, if unlikely and incongruous, bedfellows. Writing to Reid later that month, Saunier thanked him, on behalf of Shannon, for "what you have already done, and for whatever you can do further," to draw Merritt into the UVa program. Just because "Merritt would not be the first," he instructed, "should not lessen his interest in the University." If anything, the removal of this symbolic burden, as well as the arrival of these four other black freshmen, "will make the situation happier for him and for the increasing number of black students here." Not to mention that "the total effect" of his choosing to become a Cavalier would similarly make the university itself "more meaningful to the Negro citizens of the State." But, for Merritt himself, it would introduce him to social circles beyond his own station. "He would receive the best college education in the State," urged Saunier, "and would make more contact with the future political and cultural leaders of the State than would be possible anywhere else."⁴⁷

A black man allowed into the elite realm of white privilege: precisely what TWIs labored so

⁴⁷ Paul Saunier, Jr., to William Ferguson Reid, December 19, 1969, Folder "Athletics — General, 1969-1970," Box 8, President's Papers, RG-2/1/2.731 (1969-1970) (quotations).

long to prevent. But it wasn't honest entree — only the sort of exception institutions make when they instinctually place self-preservation before all else. Nor was Merritt valued for any talent other than his ability to tote a football, which was, naturally, the only reason the university had anything to do with him in the first place. The sheer desperation to ward off any HEW penalty made desegregation every bit as essential to the institution's well-being as segregation had once been: where UVa, like each TWI, had long exploited every available means to keep black athletes out, it was now exploiting every available means to bring them in. In this way, then, Merritt's recruitment was merely a means to an end, a gambit that portrayed UVa as engaged in "a more vigorous prosecution" of its Title VI compliance plan — just as Severinson had insisted. Imagine the relief UVa officials must have felt when, on April 7, 1970, in the living room of his parents' house, Merritt signed a grant-in-aid to play for the Cavaliers. On the other hand, for an institution that, as one student angrily protested, enjoyed "wallowing in its whiteness, like a hippopotamus in the mud," being at the mercy of a young black man's fancy was surely an uncomfortable, if humiliating, experience for its leadership. Their world had been turned on its head, so much so that they needed him more than he needed them. In fact, the frantic action preceding his signing day demonstrated that they would do whatever it took to win him so that their hallowed university might avoid the indignity of being rebuffed by an African American. So that they might save Mr. Jefferson's University from admitting what everyone — white and black — already knew: that the defense of whiteness, as much as the pursuit of knowledge, supplied the lifeblood of their institution. So that its administration might attest to one and all that, as Saunier put it, "we're not a white boys' school."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Eloise Severinson to Edgar Finley Shannon, Jr., September 5, 1969, Folder "U. S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1969-1970," Box 60, President's Papers, RG-2/1/2.731 (1969-1970) (first quotation); "Merritt Decides To Attend Virginia," *WP*, April 8, 1970, D6; Virginius Dabney, *Mr. Jefferson's University: A*

But it was — and continued to be. When Merritt and his four black teammates arrived on campus that August, they were numbered among a surge of African American undergraduates that lifted the total to 236 out of 10,800 students, thereby tripling UVa's black enrollment. It marked an attempt, Saunier informed the *Washington Post*, "to get every black student in Virginia whose record indicates he could do the work." Such paltry numbers suggested, though, that the university couldn't (or wouldn't) find many black students to fit that bill. But the freshman football team now had black players — an unsubtle distraction from the illegitimacy of its desegregation programs. The grand gesture now satisfied federal fiat. Symbols subsumed substance. Such were the cynical ploys which shaped the patterns of desegregation, not only at Virginia, but all TWIs. Though HEW's enforcement of Title VI indubitably opened the ranks of southern football to African Americans, the sort of enlightened cultural transformation which has been assigned to this development was merely cosmetic, a bid to see if, maybe just maybe, a leopard could change its spots. In turn, the creature — the bureaucracy — enshrouded by this artifice came to believe that, with its football team integrated, its legal obligations were fulfilled. One dean at East Carolina, for instance, was so bold as to advise his chancellor, Leo W. Jenkins, that "I do not believe that racial prejudice exists on this campus" as "faculty, students, and alumni are more concerned with winning teams than the color of the athlete." Precisely the problem: the thrill of victory had overwhelmed the urgency, and necessity, for diversity across the board. As a black student at Chapel Hill complained, "UNC's interest in minority students stems mainly from a desire to pacify Washington and to put forth an image of itself as a 'liberal' institution." Nevermind if black students weren't to be found in large numbers on campus. So long

History (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981), 482 (second quotation); Hank Burchard, "Black Enrollment Triples at U. of Va.," *WP*, November 7, 1970, B6 (third quotation).

as a handful prowled the sidelines on gameday, who cared?⁴⁹

VI

On October 16, 1971, Virginia Tech, staggering through a winless season under first-year head coach Charlie Coffey, welcomed Lou Holtz's William and Mary Indians to Blacksburg for the renewal of their age-old rivalry. Despite their lackluster performance thus far, the Gobblers entered this game bolstered by an air of inevitability. After all, their annual series with the Indians was a very one-sided affair: capturing their last eight meetings, Tech had won all but two since 1955. And, again this day, fate would tip its hand in their favor. Behind late in the fourth quarter, Tech scooped up two William and Mary fumbles inside the Indians' own 20-yard line in the span of a single minute. Blessed with extraordinarily short fields, Tech tailback James Barber powered the ball forward for an improbable pair of come-from-behind touchdowns, snatching a 41-30 victory from the jaws of defeat.⁵⁰

Breathing a deep sigh of relief, most of the 20,000 spectators exited Lane Stadium as jubilant about staving off an ignominious loss to William and Mary as Tech's first win. But not everyone left in a celebratory mood. Deeply distressed by all he had witnessed that afternoon, one Tech alumnus returned home from Blacksburg convinced that William and Mary wasn't the only one fumbling its way to defeat. At a time when his alma mater was looking for more black talent, he was alive to the inherent contradictions between this search and the racially divisive atmosphere the university abided

⁴⁹ Burchard, "Black Enrollment Triples at U. of Va.," B6 (first quotation); Douglas R. Jones to Leo W. Jenkins, memorandum, March 12, 1969, Folder "Student Unrest, 1969-71," Box 25, Chancellor's Subject Files, ECU (second and third quotations); Final Report on the Survey of UNC Minority Students, conducted by [the] Chancellor's Committee on the States of the Minorities and the Disadvantaged, issued October 1972, Folder "Survey: UNC Minority Students on White Campuses, 1972," Box 25, Friday Files (fourth quotation).

⁵⁰ "Virginia Tech Turns Fumbles Into Victory," *WP*, October 17, 1971, 96.

— and abetted — from start to finish on gamedays. Everything about the climate at Lane Stadium was a reaffirmation of white hegemony. Before the Gobbler team took the field, the Highty-Tighties — the regimental band of Tech’s Corps of Cadets — brought this predominately white crowd to its feet with an ebullient rendition of “Dixie,” a longstanding tradition which he, a Highty-Tighty in the fifties, now “found . . . in extremely bad taste” given its “White supremacy implications for the Black participants and spectators” and “particularly Black football recruits.” “This song,” he advised Tech president T. Marshall Hahn, was “even more disturbing because we all know that bigotry is not limited by specific prejudice.” Nor, it seemed, by specific practice: the Highty-Tighties’ performance furnished an imprimatur for a whole spectrum of overtly hostile behaviors directed at those African Americans in attendance. There was no ostensible limit to what white ticket holders felt free to do or say — from the Confederate flags they merrily waved in time with the band, to the verbal assault of black players, whether they wore a William and Mary uniform or, like Barber, a Tech one. And, far from binding Gobbler fans together in common cause around their team, “the deadly earnest interplay of song and banners” inexorably divided them, white from black. “As President of the University,” he urged Hahn, “you have the power and the justification” to ensure that “the band resume the unifying campus role they had when I was proud to be a Highty-Tighty.” Yet Hahn took a pass. “We do not believe we should prohibit the Highty-Tighties from playing a particular song such as ‘Dixie,’” he replied, “any more than we can prohibit a speaker from saying what he desires.” “Allowing maximum freedom to student organizations in the selection of speakers, songs, and other expressions” — even if those expressions were, by design, racially provocative — was paramount.⁵¹

⁵¹ Mayer Levy to T. Marshall Hahn, Jr., October 18, 1971 (first through seventh quotations); T. Marshall Hahn, Jr., to Mayer Levy, October 22, 1971 (eighth and ninth quotations); both in Folder 2028, Box 57, Hahn Papers.

Hahn's defense of such freedoms was administrative mendacity at its very finest. Politically, he knew that he acted best by not acting at all, sitting on his hands so long as time and circumstance would permit. Inaction, or just plain indifference, neatly preserved the institutional sanction of these traditions (while letting him indulge in a fair bit of self-preservation, too). Such bureaucratic inertia replicated, and was replicated in, the policymaking of other institution heads, who, in this age of desegregation, were forced to referee a contest between the competing interests of white tradition and black access. Unsurprisingly, the rules of that game had been set long ago to the clear advantage of those symbols which recast the Confederate ethos — and, in turn, the cultural intransigence of massive resistance — as an essential expression of school spirit. But, for his part, Coffey recognized this wasn't a contest his university could or should win, especially when HEW called for greater outreach to black prep athletes throughout the state. No 18-year-old black male, given his druthers, was going to choose to compete at an institution where gamedays celebrated, reveled in, the symbols of white southern history. So, on the Monday after the William and Mary game, he personally called on the Highty-Tighties during their afternoon practice. Careful not to transgress the firmness of his president's own position, the coach genially informed the band members, "truthfully, that the playing of 'Dixie' has hindered [our] efforts to recruit outstanding black athletes." To everyone's surprise, the band agreed, voting to end this practice for the good of attracting more athletes of color. Tech alumni were livid. One Norfolk alum railed that, "if playing Dixie keeps them from entering [Tech], I do not see how that could influence the amount of Federal Aid." "I would prefer to see basic rights and priviledges [*sic*] preserved for all people, on a majority democratic basis," another from Danville argued, "even though it meant having a mediocre football team." Calling Coffey's claims "absurd," a Portsmouth grad asked Hahn, "Is the recruitment of a few black athletes as important as the wishes

and desires of thousands of Southerners and taxpayers who support your institution?”⁵²

For most observers, both inside and outside the institution, moves like these were obsessive overcorrections, a glimpse into the fearful heart of administrative action rather than an intrepid bid to match the potency of images and symbols with the power of policy. Miami president Henry King Sanford might have believed, in severing his institution’s ties to practices which dissuaded black athletes from choosing to be Hurricanes, that “we at the University can afford to practice *noblesse oblige*.” Others were quite confident that the basic nature of TWIs was unaltered. “It seems to me,” an Alabama fan protested to president David Mathews in early 1971, after “Bear” Bryant announced his first success in landing a black prospect, Wilbur Jackson, “that it is one thing to admit colored students under the unconstitutional Civil Rights Law and quite another to give them a free ride via a grant-in-aid.” However much racial bitterness rested behind this booster’s assertion, he was right. There wasn’t a honest thing about the recruitment of black athletes. Rather than adopting a set of policies and provisions which synchronized these prospects’ entrance into the life of the campus with other African Americans, they were set apart again, exploited by the sheer force of competitive *and* financial ambitions. It was easier to concoct the appearance of racial progress than it was to actually make any.⁵³

⁵² Eloise Severinson to T. Marshall Hahn, Jr., April 29, 1969, Folder 1365, Box 36; T. Marshall Hahn, Jr., to J. V. Pratt, November 22, 1971 (first quotation); A. H. Phillips to T. Marshall Hahn, Jr., October 27, 1971 (second quotation); Edward A. Calderon to T. Marshall Hahn, Jr., October 30, 1971 (third quotation); Leland E. Thomas to T. Marshall Hahn, Jr., October 25, 1971 (fourth and fifth quotations); all in Folder 2028, Box 57; all in Hahn Papers.

⁵³ Henry King Sanford to Student Body of the University of Miami, September 25, 1968, Folder “Controversies: Songs, ‘Dixie,’ 1967-70,” Box 43, O’Connell Presidential Papers (first quotation); A. B. Porter to David Mathews, January 18, 1971, Folder “Athletics, Jan.-March 1971,” Box 5, 085-046, Mathews Papers (second quotation).

CHAPTER FIVE
“South Carolina has seceded again”

In late September 1970, with his coaching staff out “heavily recruiting” the state, South Carolina athletics director and head coach Paul Dietzel was positively inconsolable. After a long look up and down the recruiting trail, he despaired that this year’s search for the best prep players in the Palmetto state was little more than a fool’s errand — “about the exact position that I was afraid we would be in.” It wasn’t as if there was some sudden dearth of talent: as he apprised his president, Tom Jones, “there are 17 athletes in this state we would like to have” — ten of whom “we must have.” Rather, his anxiety emanated from his unswerving contention that the Atlantic Coast Conference’s academic eligibility rule — that freshmen athletes score at least 800 on their College Boards — hampered any chance he had to land these players. By his own count, just five of his top recruits were “qualified to get into school.” The rest were at risk of not making it at all. A dozen of these 17 prospects were, admittedly, “unqualified” academically; nine of those were out for “not having 800 on the College Boards.” “In other words,” he fumed, “9 of 17 prospects that we want in our state will have to go somewhere else to school because of the ACC rules.”

Ever since arriving in Columbia, in April 1966, Dietzel made the repeal of this criterion — known as the 800 rule — his main priority in conference business, only to be met with the intractable

opposition of more academically-minded leaders throughout the league. Try as he might, he couldn't persuade a majority of the ACC brethren — Clemson, Duke, Maryland, North Carolina, NC State, Virginia, and Wake Forest — that the 750 baseline score and 1.6 GPA espoused by the NCAA, and used by every other conference, even the Ivy League, supplied a more useful benchmark. So, now, he shifted tactics, assaulting anew the league's pretensions to higher standards with claims that the 800 rule inherently discriminated against athletes of color. Never mind that every ACC member — even South Carolina itself, a year earlier — had signed African Americans under the 800 rule, or that racial inequalities still stymied Dietzel's own program. All the proof he needed that prejudice underlay this policy was found in how he couldn't sign the prospects he wanted. Of his ten most prized recruits, after all, "5 of them are Negro and 5 of them are white": while only two of the whites were eligible, he advised Jones, "none of the 5 Negro prospects qualify." Even though "all 5 of these black athletes can attend most other universities," none of them scored the requisite 800, meaning that "we cannot sign a single black athlete" as ACC rules prevented it. A more mortifying declaration he couldn't have offered a president whose institution was withering under the scrutiny of the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), where the absence of color on the Gamecock roster was regarded as a clear Title VI violation. Knowing of Jones' fears, Dietzel played this angle to the hilt. "We can get some 'average' black athletes in school perhaps," he warned, "but they will not help in any way because they will not be good enough to play." South Carolina could only meaningfully desegregate its football program, he insisted, with the *best* black players — the recruits he couldn't sign. "It's going to be very difficult to explain to people around here," he needled Jones, "of all the fine black athletes playing in our newly integrated high schools, we cannot find one of them

who can attend his state university.”¹

Explaining the matter to Jones was far easier: Dietzel *needed* these players. Both men craved a winner, so the coach knew the president would understand what he meant when he told him that, if he didn't sign them, “they will be playing for Notre Dame, Southern California, the Big Ten, the Southeastern Conference, or the Southwestern [*sic*] Conference” — they were all that good. And, yet, “the same rules” that “we still have . . . to contend with in the ACC” were preventing him from making South Carolina a contender. Jones needed no further coaxing. “Under pressure from blacks and HEW” himself to bring athletes of color into Gamecock football, the purported quality of these recruits was simply added incentive for finding some way around “the rather sticky question” of the 800 rule. Indeed, within a week of receiving Dietzel's report, Jones was echoing its contents almost verbatim to leaders around the conference. “If the present rule remains in force,” he confided to NC State chancellor John Caldwell, “it could mean that we may not be able to sign a single black athlete from South Carolina.” Faced with “similar problems with white prospects,” Jones threatened, “we are ready to take some positive action” to sign Dietzel's recruits — regardless of whether the league adopted “some changes” to “the minimum SAT score for eligibility” or not. With Dietzel's report in hand, USC's Board of Trustees was making its own threats, too. Led to believe that the 800 rule was “educationally unsound and athletically unwise,” the Trustees, in mid-October, thumbed their noses at the ACC, issuing a public order that Dietzel sign prospects “in accordance with the NCAA entrance standards.” While the Board insisted that “the University foresees its athletic program cast within a conference regulated structure,” Dietzel, by forcing a crisis where there was none, exhibited

¹ Paul F. Dietzel to Thomas F. Jones, September 24, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series (quotations).

no interest whatsoever in living within the structure of conference regulations. And he didn't need to, what with Jones and the Trustees in thrall to his dream of "a championship program." As one Trustee fatalistically told the Board, after a talk with Dietzel that month, "it looks to me as though we are going to have to get out of the A. C. C."²

So it was less than a surprise when, on March 29, 1971, Board chairman T. Eston Marchant strode into a press conference to announce that USC was resigning its ACC membership, "thereby assuring [the] eligibility" of Dietzel's recruits. While Marchant claimed that "we hope this separation will be of a temporary nature" — that is, until the rest of the ACC came round to accepting the 750 score — everyone recognized this action for what it was: a permanent divorce. It also suggested a critical jettisoning of academic values and, worse yet, a serious lack of institutional control. "The worrisome thing" to the editors of the *Columbia State* was how "Dietzel apparently convinced the board last fall that he could not win consistently without recruiting players who cannot meet the ACC's academic standards," exhibiting how, "with fewer restraints, the athletic department will gain even greater influence in USC affairs." A commentator on Spartanburg's WSPA lamented, "Those who decreed the action . . . want to win so badly that they are willing to lower academic admissions standards to get winning teams." In this way, "the desire of the coaches carries more weight at the University" than "the will of the President." For his part, Dan Foster of the *Greenville News* was flummoxed. "It is one thing to want to get rid of the 800 rule and still want to stay in the league; it is another to want to get rid of the 800, and to still want out of the league." "What South Carolina

² Paul F. Dietzel to Thomas F. Jones, September 24, 1970 (first and second quotations); Thomas F. Jones to John T. Caldwell, October 1, 1970 (fourth through ninth quotations); Sol Blatt, Jr., to Board of Trustees, October 12, 1970 (fourteenth quotation); all in Folder "Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings"; Thomas F. Jones to ACC Institution Heads, November 5, 1970 (third quotation); Statement made by T. Eston Marchant, October 23, 1970 (tenth through twelfth quotations); both in Folder "Atlantic Coast Conference: Misc.," Box 6 (1970-1971); all in Jones Series; Richard Hyatt, "Dietzel Awaits ACC Struggle," *AC*, December 1, 1970, C4 (thirteenth quotation).

did,” in his opinion, “. . . was to get out before it was necessary.” Which was why one North Carolina fan thought such talk of academic standards was a mere smokescreen. “The real reason that USC is leaving the ACC,” he sniped, “is so it can find some place where it can win.”³

Amid all the clucking tongues and wagging fingers, the racial component of USC’s action remained entirely stealth — just as Dietzel, Jones, and the Trustees wanted it. Desegregation, after all, was a political nonstarter in South Carolina. John West, the state’s newly elected governor, for one, demanded Jones and the presidents of the six other public universities “resist federal pressures for ‘social experimentation,’” especially HEW’s agenda for “voluntary desegregation.” Needless to say, the university felt it could little afford to incur such white opposition. Framing the matter instead as a bid (in Dietzel’s words) “to reevaluate those rules which we think put some schools at an unfair advantage” deliberately distracted the world beyond the campus gates from what was afoot behind them. Only one observer, an ACC enthusiast living in western New York, even touched the edges of Dietzel’s ploy. Writing to Jones, he protested that “your recruiting program is such that if a high school athlete wants to attend South Carolina University he can take a course in Basket Weaving or Home Economics” — “a very bad direction” in which to move Gamecock football. But it was where this backsliding would lead the university in its search for gridiron talent that concerned him most. “I also suppose now your school will go into ghetto areas (maybe with a net) and claim athletes who

³ Statement from T. Eston Marchant, Chairman of the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees, March 29, 1971, Folder “Statements,” Box 1 (1970-1971), Jones Series (first and second quotations); “Sports-Oriented Trustees Pull USC Out Of The ACC,” *The State*, March 30, 1971, A20 (third through fifth quotations); WSPA editorial, typescript, April 22, 1971, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference, 1966-1974,” Box 15, Records of the Office of the Chancellor: Joseph Carlyle Sitterson Series, UNC-CH (sixth and seventh quotations); Dan Foster, “South Carolina’s Decision,” *Greenville News*, March 30, 1971, 8 (eighth and ninth quotations); Richard Douglas, Letter to the Sports Forum, *Charlotte Observer*, April 12, 1971, C6 (twelfth quotation).

otherwise would not get into South Carolina.”⁴

Dietzel didn’t have a net. But he did possess extraordinary latitude to operate as he saw fit. With “no limit” placed on the recruiting pool, Duke faculty athletics chair Allan Kornberg worried Dietzel would “dredge up a substantial number of these youngsters and their eligibility somehow will be maintained.” That was precisely what occurred on Signing Day 1971, when he ably secured the admission of all 36 of his recruits, including those who scored lower than 800 on the SAT, reasoning that “recruiting a higher class of athlete” necessitated decisive compromises with academic standards as “we cannot continually be losers in football.” Nor could “cultural deprivations” prevent him from “achiev[ing] representation in athletics of underprivileged groups” — sufficient rationale for bolting the ACC, to his mind. Otherwise, “we would have lost at least seven of the top 10 athletes in South Carolina this year because they couldn’t make 800.” Seeing as “we have to compete against the likes of Georgia, Georgia Tech, Alabama, and Tennessee for the boys from this state,” relinquishing every pretense to academic integrity wasn’t a mere convenience, but “a matter of survival.”⁵

What did survive at USC was the sense that African Americans were second-class citizens. What other reason was there for a university to take such drastic measures as forsaking conference affiliation, and pursue prospects who couldn’t be admitted except by special permission, but to seize

⁴ Minutes of Meeting of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education and Council of Presidents, July 2, 1970, Folder 1, Box 1, Records of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education: Division of Facilities and Planning, S17007, Desegregation of Post-Secondary Education Files, SCDAH (first and second quotation); Hyatt, “Dietzel Awaits ACC Struggle,” C4 (third quotation); Jeff Weiner to Thomas F. Jones, March 30, 1971, Folder “Athletic Affairs: Misc.,” Box 4 (1970-1971), Jones Series (fourth through sixth quotations).

⁵ Allan Kornberg to A. Kenneth Pye, January 15, 1971, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference, 1969-1971,” Box 1, Pye Records (first and second quotations); Paul Attner, “Dietzel Points the Way and South Carolina Heads Upward,” *WP*, December 20, 1970, 144 (third, fourth, seventh, and eighth quotations); Thomas F. Jones to John T. Caldwell, June 5, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series (fourth and fifth quotations).

upon their athletic potential? Indeed, Jones advised the ACC's institution heads that only 4 percent of black males in one of the state's poorest counties — Horry County, on the Atlantic coastline — even scored as high as 800 on their SAT. “Obviously,” he quipped, “the incidence of athletes in the top 4% in cognitive skills is very small indeed.” When Dietzel groused that, under the 800 rule, “they can't go to school at their own state school,” he wasn't lamenting the loss of black opportunity. For him, they were a rich natural resource that USC had too long squandered — first by segregation, then by abiding ACC rules — and who now, in this age of desegregation, were ripe for the taking, ready for some enterprising program to exploit. And exploit them he did — for the promise of more wins, for the cover they gave him from HEW, for the easy excuse their ineligibility gave him to play without league rules as an independent. Forced through federal mandate to recruit them, coaches like Dietzel had grudgingly come to see real value in the black athlete, so much so that, as the writer (and football aficionado) Willie Morris once observed, they became “an object in a contest of the highest stakes, an invaluable commodity.” The value of the black athlete for Dietzel, then, was assessed by how they could keep “our progress . . . moving on every front” — competitively *and* commercially. In that way, South Carolina's departure from the ACC vividly encompassed what desegregation was by the early seventies: a pernicious cycle, swinging madly from segregation to exploitation, all in the blink of an eye.⁶

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⁶ Thomas F. Jones to John T. Caldwell, June 5, 1970 (first quotation); Paul F. Dietzel to Thomas F. Jones, September 24, 1970 (second quotation); both in Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series; Willie Morris, *The Courting of Marcus Dupree* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 52 (third quotation); Attner, “Dietzel Points the Way and South Carolina Heads Upward,” 144 (fourth quotation).

On April 8, 1966, Arthur Daley devoted his “Sports of *The Times*” column in that morning’s *New York Times* to a single theme: the “growing lack of high-minded principle” which was “becoming manifest among the coaching fraternity.” “Many of the brothers have such utter disregard for the sanctity of solemn contracts,” he opined, “that they have not the slightest compunction about going back on their signed pledges to accept more attractive offers elsewhere.” In such a professional climate, “integrity yields to expediency,” with “a long list of pseudo character-builders who walked out on their commitments at one institution of higher learning to teach loyalty and self-sacrifice at another” seeking to satisfy that most selfish of impulses: “What’s in it for me?” He wasn’t offering up some slow-news-cycle disquisition on how coaches were allowed, with “impunity,” to “flit about like the oldest, permanent, floating crap game in town.” Rather, his column ran just 48 hours after Paul Dietzel distinguished himself as “the latest to flout a contract” by leaving West Point — a week before spring practice was set to begin — “to accept a fancier bid” at USC. “Although he had several years to go on a document binding him to West Point,” Daley fumed, “he figuratively tore it up” — an act “he’s now quite expert at,” seeing how “he had four years left on a Louisiana State contract before skipping to Army” in January 1962. But what did Dietzel have to show for his time at Army? A 21-18-1 record and just one victory over Navy in four tries — “that hardly is earthshaking.” “It was hoped that he would restore Army to the glory days of Red Blaik,” Daley lamented. “Somehow or other, though, the impression persists that Dietzel never quite made it at the Military Academy,” especially in light of “what had been expected.” Instead, his tenure was “downright disappointing.” (Daley’s *Times* colleague Robert Lipsyte slammed the door even harder: Dietzel’s final two years were “wretched, the worst consecutive seasons in 25 years.”) So, Army let him leave without a fight. No program, Daley noted, “will risk holding fast to a coach who has become unhappy with his lot and

wants to move elsewhere. They theorize that he would be worthless. Maybe they are right.”⁷

But upon his arrival in West Point — more of a return, really, to where he twice served Blaik as an assistant, first in 1948, and again in 1953 and 1954 — Dietzel’s value couldn’t have been more secure, representing, in Daley’s judgment, “the No. 1 glamour boy of the coaching profession after [his] sensational exploits with Louisiana State” throughout the late fifties and early sixties. Indeed, his value was so great that the LSU Board of Supervisors seriously contemplated legal action to force him to fulfill the length of his contract with them. He had won a national championship in 1958, with Heisman Trophy winner Billy Cannon lining up in the Tiger backfield, so the supervisors knew quite well what they had in Dietzel. He was also very young — just 29 when he was hired in 1955 — *and* innovative, reorganizing his outmanned Tiger varsity into three separate squads: the White team, an offensive and defensive unit that started every game and each quarter; the offense-only Go team; and his much-heralded defensive specialists, “Chinese Bandits.” A forerunner of the platoon system, this scheme was derided by many at the time as gimmickry. Dietzel was unrepentant: in his introductory press conference at Army, he declared that he was bringing this three-team system with him because “that’s the way I coach football.” And why not? Upon installing this plan in 1958, LSU strutted to a showy 35-7-1 mark, as well as two Southeastern Conference titles, in his final four seasons there.⁸

Of course, only one part of Dietzel’s success at LSU was his tactical genius. The other was his uncanny ability to sniff out the best talent and, then, win them over. In many ways, this was a by-

⁷ Arthur Daley, “Sports of *The Times*,” *NYT*, April 8, 1966, 16 (first through fifteenth and seventeenth quotations); Robert Lipsyte, “Cahill Substitutes Hard Work for Gimmicks at Army,” *NYT*, August 24, 1966 (sixteenth quotation).

⁸ Daley, “Sports of *The Times*,” 16 (first quotation); “Dietzel Signed to Coach Army For Five Years,” *NYT*, January 7, 1962, 181 (second quotation). On Dietzel’s life and career, see, generally, Paul F. Dietzel, *Call Me Coach: A Life in College Football* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

product of his easy charm and fair good looks, a self-confidence which radiated in the wide smile that earned him his enduring nickname: “Pepsodent Paul.” “Once Paul gets his feet under the dinner table of a prospect,” one “embittered rival” advised Daley, “all other coaches are wasting their time.” Indeed, on the morning after Dietzel was named head coach at Army, Daley raved how he “not only is matchless in getting talented material, he knows how to use it to greatest advantage.” But he was singing another tune after Dietzel’s exit. “He couldn’t charm prospects into embracing West Point’s rugged regimen the way he could lure schoolboy wonders to a civilian college. In trying to do so, he ran into occasional trouble. Other coaches openly charged him with attempting to steal from them prospects they already had signed to grant-in-aid agreements. This had to horrify the top brass at West Point where the primary word in the code is honor.” Daley, the West Point brass, and Army fans everywhere were learning how Dietzel’s charm lost its luster with time — that his tactics and methods weren’t so easy to forgive or overlook when he wasn’t winning. As John Brickels, athletics director at Dietzel’s own alma mater, Miami of Ohio, had warned the LSU Board of Supervisors in February of 1955, just before they hired him: “after a while Dietzel would wear thin.”⁹

So, the coach who once declared that “I’ll never leave LSU,” only then to giddily confess that “I’ve always wanted to be head coach at West Point,” now found his way to South Carolina, his third stop in six seasons, where he was welcomed by a president, a Board of Trustees, and a fan base who each desperately yearned for a major reversal in their program’s gridiron fortunes. The Gamecocks had long run in the middle of the pack, or even further back, in the Atlantic Coast Conference, with a 1965 league title negated by a spate of recruiting violations committed by Dietzel’s predecessor,

⁹ Daley, “Sports of *The Times*,” 16 (first and third quotations); Daley, “Sports of *The Times*,” *NYT*, January 9, 1962, 26 (second quotation); Peter Finney, *The Fighting Tigers: Seventy-five Years of LSU Football* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 197 (fourth quotation).

Marvin Bass, who skedaddled for Canadian football before he was shown the door. In many ways, then, the hiring of Dietzel, the coach who won through gimmickry, was a gimmick in and of itself—a ploy to at least project for fans a brighter future for USC football at one of its darkest moments. “When I took the job at South Carolina,” Dietzel observed, “I realized that the football program had been an embarrassment to the university, its alumni, and the team’s fans. It had to be rebuilt from scratch.” This renovation wasn’t simply reserved for the team alone. The whole culture of Gamecock football had to be conceived anew, turning a program that had for too long been an also-ran into the class of the ACC. He sold the USC administration, as well as Gamecock diehards, on the dream (or, perhaps, delusion) of a championship program, convincing them that what he had achieved in Baton Rouge was every bit as possible there in Columbia. It was the glory of his LSU years, after all, which South Carolina fans wanted him to recreate, not the rather pedestrian nature of his West Point teams, and he happily obliged them by drawing deeply on his years on the Bayou to engineer a new tradition for USC. Indeed, by recasting the Gamecocks in the image of his formidable Tigers, he believed he could inspire a future for USC where winning was as expected as it had been at LSU. Before they were winners, however, Dietzel would drape them in the mantle of a winner. He constantly referred to his boys as the “Fightin’ Gamecocks,” just as a booster club anointed his LSU teams the “Fightin’ Tigers.” He had the program’s logo redesigned to portray the Gamecock mascot in attack-mode—like a Bengal lunging at its prey. He would even appropriate the classic rounded shoulder stripes of the LSU jersey for South Carolina’s new uniforms, making his team look like the Tigers, even if they couldn’t yet play like them.¹⁰

¹⁰ Finney, *The Fighting Tigers*, 262-63 (first and second quotations); Dietzel, *Call Me Coach*, 142 (third quotation); “Dietzel Plans No Gimmicks At S. Carolina,” *WP*, September 13, 1966, D2.

For all of his reliance on his LSU success, Dietzel remained the most hated man in the state of Louisiana. “From the moment it was revealed that Dietzel was leaving LSU,” Jesse Outlar of the *Atlanta Constitution* explained, “the Bengals had a natural rival. Any college coached by Dietzel was an enemy on the Bayou.” So, for many observers, there was sweet justice in that his first game as the Gamecocks’ head man would return him to Baton Rouge, against a talent-rich LSU squad led by his friend and former assistant Charley McClendon. “I expect the longest, loudest ‘boo-o-o-o’ in history when we take the field at Louisiana State,” Dietzel joked with the Associated Press. But he was more concerned with the game, in which he planned “no gimmicks, just sound football,” playing “the best 22 men” he could identify on his outmatched team. Under the Saturday night lights of Tiger Stadium, he could have used some of his old tricks and a battalion of more able-bodied men: Charley Mac’s Tigers clobbered his Gamecocks, 33-7. Not an especially auspicious start to the Dietzel era. Yet, as Jake Penland of *The State* contended, “South Carolina is not expecting to be in any championship competition in Dietzel’s first year.” “I have no complaints,” Dietzel bravely ventured about the 1966 schedule. “After all, we play Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee, too,” as well as an abbreviated ACC slate that included arch-rival Clemson. When all was said and done, his team managed just one win — a 33-27 squeaker at NC State — finishing with a dismal 1-9 record. Nevertheless, the Gamecock faithful weren’t discouraged: quite the contrary. Most were reenergized about the direction of their program. With Dietzel at the helm, one alum exclaimed that November, “the future of the university in athletics looks very rosy indeed.”¹¹

¹¹ Outlar, “‘Miracle’ in the Mud,” *AC*, December 31, 1969, A9 (first quotation); “Dietzel Plans No Gimmicks at S. Carolina,” D2 (second through fourth and sixth quotations); Jake Penland, “South Carolina Would Consider 5-5 Seasons a Success for Dietzel,” *WP*, September 11, 1966, M5 (fifth quotation); Robert C. Thomas, Jr., to Thomas F. Jones, November 7, 1966, Folder “Athletic Affairs: Miscellaneous,” Box 1 (1966-1967), Jones Series (seventh quotation).

No matter how hopeful these fans were that the Gamecocks' competitive stock was on the rise, the program that Dietzel inherited was hopelessly mired in the past — nowhere more so than when it came to matters of race. Indeed, the university's ferocious defense of the racial status quo closely resembled the members of the Southeastern Conference — like LSU — rather than those in its own ACC, where a handful of programs had already fielded integrated teams and still others were looking to do the same. Not so, South Carolina. In ways large and small, a Saturday gameday at Carolina Stadium was a ruthless pageant of white supremacy, a striking demonstration of just how little distance the university had put between it and the vicissitudes of segregation. It wasn't simply the buoyant strains of "Dixie," or the sea of fluttering Confederate flags, or the vile taunts hurled at black athletes on visiting teams, which evinced the endurance of these old habits: rather, the inherent racism of the culture of gameday was exhibited in the alarming absence of any diversity among the Gamecock partisans and their team. South Carolina had been an integrated university since the fall of 1963, but one couldn't tell that by scanning the stands or the sideline. In the same season in which Dietzel made his debut as head coach, the USC Student Senate was compelled to pass a resolution pleading with fans and students "to adopt a major league attitude to go along with our major league program" — a show of sportsmanship which included "desisting in such actions as racial aspersions against opposing players" and "the tossing of refuse" on the field of play. "The arrival of such well-known and widely-respected men as Coach Dietzel," they insisted, would mean that USC "will be scheduling contests with teams who will no doubt be of bi-racial composition." Targeting athletes of color for abuse, then, would doubtless ensnare USC "in an administrative controversy." Little good this did. The harassment continued unabated — with Dietzel's own football players inciting racially-intimidating crowd reactions toward black players, like North Carolina star Charlie Scott, at home

basketball games. When black ticket holders finally began finding their way into games in the late sixties, they encountered no better reception. In September 1968, for instance, one alumna wrote USC president Tom Jones to protest the treatment of a black couple during the Duke game by a student usher who “refused to help [them] find their seats which were obviously occupied by the wrong people.” Without any assistance, the couple uncomfortably stood in the aisle through the first quarter “until reluctantly the husband asked the improper occupants of their reserved seats to move.” While the couple eventually took their rightful place, she was “appalled” to see an act of such naked racism “happen in Carolina Stadium.” Jones called the event “regrettable,” yet the hostility toward African Americans persisted to such an extent that he could no longer justify his promise to the Afro-American Society that all administrators — even Dietzel, in his capacity as athletics director — were formulating “pertinent procedures and pertinent plans which will assure freedom from discrimination in University activities.”¹²

The same degree of intimidation that gamedays inspired carried over even to class days, when some of Dietzel’s players would verbally and, in a few cases, physically attack black undergraduates, going so far, in the spring semester of 1969, as to gang up on a few Afro-American Society members outside the Student Union, known as the Russell House, in between classes. With hostility governing the relationship of student-athletes to students, it wasn’t any wonder that USC’s black community felt ostracized from the regular ebb and flow of campus life. “What we really want,” one black co-ed explained shortly after the Russell House incident, “is to be able to be in if we want to be, not to be

¹² Resolution on the Sportsmanship of Carolina Sports Fans, passed December 14, 1966, Folder “Athletic Affairs: Miscellaneous,” Box 1 (1966-1967) (first through fifth quotations); Mrs. B. G. Anderson to Thomas F. Jones, September 22, 1968 (sixth through eighth quotations); Thomas F. Jones to Mrs. B. G. Anderson, September 25, 1968 (ninth quotation); both in Folder “Athletic Affairs: Football,” Box 2 (1968-1969); Thomas F. Jones to Kenneth Price, May 7, 1968, Folder “Association for Afro-American Students,” Box 10 (1967-1968) (tenth quotation); all in Jones Series.

excluded just because we are Negroes.” A hopeful wish, but one that she knew better than most was unlikely. A columnist for the student paper, *The Gamecock*, deemed it “a dis-service” to black students strong-arm either Dietzel or head basketball coach Frank McGuire into recruiting athletes of color “because his race needed representation in the USC Athletic program.” But, for one black freshman, the absence of color on any Gamecock team — football, basketball, or otherwise — was especially hard to stomach as “I don’t have anybody to identify with.” “I’m not saying that Negro players are superior to whites,” he insisted, “but I am saying that we’re here; we’re part of the University, and we should have somebody we can identify with and cheer for.” As it stood, one of his friends argued, “it seems like Carolina lets Negro athletes slip through their fingers.” And such recruiting ineptitude was rendered indefensible that spring, after Duke signed Ernie Jackson, the state’s Class A Back of the Year, who played his high school football just miles from Dietzel’s office at Columbia’s Lower Richland High. Too small to play in the ACC, was how Dietzel described him. These freshmen weren’t buying it. “It’s strange that athletes like Jackson are good enough to go to Duke or Michigan State, but Carolina doesn’t want them.”¹³

Like their black forebears of a century earlier, who were admitted to the Reconstruction-era university by a Republican-controlled state legislature, these students discovered (in the lamentation of a USC trustee in 1873) that white South Carolinians had no interest in “a University which is the common property of all our citizens without distinction of race.” Overlooked in both the social and athletic spheres of campus life, the Afro-American Society resolved to grab the attention of the university community and shake it to its core. On Lincoln’s birthday, 1969, its members gathered on

¹³ ““They Are And They Are Not,”” *The Gamecock*, undated clipping [circa Spring 1969] (first, third, fourth, and fifth quotations); Jay Bender, “By the Way,” *The Gamecock*, undated clipping [circa Spring 1969] (second quotation); both in Folder “Integration of Sports,” Integration Vertical Files, USC.

the main lawn of the campus, called the Horseshoe, to burn a Confederate flag in protest of the persistent racial inequalities which kept them under foot at USC. These students renewed their calls, too, for Jones to ban the playing of “Dixie” at home football games — a one-two punch of identity politics that walloped the age-old racial pieties of the state’s white majority. This “manifestation of rebellion and destruction by a vociferous pressure group with a chip on its collective shoulder,” as one alumnus put it, would, if indulged by Jones, “irreparably harm the spirit of our great University.” Gamecock pride and the Lost Cause were evidently one and the same. The Columbia chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy demanded Jones “put aside any thought or action that would ban the playing of ‘Dixie’” as it honored “all the patriots, causes, etc., whether won or lost, which have made this nation what it is today.” A Gamecock fan from Williamson railed that “a minority” shouldn’t “deliver ultimatums and tell the administration what to do and what not to do.” Another booster insisted that “this minute group . . . should be reminded that there are two other institutions in this city” — all-black Allen and Benedict Colleges — “where they might continue their education and attend athletic contests where they would be in little or no jeopardy of subjecting themselves to a rendition which they deem distasteful.” A Sumter alum advised Jones that ending these gameday traditions would be one more signal that “these so-called Afro-Americans” were “just plain trouble makers, allowed to come into our schools to cause trouble and disrupt” the life of the campus.¹⁴

The convergence of all of these events — the flag burning, Jackson’s signing with Duke, the Russell House altercation — had, in Jones’ view, “created an emotional climate that could, if not

¹⁴ Daniel Walker Hollis, *University of South Carolina, College to University: Volume II* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1956), 79 (first quotation); Benjamin B. Boyd to Thomas F. Jones, February 12, 1969 (second quotation); Dotty L. Boineau to Thomas F. Jones, February 13, 1969 (third and fourth quotations); Mrs. D. R. Chastain to Office of Student Affairs, February 12, 1969 (fifth quotation); T. Ralph Meeks to Rutledge Osbourne, February 12, 1969 (sixth quotation); J. P. “Mike” Edwards to Thomas F. Jones, February 12, 1969 (seventh quotation); all in Folder “Dixie,” Box 5 (1968-1969), Jones Series.

reasonably approached, have very serious consequences” for his institution.¹⁵ Into this breach stepped Dietzel, who believed a word or two from him might ease the racial tension. So, in late April 1969, he granted a lengthy interview to *The Gamecock* to offer up some clarification for the “many rumors that float around campus” about the seeming intolerance of both his athletics department and football program for black participation — as either spectators or competitors. “My purpose here at Carolina is to help create the finest athletic department in the United States,” he argued. “It is no desire on our part to do this at the expense of any other part of the University or any other group on the campus.” In so doing, he assured his student interviewer, “we plan to recruit any athlete from any where that we feel can help us to achieve a finer Carolina, both on and off the athletic fields.”

But, his interviewer inquired, did he have any experience in recruiting African Americans? It was a legitimate question. Dietzel had grown up in small-town Ohio, where, as he reminisced, “we had no racial problems” — “they went to our school and I don’t believe anything was ever thought about it one way or another.” In fact, “we had Negro athletes on the team I played on” in high school. Obviously, at segregated LSU, he was barred from even taking a look at black prospects, but West Point was a somewhat different situation, where he “began recruiting several Negro athletes.” “The first one we were able to get” was Gary Steele, “a fine split end” from Pennsylvania. Not only was he the first African American whom Dietzel had signed, he was the *only* one. “In order to get into the Academy, you have to have roughly at least 1100 on the [College] Boards,” he explained, sharply curtailing the search for any athlete. “When you are looking for topnotch athlete with better than 1100 on the college boards you cut down the field considerably”: the implication being here that there

¹⁵ Thomas F. Jones, Press Statement, February 14, 1969, Folder “Dixie,” Box 5 (1968-1969), Jones Series (quotation).

were few “topnotch” black prospects who were capable academically of being admitted to West Point. What about South Carolina, the interviewer pressed? Were there any provisions keeping black athletes out? “Absolutely none,” Dietzel replied. “On the contrary, we have been greatly encouraged to recruit Negro athletes by the administration, the faculty, and the student body.” What’s more, “the trustees assured me” at the time of his hiring “that we could recruit any athlete who was qualified regardless of race, color, or creed.” And this spirit of openness, to his mind, was evidenced by the arrival of the Gamecocks’ first black player that coming fall. He and his staff were on the lookout for others, losing “one fine Negro tackle from Virginia . . . who chose Duke over South Carolina.” USC, he hopefully predicted, was well on its way to a more racially diverse future on the gridiron.

And, yet, his student interviewer probed still further. Would this unnamed black athlete — or any to follow after — be accepted as a teammate by a squad of whites who had already showed themselves hostile to African Americans? “Everyone,” Dietzel huffed, “has to make adjustments and compensations in life unless he wants to live on a desert island by himself.” What reception would Dietzel expect this athlete to receive from USC’s overwhelmingly white student body? “We have people who are vehement about any issue you would like to bring up,” but “it is my frank opinion that the huge bulk of students will accept any student on his own merits and not lump him together with any group.” No matter how whites responded to a black player, “it has been the experience of other people who have Negro athletes on their squads that some of the major problems come from people of their own race.” Dumbfounded, the interviewer asked Dietzel to elaborate. Among those coaching colleagues who had integrated teams, Dietzel had been informed, “hardly a day goes by that these fine athletes do not receive several calls on the phone from highly militant groups . . . trying to get him to cause an incident.” His own safeguard against this problem at Carolina would be that “the

athletes that I coach will become the best friends that I have.” Short of this, how could Dietzel assure them that he understood, even empathized with, their problems? Given the pressure tactics of these alleged black militants — and evidently not the white racists with whom they attended class, or played alongside each Saturday — “I honestly do not believe that the average person, in or out of college, has any idea of the frustration that some of these black athletes go through.”

What about the racial atmosphere at sporting events, or even in daily campus life? “I am not so naive to think that we don’t have a couple of people who might make stupid comments,” Dietzel allowed, but Carolina fans needed to learn that “being a good sport does not mean hurling insults at our opponents or throwing things on the floor or on the playing field. That sort of thing is bush league and has no part in championship athletics.” How about playing “Dixie” at home games? He saw “no fault in playing such a spirited song” — “personally, I like the song immensely” as “it has lots of bounce and lots of energy to it” — nor did it have “implications, to me, of struggle or strife.” What did he think of his football players who waved Confederate flags at sporting events? “That is not true!” Or intimidating black students on campus? “That is absolutely ridiculous.” What about what occurred at the Russell House? “Yes, there was a ‘shouting contest’ between one of our athletes and some black students in front of the Russell House, but the funny part of it is that the boy is not a Southerner at all. He is from the North.” Some groups, the interviewer observed, “would say that he is reflecting the views of his coach.” Dietzel dismissed this suggestion out of hand. “It is just like the lady going to the doctor to find out what is wrong with her. If the doctor says there is nothing wrong with her, she will go to another doctor — and another — and another — until she finally finds one who says she is sick and then she is satisfied.” Ultimately, “other things on the campus are difficult to attack but the Athletic Department and athletics are more in the open and are, henceforth, more

vulnerable. In other words, it is difficult to attack the curriculum. Who do you attack? Where do you start?” Rather than playing his athletes off the student body, Dietzel asserted, “we hope that everyone on and around the campus will treat and accept the students who happen to be athletes according to what that person deserves and not by any other criteria.”¹⁶

It went without saying that Dietzel’s only criterion was winning. And, in the zero-sum world of college football, winning has a way of covering all manner of sins. Athletes who were reviled in spring were, by autumn, the toast of the USC campus, as Dietzel marveled at the “overflow crowds for all five of our home games” in a season that saw the Gamecocks finish with a 7-4 record and their first outright ACC title. Much as it took him three years to make LSU into a championship program, it seemed as if Pepsodent Paul once again worked his magic. “I was determined to coach at a college where people are not so sophisticated that enthusiasm is embarrassing,” he told Jesse Outlar that December. Indeed, the “wonderful support” that he and his team received was due, in no small part, to a feeling among the Gamecock faithful that the bottom dog was now on top. A program that long believed itself to be (in the words of one fan) “the whipping boy and scapegoat of the conference,” on and off the field, basked in the first dawn’s light of a new era of success — or so they thought. These sellout crowds would instead bear witness to the quiet passing of an age. After all, the 1969 South Carolina varsity was the last all-white team crowned ACC champions.¹⁷

This wake was set to move to Atlanta for the Peach Bowl, on December 30, a game for which

¹⁶ Interview with Paul Dietzel, typescript, April 24, 1969, Folder “Athletic Affairs: Athletic Director,” Box 2 (1968-1969), Jones Series (quotations). For the published interview, see Don Hult, “Dietzel Gives His Opinions on Problems Concerning Recruiting of Black Athletes,” *The Gamecock*, April 25, 1969, 6.

¹⁷ Outlar, “Bowl Homecoming,” *AC*, December 30, 1969, A9 (first through third quotations); Jack Rodeen to Thomas F. Jones, November 25, 1966, Folder “Athletic Affairs: Miscellaneous,” Box 1 (1966-1967), Jones Series (fourth quotation).

Dietzel announced his department had sold 19,000 tickets — “so many that we had to ask for more.” The absence of diversity on his roster was only amplified by the opposition, Jim Carlen’s West Virginia Mountaineers, whose stout defense was anchored by All-American middle guard Carl Crennel. A giant of a lineman, hailing from Lynchburg, Virginia, where he was the first black athlete to play football at E. C. Glass High School, Crennel’s size and surprising speed filled the center of the Mountaineers’ defensive line — a defense that ranked fifteenth nationally in rushing defense, eleventh in scoring defense, and twelfth in total defense — greatly contributing to his team’s 9-1 regular season mark. After watching him on film, Dietzel judged Crennel to be “as good as any middle guard we’ll play against any where any time.” West Virginia integrated in 1963, when still a member of the Southern Conference, so Crennel was one of nine African Americans on its squad, making this showdown between what the *Atlanta Constitution* dubbed “one [team] from Dixie and one from (you might say) Dixie’s outskirts” a contrast between a program which embraced diversity and another that still stubbornly avoided it.¹⁸

Fittingly, perhaps, given the racial subtext of this game, the halftime entertainment on this rainy night under the lights of Georgia Tech’s Grant Field was Georgia’s irascible governor, Lester Maddox, who rose to fame (more like infamy) earlier in the decade by chasing black customers out of his Atlanta chicken restaurant by wielding an ax handle. Showcasing his other signature gimmick — riding a bicycle backwards — Maddox proved no more capable of moving forward than Dietzel’s offense, which barely got its gameplan started against Crennel and the Mountaineer defensive front. They kept the Gamecocks off the muddy field for most of the game, limiting them to 20 less plays

¹⁸ Outlar, “Bowl Homecoming,” A9 (first quotation); Charlie Roberts, “Carlen Decided to Run, Was ‘Elected’ to Peach,” *AC*, December 30, 1969, A11 (second quotation); “Bowled Over,” *AC*, December 30, 1969, A4 (third quotation).

than their own offense — led by another black star, fullback Ed Williams, who slogged his way to 208 rushing yards — as well as a meager 190 yards of total offense. By the time it was all said and done, the Mountaineers powered their way to a 14-3 victory, with Crennel and Williams named the defensive and offensive MVPs, respectively. “You saw a pretty good lesson in hard-boiled football out there tonight,” a downtrodden Dietzel told the press afterwards. With barely 24 hours remaining in 1969, and, with it, the decade of the sixties, it was also an embarrassing lesson in how far Dietzel and his program still had to travel to begin to compete in the biracial world of college football in the decade to come. Boarding the team buses outside Grant Field, the emptied stands bathed in harsh fluorescent light, the Gamecocks increasingly appeared to be among the last to leave a past where whiteness ruled southern football, where championships were won and lost in the intramural solace of regional play. This team, and certainly its smiling charmer of a coach, had to concede, in the end, that championships were now even less likely than they were before if their program continually ignored the racial lessons of a game like this one. South Carolina would have to *finally* integrate.¹⁹

II

For football fans throughout the Atlantic Coast Conference, the ascendance of South Carolina under Dietzel’s leadership was especially hard to stomach. He was the coach, and the Gamecocks were the team, everyone loved to hate. Only USC’s head basketball coach Frank McGuire raised more ire in this basketball-dominated league. “None too prestigious as a top educational institution, and certainly not the most important member of the Conference,” South Carolina, in one North Carolina booster’s

¹⁹ Outlar, “West Virginia Grabs Peach Victory,” *AC*, December 31, 1969, A1; Roberts, “‘Defeat’ Intolerable for SC,” *AC*, December 31, 1969, A11 (quotation).

estimation, had fallen under Dietzel's sway so irrevocably that its leaders did his every bidding. And what was it that he wanted? "Obviously Dietzel wants bigger and better crowds, leading to higher coaching salaries." For all of his talk about building USC into a power, this fan posited, Dietzel was really communicating the stark differences between the ACC's academic and competitive controls and the SEC's devil-may-care culture, which he much preferred. "He had a free hand at Louisiana State and wants the ACC to allow the same routine." While a NC State booster argued that "Dietzel deserves our commendation" for challenging the pieties of "our conference educators," one Virginia alumnus expressed the more common suspicion that his numerous attempts to overhaul the league's eligibility standards amounted to "backtracking" on academics. A Clemson loyalist warily regarded such zeal for reform as a ploy "to give out the very maximum number of scholarships the NCAA will allow." "I don't think I have to tell any one of you," he appealed to the ACC's institution heads, "that Dietzel will do absolutely anything to win a football game."²⁰

The disdain was mutual. From practically the moment he arrived in Columbia, Dietzel had been sniffing around for a pretext by which he might force a break between his program and its ACC brethren. He wanted to move his Gamecocks to a conference — or, at least, a condition within the ACC — where football was taken as seriously as it had been while he coached in the SEC. No mean feat when most squabbles in the ACC were settled on the hardwood, not the gridiron. And no single group manifested this preoccupation with basketball more so than the so-called Big Four — Duke,

²⁰ Frank Coxe to William C. Friday, June 22, 1970, Folder "Athletics: General, 1970," Box 1, Friday Files (first through third quotations); Jere LeGwin to John T. Caldwell, December 11, 1970, Folder "ACC Study — Student Academic Eligibility Requirements," Box 52, Office of the Chancellor General Records, NCSU (fourth quotation); Howard Means to Edgar Finley Shannon, Jr., May 2, 1970, Folder "Athletics — General, 1969-1970," Box 8, President's Papers, RG-2/1/2.731 (1969-1970) (fifth quotation); James T. McCarver to ACC Institution Heads, March 31, 1971, Folder "Atlantic Coast Conference, 1969-1971," Box 1, Pye Records (sixth and seventh quotations).

North Carolina, NC State, and Wake Forest — which comprised a formidable voting bloc in league politics, especially as they equaled a full one-half of the ACC membership. To the unceasing chagrin of their two Palmetto state conference mates, no piece of league legislation could pass without them; with two of their number exclusive, top-flight private colleges, and North Carolina a well-respected public university, academic standards were a non-negotiable proposition. Dietzel would have eagerly subscribed to the thesis advanced by Clemson president Robert C. Edwards: “one of the most serious problems with the ACC, as it is presently constituted, stems from the fact that it is fifty percent North Carolina.” Whether an Ivory Tower prejudice for all matters pigskin, or a natural predilection toward boosting basketball’s interests, or a fit of pique for any member located south of, say, Charlotte, Dietzel believed the Big Four deliberately sabotaged the quality of the ACC’s gridiron competition. In August of 1969, for instance, he sarcastically lashed out at them in a memorandum to his fellow athletics directors and coaches, institution heads, and faculty athletics representatives, for promoting artificial limits on the number of football grants-in-aid that each member institution could offer. The South’s three other major conferences — Southwest, Southeastern, and Southern — all outpaced the 325 total scholarships the ACC brethren chose to support. “Our football,” he sneered, “is just about at par with the number of scholarships given.” These 325 grants put the ACC in an eighth-place tie nationally with the mid-major programs of the Mid-American Conference: “that’s where our football is too — perhaps on par with the Mid-American Conference.” Frustrated by the refusal of the Big Four to support any measure which might reinforce the strength of ACC football, Dietzel sniped that, “when we start discussing the situation in which we find ourselves in football, let’s make sure we put

the blame exactly where it rests.”²¹

Somewhere, in every stumble, every fall, that USC experienced in the late sixties, the sinister machinations of the Big Four could be divined. Such paranoia extended to Gamecock fans, who were similarly resentful of their collective power. Imagine the recriminations, then, in March 1970, when McGuire’s undefeated basketball team lost, in double overtime, in the ACC championship game to a NC State squad it handily beat twice during the regular season, seeing its sure path to the 16-team NCAA tournament — and a shot at a national championship — vanish. McGuire demanded that the rules be changed thereafter so that not just the conference tournament winner was eligible for further post-season play. But the Big Four rallied round one of their own, nixing this proposition. A “Drop the ACC” movement began among USC supporters as a result, growing so vociferous, so quickly, that a startled Dietzel had to quash it, reminding these fans that it “would be foolish” to leave the ACC in a huff just because the Big Four didn’t respond affirmatively to their “ultimatums.”²²

Yet, it seemed, ultimatums were the only way in which Dietzel communicated with the ACC. Around the same time as USC’s basketball season was cut short, he launched a major assault on the conference’s academic eligibility standards — the 800 rule itself — in the case of one of his top recruits, Marty Woolbright, who initially scored lower than the required 800 minimum on his SATs. Passed in May 1964, the 800 rule, Edwards explained, was created because “the ACC member institutions felt that a minimum academic requirement should be established as a prerequisite for

²¹ Robert C. Edwards to T. Marshall Hahn, Jr., October 10, 1966, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference #1,” Box 16 (1966), Hahn Papers (first quotation); Paul F. Dietzel to ACC Presidents, Faculty Chairmen, Athletics Directors, and Coaches, memorandum, undated [August 1969], Folder “Athletics — General, 1969-1970,” Box 8, President’s Papers, RG-2/1/2.731 (1969-1970) (second through fourth quotations). The Southwest Conference rated fourth nationally with 476 scholarships offered in 1968; the SEC was fifth with 462; and the Southern was seventh with 362.

²² “S. Carolina May Quit Over ACC Tournament,” *WP*, March 29, 1970, 38 (quotations).

awarding athletic scholarships and/or grants-in-aid to prospective student athletes as a means of helping to achieve the stated purpose and function of the Conference.” Accordingly, the ACC was attempting to keep intercollegiate athletics “in proper bounds by making it an incidental and not a principal feature of college and university life” — another in a series of “wise and prudent measures” to help sports “form a constituent part of that education for which universities and colleges were established and maintained.” Dietzel had no time for such idealism: he goaded the USC Board of Trustees into threatening a withdrawal from the league that May if the 800 rule wasn’t immediately rescinded — a position from which they quickly retreated for fear that they might “jeopardize” the university’s “status . . . in the ACC.” When that didn’t work, he pressured ACC commissioner James Weaver to rule on Woolbright’s eligibility himself. If only to keep the peace, Weaver took his side, ordering Woolbright to retake the SAT: if he scored less than 800 again, his would be officially judged “a hardship case,” a label that made him eligible for ACC competition. But Weaver had, instead, disturbed the peace. Edwards, for one, believed his decision “unfortunate.” “It is my understanding,” he told a Clemson alum, “that Woolbright repeated the SAT . . . and scored above 800.” By the time Woolbright reported for fall camp, “he was fully qualified under the ACC rules” by virtue of his second showing on the SAT — *not* the exception that Weaver made for him.²³

The Woolbright Case (as it became known in the press) colored nearly all of Dietzel’s efforts at reform that spring. Eventually securing this one rather extraordinary waiver wasn’t good enough for him. The whole rule had to be thrown out, in his opinion, because the ineligibility of athletes like

²³ Robert C. Edwards, Draft Resolution on the 800 rule, undated [circa mid-November 1970], Folder 22, no box (first through fourth quotations); Robert C. Edwards to Calhoun Lemon, October 27, 1970, Folder 23, no box (sixth through eighth quotations); both in Edwards Correspondence; “South Carolina Look for ACC Exit,” *WP*, May 2, 1970, E5; “South Carolina Decides to Stay in Conference,” *WP*, May 6, 1970, D6 (fifth quotation); “Four at S. C. To Retake Board Tests,” *WP*, June 20, 1970, D4.

Woolbright exhibited how the ACC brethren weren't the least bit interested in doing the league's football programs any favors. The highest hurdle he had to clear, however, was in convincing the brethren that it wasn't mere self-interest that spurred such concern — even though he craved this change out of pure self-interest. What he needed was a rationale which would be certain to seize, *preoccupy*, the collective imagination of the ACC membership — something with which they each had to contend, something from which none of them, particularly the Big Four, could claim a convenient exemption. The solution rested in a problem with which his own program had grappled all spring: desegregation. In early March, a team of field agents arrived on campus from HEW's regional office in Atlanta to conduct a review of the university's progress in complying with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Relating their findings to President Jones a few days later, regional chief Dewey E. Dodds reported that these agents couldn't help but conclude that USC was still abiding “continuing patterns of segregation.” Especially troublesome to them was a “differential pattern of recruitment between black and white athletes,” which Dietzel oversaw as athletics director. “According to Coach Dietzel,” Dodds noted, only four of the 227 athletes then on scholarship were African Americans — and *none* in football. Moreover, of the \$400,000 available in grant money, this quartet received but \$5760, a shameful figure that evinced the disinterest that USC athletics held for the cause of diversity. And black recruitment certainly wasn't advanced by the lily-white profile of Dietzel's own staff. “During the review,” the agents were aghast that there wasn't a single black employee on his payroll, as either an administrator or a coach. White on the field and off, his program was pinioned to segregation, necessitating “special efforts” to introduce blacks into every phase of this competitive enterprise. That went for the atmosphere the university abetted at its home athletic events, too. Urged to “use the influence of your office to deal constructively” with the segregated

culture of gameday, Jones was specifically instructed to ring the curtain down on “the playing of ‘Dixie’ and waving of Confederate flags,” both of which “tend to have a negative public relations effect on present and potential black students.” “It has been our experience,” Dodds counseled, “that forthright and positive leadership from the administration . . . can play a significant role in overcoming these kinds of problems and help create a climate of mutual respect whereby similar problems can be averted.”²⁴

Jones initially appeared more receptive to such advice than other institution heads around the region, and even in his own state, who saw in such scrutiny an encroaching federal takeover of their universities. His immediate response was a practical one, figuring out how quickly USC could remedy these deficiencies. He similarly conceded that these findings held precedent over the athletics department, and even football, which was a departure from the norm. Undertaking his own internal audit of the alleged Title VI violations in April, Jones directed each dean and director, including Dietzel, to “provide my office with a brief written report . . . on what plans you have formulated to implement the recommendations and observations in [Dodds’] letter regarding your department.” In early May, when these administrators gathered in his office to discuss the university’s official response to HEW, they pressed him to hold his ground, to dispel any notion that he was amenable to further action than Dodds’ recommendations. USC should toe the line, they instructed, but no further. In replying to Dodds, then, Jones wrote that “we do not believe” the charge of segregation “to be true,” insisting that “the University had worked diligently to fulfill both the spirit and the law as stated in the Civil Rights Act” since receiving word of these agents’ findings. “Affirmative actions have been

²⁴ Dewey E. Dodds to Thomas F. Jones, March 9, 1970, Folder “Civil Rights Compliance: General,” Box 9 (1969-1970), Jones Series (quotations).

taken to promote positive programs which will attract and involve more members of the black race in the total life of the University,” with the reports of its deans and directors (which he utilized as a rejoinder to each specific HEW charge) “represent[ing] positive action either taken or planned.”²⁵

Of course, it was rather impossible to detect any sense of action in Dietzel’s paltry 95-word statement. An extraordinarily vague list of boilerplate promises, which were, in their way, a defense of inertia, he asserted, in the face of these HEW findings, that “progress has been made in efforts to recruit black athletes.” With little basis, too, he declared that “special efforts will be made to extend our recruiting program to more black athletes this fall.” Only, he offered no specific strategy for how he and his department would do so — simply that the “athletic scholarships . . . offered black athletes during the past 20 months” evidenced that “success in this area can be made.” But, in the next breath, he shifted the blame for the low number of black prospects who actually accepted these scholarship offers squarely onto the shoulders of the athletes themselves; indeed, “some made decisions to attend colleges elsewhere,” which absolved USC, in his mind, from any culpability in this lack of diversity. Such straight-faced predation on reason and logic was a mere trifle compared to the personal agenda he now advanced: his program, he proclaimed to HEW, was hamstrung in recruiting athletes of color by the rules and regulations of its own conference. Written, as it was, in the midst of the Woolbright Case, his central assertion — that the other African Americans whom he had recruited “were unable to accept a scholarship because of the restrictive academic requirements of the Atlantic Coast Conference” — sought to distract HEW from his own half-hearted pursuit of these prospects. With Woolbright then twisting in the wind, Dietzel recognized how the inequalities of the 800 rule could

²⁵ Thomas F. Jones to Paul F. Dietzel, April 6, 1970 (first and second quotations); Thomas F. Jones to Dewey E. Dodds, May 21, 1970 (third through seventh quotations); both in Folder “Civil Rights Compliance: General,” Box 9 (1969-1970), Jones Series.

be easily painted with the brush of racism, making it look as if it was the ACC, not USC, that denied opportunity to the black athlete. Here, then, was the first discordant strain of that intractable rationale by which Dietzel, an all-too-enterprising Pied Piper, would lead South Carolina out of the ACC.²⁶

Dietzel was hardly playing a solo here. Up at Clemson, its president Robert C. Edwards was sounding a similar note. Writing Dodds that same May, he observed that, “while member institutions of the Atlantic Coast Conference never intended that the requirement of a minimum SAT score of 800 would be discriminatory, the fact remains that its application currently results in what I consider to be *de facto* discrimination.” Though the rule applied to all prospects, “its existence bars a proportionately larger number of Black student athletes than white”: “there are many Black student athletes who have achieved high class rank and who have outstanding athletic ability, and who would like to attend Clemson University, but who simply cannot achieve a minimum score of 800 on the SAT.” While Edwards reassured Dodds that he had instructed his newly-hired head football coach, Hootie Ingram, to move ahead “on a more intensified basis” to “identify more Black student athletes who can qualify for scholarships” under the 800 rule, “until such time” as it was repealed, it would prove “physically impossible for Clemson University and the other ACC member institutions to have the number of Black student athletes that we would like to have, or you would expect us to have.”²⁷

To Edwards, the wisdom of eliminating the 800 minimum score had been “concluded beyond question.” Likewise, it was his “considered opinion” that, if the performance of black students on standardized tests “for the states of North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland” were made available to

²⁶ The text of Dietzel’s statement is included as Section Seven in Jones’ formal reply to Dodds. See Thomas F. Jones to Dewey E. Dodds, May 21, 1970, Folder “Civil Rights Compliance: General,” Box 9 (1969-1970), Jones Series (quotations).

²⁷ Robert C. Edwards to Dewey E. Dodds, May 21, 1970, Folder 23, Edwards Correspondence (quotations).

the ACC brethren, “the results would very closely parallel the South Carolina experience,” where 93 percent scored below 800 annually “and that the difference in median score between the white and Black graduates is 286” points. Now that each ACC member was recruiting athletes of color — or made to do so by HEW mandate, as was Clemson — Edwards believed that the conference, as a whole, had to face facts that it was going to be pursuing many prospects who had graduated from disadvantaged schools. A 1.6 GPA, adopted by the NCAA as the absolute floor for eligibility, was perfectly reasonable to him under these circumstances. Moreover, “any student who is accepted for enrollment by an ACC member institution,” and “whose academic record is such that he predicts a minimum 1.600” GPA, “should be eligible to receive a grant-in-aid and/or to participate in our intercollegiate program” — even if he didn’t score 800 on the SAT. “Denial of this privilege,” Edwards contended, “constitutes unacceptable discrimination.”²⁸

The difference between Dietzel and Edwards, however, was Edwards never threatened to bolt the conference if he didn’t get his way. Utterly determined to bring the 800 rule down, but not the ACC along with it, Edwards was convinced that “failure to do so will ultimately lead to potential embarrassment for all of us.” “If we insist on maintaining the minimum requirement of 800 on the SAT as a prerequisite for participation in our athletic programs,” he advised UNC president William C. Friday, “we are going to be accused of discrimination by HEW.” Such fear prompted the powwow he and his athletics director Frank Howard held with Dietzel and Jones that March in Clemson. All four men, as he later put it, wanted “an agreement within the Conference that will make it possible for the ACC” — read: Clemson and USC — “to become competitive in football.” But, in hearing

²⁸ Robert C. Edwards to John T. Caldwell, June 9, 1970, Folder 23, Edwards Correspondence (quotations).

Dietzel talk, he soon realized USC sought an entirely different outcome. While “we suggested the desirability of developing plans for the organization of a new conference,” of which both universities would serve as the co-founders, should the 800 rule remain standing through 1970, he told Dietzel that “we intend to do everything possible to resolve the conflicts currently existing in the ACC.” Dietzel, by contrast, was already chomping at the bit to get out. “Most certainly,” a dismayed and exasperated Edwards concluded, “I do not believe we should follow suit.”²⁹

“Dietzel said that Carolina wants to be the leader, not the follower,” one prominent Clemson booster advised Edwards. “It occurs that it hurts Clemson’s prestige a good bit to appear in the public eye as being forced to do something by Carolina’s action or being a follower.” Edwards wasn’t the least bit interested in following Dietzel anywhere. But the shared interest of Clemson and Carolina, joined by the other football-first member, Maryland, in eliminating the 800 rule demonstrated to the Big Four and their close ally Virginia that there was substantial opposition to its continuance — or so Dietzel hoped. Such ferment, in reality, didn’t mean that Clemson and Maryland were willing to go to the barricades quite like South Carolina. Indeed, Maryland president Wilson Elkins put forth a plan during the ACC spring meetings in Greensboro — the same gathering before which Dietzel had the USC Board of Trustees threaten its withdrawal if it didn’t get its way on the Woolbright Case — that split the difference between plain stubbornness and open revolution. “We would suggest that the Conference keep the 800 minimum,” he proposed, “but allow a fixed minimum of not more than

²⁹ Robert C. Edwards to William C. Friday, March 30, 1970, Folder “Athletics: General, 1970,” Box 1, Friday Files (first and second quotations); Robert C. Edwards to John T. Caldwell, October 22, 1970 (third quotation); Robert C. Edwards to Calhoun Lemon, October 27, 1970 (fourth through sixth quotations); both in Folder 23, Edwards Correspondence. On March 30, 1970, Edwards wrote his fellow ACC institution heads to declare that the Clemson Athletic Council, “concerned” over news reports that their university was “considering withdrawing” from the ACC, “resolved to continue to work within the framework” of the ACC “to achieve common goals.” See Robert C. Edwards to ACC Institution Heads, memorandum, March 30, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference, 1966-1971,” Box 15, Sitterson Series.

five athletes annually to be admitted with SAT scores below 800.” And, yet, exemptions struck many observers as a mere stop-gap measure, especially after the Woolbright Case. “Once you start handing out hardship exemptions,” contended Frank Barrows of the *Charlotte Observer*, “you get into a very sticky business. Woolbright made 790 but what makes his case any worse than that of the fellow who gets a 700?”³⁰

Dietzel was determined never to have to submit that question to anyone else’s judgment other than his own. His racial legerdemain — mimicked in Jones’ shrill insistence that “the 800 minimum requirement all but blocks out ‘black belt’ black athletes” — was pitched at swelling the progress toward a crisis that would end such obligation. And he succeeded in spades that May, with the ACC institution heads agreed to form a committee to study whether the 800 rule represented “‘cultural’ or ‘racial’ bias,” appointing NC State chancellor John Caldwell its chair. A universally respected league diplomat, remarkably acceptable to the Big Four and USC, Caldwell advised his fellow institution heads later that month that “we have been presented with a perfectly valid question to which we ought to have defensible, educational conclusions,” with such judgments reached in a process that would leave the brethren “educationally sound and harmonious in our great competitive association.” In that vein, then, “I have telephone assurance of President Jones of South Carolina that this study can be made free of any threat by South Carolina to withdraw from the Conference if dissatisfied with the outcome of our decision.” And this study, he instructed, required each of them to initiate “an examination of your own policies, practices, and experience which might answer for

³⁰ Calhoun Lemon to Robert C. Edwards, October 26, 1970, Folder 23, Edwards Correspondence (first quotation); Wilson H. Elkins to John T. Caldwell, June 5, 1970, Folder “ACC Study — Student Athletic Eligibility Requirements, 1970-1971,” Box 52, Office of the Chancellor General Records (second quotation); Frank Barrows, “Is It ‘Goodbye, 800?,”” *Charlotte Observer*, July 2, 1970, clipping found in Folder “Athletics — General, 1970-1971,” Box 8, President’s Papers, RG-2/1/2.741 (1970-1971) (third quotation).

your campus the question of educational validity in requiring a fixed SAT minimum.” As a way of guiding such a study, he supplied them with what he judged the four most essential queries: (1) the validity of “a fixed SAT score minimum”; (2) “your campus experience with students who have been admitted with less than 800 minimum but who had a 1.6” GPA; (3) whether “your analysis and research support requiring” the fixed minimum “for athletics participation”; and (4) if “your campus require[s] an SAT minimum score for eligibility for financial aid other than an athletics grant-in-aid,” how to “evaluate this apparent discrimination.” Whether they elected to “keep the 800 SAT minimum,” “abandon the SAT minimum,” or “adopt some substitute,” an answer to each of these points would aid his committee in determining how their conference might “‘protect’ the presumed academic standards represented” by the 800 rule.³¹

Caldwell wanted to have this study wrapped up “in some manageable fashion” before he left on a three-month sabbatical in mid-June, pleading that the institution heads “undertake the responses requested as soon as it is practical for you to do so.” A speedy resolution was preferable for another reason: the Woolbright Case was still pending at the time of his letter. But, as answers from Duke, North Carolina, and Virginia were still outstanding at the time of his desired deadline (perhaps by design), Caldwell soon realized the resolution he sought for scheduling purposes — and Dietzel and Jones demanded for competitive ones — wasn’t going to materialize. “President Jones has indicated to me an anxious desire to have a conclusion before July 1,” he wrote the institution heads on June 15. “It is evident to me that this is not possible.” Indeed, with “two or three prospects who could be accepted at a less-than-800 score,” he reported how Jones “hoped that this issue might be resolved

³¹ Thomas F. Jones to John T. Caldwell, June 5, 1970 (first quotation); John T. Caldwell to ACC Institution Heads, May 21, 1970 (second through thirteenth quotations); both in Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1969-1970), Jones Series.

one way or the other by July.” Even without these three replies, those he did have in hand were “not unanimous for any position and obviously require further consultation.” Quick solutions, in his view, were insufficient anyhow, since “it never occurred to me we would be aiming at a decision earlier than September or October of this year prior to the beginning of a new recruiting season.”³²

In light of such deliberation, Caldwell called for a meeting, at the earliest, in late September, after he returned to work. One can only imagine how this delay went over in Columbia. By that time, the fall recruiting season would be well underway. Dietzel fretted that his coaches might take to the recruiting trail without any definite sense of who they could sign, and by what standard. The summer of 1970 thus became a season of uncertainty, not only for South Carolina but every program in the conference. Barrows captured the dubiety of the moment in his *Charlotte Observer* column in July. “Where does all this leave the Atlantic Coast Conference? What is likely to happen to the 800 Rule? What will the special committee of the eight presidents of the eight universities recommend when they finish their study of the situation in September?” He was certain “they will recommend repeal.” Over in Chapel Hill, the white-hot center of the Big Four, UNC chancellor J. Carlyle Sitterson had other ideas in mind. Finally mailing his reply to Caldwell’s survey later that month, he asserted that “the 800 SAT minimum seems such a modest, indeed low, SAT score that we do not regard the rationale for removing it as compelling.” For eligibility criteria to “have a clear relationship to educational objectives” wasn’t at all contradictory to the cause of diversity. “While our experience in recruiting culturally deprived students and students of a minority race has not been all we hoped,” he pointed with pride to head football coach Bill Dooley and head basketball coach Dean Smith, both of whom

³² John T. Caldwell to ACC Institution Heads, May 21, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1969-1970), Jones Series (first and second quotations); John T. Caldwell to ACC Institution Heads, June 15, 1970, Folder 23, Edwards Correspondence (third through sixth quotations).

achieved “considerable success in recruitment of black athletes” — within “our existing admissions requirements.” If UNC could attract black talent under the 800 rule, why, then, couldn’t USC? Hence, the delicious irony of Dietzel’s scheme: those black athletes whom he exploited all spring as a symbol of the ills of the 800 rule, so he might sign more white stars like Woolbright, became the very ones, by fall, he needed most.³³

III

Just three weeks after his team returned home from the Peach Bowl in Atlanta, Dietzel struck a deal, with Georgia Tech athletics director Bobby Dodd, that would take them back there to start their 1970 season. “Under hurried conditions” — as Dodd described their negotiations — brought about by the NCAA’s recent addition of an eleventh game to the regular season, starting that fall, he and Dietzel agreed that their September 12 date at Grant Field would serve as a first installment in a decade-long series. Explaining the wisdom of such a long-term arrangement to a skeptical Athletic Board, Dodd wanted “to see us sign a contract” given that Georgia Tech, one of the few major independents in the South, had to take a game whenever, and with whomever, it could. With such considerations in mind, he counseled, “a game with South Carolina is desirable for several reasons.” Still adjusting competitively and commercially to life after bolting the SEC some six years earlier, the \$200,000 in revenue the game was expected to generate would make their “financial picture . . . look brighter.” Certainly, the USC contingent that filled Grant Field in December showed how the Gamecocks could

³³ Thomas F. Jones to John T. Caldwell, October 1, 1970, “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series; Barrows clipping, Folder “Athletics — General, 1970-1971,” Box 8, President’s Papers, RG-2/1/2.741 (1970-1971) (second and third quotations); J. Carlyle Sitterson to Helen O. Mann, July 21, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference, 1966-1971,” Box 15, Sitterson Series (fourth through eighth quotations).

“draw a good crowd.” And, in his opinion, it promised to be a good game — make that, a *winnable* game — seeing how “the South Carolina team is rather comparable to ours in terms of ability.”³⁴

In every way but one: its quarterback. Sure, South Carolina possessed a capable field marshal in the scrappy, scrambling senior, Tommy Suggs. But, in Eddie McAshan, Georgia Tech would suit up an entirely different sort of signal caller on that scorching hot September afternoon than any major southern team ever had — a *black* quarterback. The appearance of this lanky sophomore — known as “Skip,” to friends and teammates — in his gold-and-white uniform, emblazoned with the number 1, was made all the more extraordinary considering that informal understanding throughout the world of football, whether north or south, pro or college, that the quarterback position was one reserved exclusively for white athletes. Yet, in his freshman year, as well as the Yellow Jackets’ spring drills, McAshan had demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt that he belonged over center. A native of Gainesville, Florida, he landed in Atlanta after his hometown Florida Gators, and Tech’s arch-rival Georgia, dismissed him as an academic risk, a convenient excuse for their unwillingness to see him call plays. Not that the Tech faithful were any more enthusiastic about him taking the field that day. Indeed, as 11,000 Gamecock fans summoned forth a pre-game cheer that was “as boisterous as a St. Patrick’s Day parade,” in the view of the *Atlanta Journal*’s Furman Bisher, “a sort of hush fell over the Tech side of the field,” where 40,000 supporters collectively held their breath. “There was every kind of fear running up and down the spines of people who have watched Tech football on this spot, and whose daddies and daddies’ daddies have before them”: a continuity of experience which

³⁴ Georgia Tech Athletic Board Minutes, January 22, 1970 (first, second, fifth, and sixth quotations); Georgia Tech Athletic Board Minutes, March 26, 1970 (third and fourth quotations); both in Folder 20, Box 13, Glenn Weddington Rainey Papers, Emory. See also Herman Helms, “The Birth Of A Football Rivalry,” *The State*, September 10, 1970, C1-C2.

encompassed “the times when Eddie McAshan’s predecessors dared make their appearance at the back door only with hat in hand.”³⁵

Whatever trepidation these fans felt about McAshan as the ball was kicked off at 2 o’clock, Bisher quipped, “was over by 2:15 pm,” when he hit the outstretched arms of senior fullback Steve Harkey in the end zone for Tech’s first touchdown. “In mid-season passing form,” Bisher’s colleague Jesse Outlar opined, “he had the West Stands” — where the Tech students sat — “cheering” as he completed 20 of his 38 passes, amassing 202 yards through the air. “Old Engineers couldn’t recall a soph quarterback with more poise and passing ability than McAshan,” directing his team to a 23-20 win, from a 20-17 halftime deficit, with all the skill of a seasoned veteran. With Tech’s white fans dreaming of the heights to which their Jackets might soar in “the McAshan Era,” as Outlar dubbed it from his perch in the press box, Marion Jackson of the *Atlanta Daily World*, seated just down the row, warned his black readers against buying into such “malarkey.” One game a star does not make: “whether he plays spectacular, mediocre, and with the ultimate perfectionist skill will depend a lot on crowd attitude and grandstand patterns.” Grant Field’s largely white crowds were with him on this afternoon because he won; what would they think of him following his first loss? Furthermore, “playing in Atlanta is one thing, but outside, deep in the Confederacy, may be another.” The Jackets played in “Rebel Country” just once that season — at Auburn, in mid-October. “If this was to be the year of decision at Georgia Tech for smashing the color line,” he posited, “the timing was superb.”³⁶

³⁵ Bisher, “Color Tech the Gold of a New Day,” *AJ*, September 13, 1970, C1, C13 (first through fourth quotations). On the history of the black quarterback, see William C. Rhoden, *Third and a Mile: The Trials and Triumphs of the Black Quarterback* (New York: ESPN Books, 2007). On Georgia’s reluctance to sign McAshan, see Fred C. Davison, Draft Response to HEW Findings, undated [October 1969], Folder “Health, Education, and Welfare, Department of (1967),” Box 32, Davison Papers.

³⁶ Bisher, “Color Tech the Gold of a New Day,” C13 (first quotation); Outlar, “McAshan Era Dawns With 23-20 Tech Win,” *AC*, September 13, 1970, C1 (second through fifth quotations); Jackson, “Sports of the World,”

What Jackson couldn't have known, as he interviewed Dietzel outside his locker room, was how surely the coach was angling to make this year one of decision for South Carolina, too. Entering the game, Dietzel confidently attested, "we're a little better than we were last year." That supposition receded with each swing pass McAshan completed to Harkey, leaving Pepsodent Paul to unsmilingly explain to a clamoring pack of sportswriters how yet another integrated opponent with an impressive black star had taken the measure of his all-white squad. Like West Virginia's Carl Crennel before him, McAshan, in Dietzel's view, "came up with some big plays and we couldn't stop them." It was clear from where he watched on the far sideline that "McAshan's going to be a great" — "a fine athlete" who "showed tremendous poise" in a second-half comeback. As for himself, he was losing his nerve: two straight losses to two integrated teams — two integrated teams *from the South*, no less — "tore him up inside," noted *The State's* Herman Helms, with visions of the defeats that lay ahead when his Gamecocks encountered an increasing number of Crennels and McAshans. Athletes like Maryland safety Tony Greene, who Dietzel praised five weeks later, after the Terrapins scored a 21-15 upset over USC, as "so fast, he scares the heck out of you." While a pair of black athletes joined USC's freshman squad that season, the varsity team, as segregated as ever, increasingly resembled a refugee from Jackson's "Rebel Country," plodding the path of least resistance into this new decade. (Of the eleven teams on USC's 1970 schedule, only Georgia and Clemson had yet to integrate.) More important, Crennel and McAshan, playing on opposite sides of the ball, proved how athletes of color could be difference makers, with their respective performances against South Carolina supplying the

ADW, September 18, 1970, 5 (sixth through eighth quotations).

difference between victory and defeat for their own teams — *and* for the Gamecocks, as well.³⁷

Dietzel came to South Carolina to build a winner, not a racial utopia. But he recognized how his program was playing at a game it couldn't win, so he changed tack: now, aggressively pursuing black athletes, he sent his assistant coaches forth on the recruiting trail with the charge to sign only the best — in sum, *difference makers*. It wasn't that hard. Practically every morning, he and his staff could have simply opened the sports pages of *The State* and used it as a catalogue for choosing the best local black talent, whom were thrust into the public eye with the desegregation of Columbia's high schools the week before Labor Day. (A thorough examination of the sports pages of *The State* for the whole month of September 1970, reveals that most stories about local prep football involved the abilities of one of the black athletes who presently landed at a previously all-white high school.) Or, he could have met a few of them at the first meeting of the Columbia Touchdown Club for the 1970 season, two days before the Georgia Tech game, where he was the featured speaker — and one of the organization's prep players of the week was a black running back. Desegregation was in the air, which was what made the inability of Dietzel's staff to sign any of their top black recruits worry him so. Indeed, it was only twelve days after losing to McAshan and his Tech team that Dietzel submitted his forlorn recruiting report to President Jones — the one in which he declared, “we cannot sign a single black athlete.” And losing these quality prospects to mere conference rules, he convinced himself and everyone else on campus, would prove a defeat far more damaging to USC's long-term

³⁷ Hudspeth, “Tech Puts Line on Line,” C3 (first quotation); Jackson, “Sports of the World,” 5 (second through fifth quotations); Herman Helms, “A Player Who Knows About the Price,” *The State*, September 17, 1970, C1, C4 (sixth quotation); Attner, “Greene Races To Defense of Maryland,” *WP*, October 29, 1970, H5 (seventh quotation).

competitive ambitions than any it might ever suffer on the field of play.³⁸

A sense of urgency was injected into this effort with the arrival of the results from Chancellor Caldwell's study on the 800 rule. Supplying each institution head with an oversized chart, detailing the answers to each of his four queries, Caldwell wanted to give them, as he put it, "some knowledge of the varied positions of our colleagues" (table 5.1). "It is evident," he observed, "that we do not have sufficient agreement to resolve . . . the question of the 800 SAT minimum score requirement for grant-in-aid eligibility." If sufficient agreement was the threshold — after all, it took six votes to change any ACC bylaw — then this cacophony of opinions evinced that reaching a compromise was nearly impossible. Of course, the Big Four opposed any change. Refuting Dietzel's insistence that the ACC adopt the NCAA's eligibility standard for its own, Duke president Terry Sanford (a former North Carolina governor and erstwhile presidential candidate) declared that "we still believe that the ACC should lead, rather than follow, NCAA practices in these matters." J. Carlyle Sitterson at UNC wasn't convinced any element of racial discrimination was even involved. "I do not believe that there is any clear evidence that the SAT is racially discriminatory, although there seems to be some indication that it may contain some 'bias' against 'culturally and socially deprived' persons." In many ways, "it might be argued that the 1.6 is equally discriminatory, or that indeed whatever academic criteria an institution or the Conference adopts is to some degree discriminatory." Wake Forest president James Ralph Scales only foresaw popular outrage. "If the ACC abandons the 800 minimum, it will be perfectly natural for the general public and for future college athletes to assume this implies a lowering of academic standards for the purpose of improving football." As it stood, "the athlete

³⁸ "Touchdown Club Features Dietzel," *The State*, September 10, 1970, C2; Paul F. Dietzel to Thomas F. Jones, September 24, 1970, Folder "Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings," Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series (quotation).

who chooses the ACC in preference to conferences with lower admission standards is . . . more likely to have at least a modicum of academic ambition.” Any change that might allow a prospect — white or black — who scored at or just above 800, but “hardly above the mid-point of high school class,” to earn eligibility at Wake Forest or any other ACC member “would involve a very high academic risk.”³⁹

But this was a risk that USC leaders had already shown themselves willing to take. “We urge that eligibility requirements be sufficiently modified,” Jones wrote Caldwell, “to allow us to achieve representation in athletics of underprivileged groups to the same extent as most other nationally recognized schools, by adopting the NCAA standards.” Under the NCAA’s 1.6 standard alone, all of Dietzel’s top black recruits were eligible — even if none of them scored the requisite 800 on the SAT. Eager to align USC’s fortunes with this more favorable approach, Jones looked to the NCAA for help. Like Dietzel appealing to Commissioner Weaver for a resolution to the Woolbright Case, he believed that winning the support of NCAA executive director Walter Byers — ostensibly the most powerful man in college athletics — might tip the scales in their favor. Byers had long proven himself a fierce advocate for NCAA policy — and a vindictive adversary for those who chose to preempt or oppose it. The 1.6 GPA, he argued, “was the NCAA’s soundest approach to a national academic standard.” Balkanizing eligibility standards, as the ACC did with the 800 rule, seemed to fly in the face of those measures which centralized enforcement authority in the NCAA — something Byers

³⁹ John T. Caldwell to ACC Institution Heads, September 25, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference, 1969-1971,” Box 1, Pye Records (first and second quotations); Terry Sanford to Helen O. Mann, August 4, 1970 (third quotation); James Ralph Scales to John T. Caldwell, June 8, 1970 (sixth through ninth quotations); both in Folder “ACC Study — Student Athlete Eligibility Requirements, 1970-1971,” Box 52, Office of the Chancellor General Records; J. Carlyle Sitterson to Helen O. Mann, July 21, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference, 1966-1971,” Box 15, Sitterson Series (fourth and fifth quotations). For Caldwell’s chart, see Atlantic Coast Conference Eligibility Questionnaire Chart, undated [September 25, 1970], Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series.

obviously preferred. Knowing this, Jones thought might find a receptive, even sympathetic audience in him. And, with Caldwell calling for an October 21 meeting in Raleigh of the eight ACC institution heads, the chance to lobby Byers face-to-face had to come as soon as possible.⁴⁰

On the morning of October 6, then, Jones and three other USC officials — Board member Sol Blatt, Jr., the chair of the Athletic Committee; faculty athletic chair John C. Guilds; and Dietzel's top administrative assistant, Weems Baskin — boarded a five-hour flight for Kansas City, where the NCAA was then headquartered, for what amounted to a two-hour audience with the autocratic Byers. Upon his return, Blatt — a former athlete at USC and the scion of a politically powerful family from Barnwell — detailed the substance of the meeting for his fellow Trustees. "In my opinion," he wrote them, "the people at the NCAA think our conference is absolutely 'nuts' to have the 800 minimum score." Indeed, as his own minutes from the meeting reveal, Byers advised them that "the NCAA is against any cut-off." In fact, he reported that "many of the Ivy League schools are allowing students to enter" under the 1.6 standard. "The Ivy League, which are the schools that North Carolina, Duke, and Virginia are, in the words of the NCAA people, trying to 'ape,'" Blatt noted, savoring the irony, "... are really far more liberal even than we are in wanting a change to this rule." Eliminating the 1.6 GPA, according to Byers' version of things, "is a must" for the Ivies, "because it keeps the disadvantaged student out of athletics and these are the type of students that the Ivy League now is trying to help." Jones and Blatt then informed Byers that a similar consideration was behind their meeting with him, since USC was trying to help the same kinds of students through "our efforts to recruit" black athletes. "However," they ruefully explained, "our academic standards prohibited them

⁴⁰ Thomas F. Jones to John T. Caldwell, June 5, 1970, Folder "Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings," Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series (first quotation); Walter Byers with Charles Hammer, *Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Exploiting College Athletes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 158 (second quotation).

from getting in school.” Unblinking, Byers again reiterated how the 800 rule made little competitive sense, a point on which he found no disagreement among his visitors. “We are the only conference in the Country with anything like that,” Blatt fumed, “and it is a mystery to me how we have remained competitive with this kind of handicap.”⁴¹

Their conversation with Byers brought that other dilemma — the feasibility of remaining a member of the ACC — into rather sharp focus. If Dietzel couldn’t pursue prospects who could help him remain competitive, then, as Blatt’s notes suggested, South Carolina was willing to seek Byers’ aid in forming a new conference. With some degree of optimism, Blatt reported to the Trustees that “we think we would have no trouble in forming a new conference” because, “certainly, the people at NCAA headquarters will cooperate in such an undertaking if we leave the ACC.” What’s more, Byers offered to write Jones a letter “setting forth that the NCAA objects to the use of the minimum SAT score as a prerequisite to athletic participation” — which he did, the next day, in a data-laden document which substantiated unequivocally that the ACC was “the only one following procedures more demanding” the NCAA’s own policies. Little good it did. Aside from these niceties, Blatt was less certain that the imperious Byers would stoop to aid USC in this fight: “I doubt we are going to get much help.” Compounding these doubts was his suspicion that USC wouldn’t receive “any relief from the meeting of the presidents this month.” He was beginning to sound a note of inevitability

⁴¹ Sol Blatt, Jr., to USC Board of Trustees, October 12, 1970 (first, fourth, fifth, and eighth quotations); Sol Blatt, Jr., Minutes for Meeting held in NCAA Office, October 6, 1970 (second, third, sixth, and seventh quotations); both in Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series. There was some validity to what Byers told them about the Ivy League. The Ivies’ opposition could be seen as early as the implementation of the 1.6 standard in 1966. That April, Princeton president Robert Goheen, then serving as the chairman of the Ivy League Policy Committee, informed the NCAA that his group’s objections stemmed, in part, from the fact that this “predictive standard will not always be appropriate to the lad from the slum school or other disadvantaged environment.” See Robert F. Goheen to Everett D. Barnes and the Council of the NCAA, memorandum, April 13, 1966, Folder “Athletics: General, 1965-1967,” Box 1, Friday Files.

himself: “it looks to me as though we are going to have to get out of the ACC.” This wasn’t idle chatter. He had bought, lock, stock, and barrel, into the seeming urgency of this crisis for USC. “After our trip to Kansas City,” he confided to Jones, “I am more than ever convinced that we should get out of the Conference if we cannot get a 25% exemption” of any recruiting class from the 800 rule. Moreover, if the deteriorating situation led to withdrawal, “I am of the opinion that the Athletic Committee and the full Board will vote” to support this plan of action.⁴²

Girding themselves for this possibility, Dietzel, Jones, and the Trustees pulled even tighter. “I think that this is one thing we can all unite to do,” Blatt lobbied the Board. “We would not get out until after basketball season this year has been completed” — in early March — “and so I do not think it would really interfere with any of our schedules and we will have ample time to start a new conference by next football season.” Not that he thought the ACC brethren would hold any of this against South Carolina. “With the new seats added to our stadium by next fall, I do not believe there is a single ACC school, with the possible exception of Duke, who would not want to play us any way.” Even Dietzel shared this conviction, counseling Jones that “they need us and Clemson to stay in business.” All of them would learn that South Carolina wasn’t indispensable soon enough.⁴³

IV

Two weeks after Jones and company visited Kansas City, and about seven days before the institution

⁴² Sol Blatt, Jr., to USC Board of Trustees, October 12, 1970 (first through third and fifth through seventh quotations); Walter Byers to Thomas F. Jones, October 7, 1970 (fourth quotation); Sol Blatt, Jr., to Thomas F. Jones, October 12, 1970 (eighth and ninth quotations); all in Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series.

⁴³ Sol Blatt, Jr., to USC Board of Trustees, October 12, 1970 (first through third quotations); Paul F. Dietzel, Notes from the ACC Meeting of Presidents, October 21, 1970 (fourth quotation); both in Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series.

heads convened in Raleigh, on October 21, Virginia's newly-hired athletics director Gene Corrigan — himself a future ACC commissioner — set his thoughts on the 800 rule down on paper. Writing UVa vice president Alan Williams while cleaning out his office at Washington and Lee (in fact, the letter was typed on W&L letterhead), he observed that, for Cavalier football, the rule “would be just as well left as it is.” The 800 score was “extremely low” — so low that it “at least put a cut-off on some of our conference members” and “kept us closer together [competitively] than we otherwise would be.” And, yet, “taking the opposite tack,” he appreciated the pressures facing those members, like South Carolina and Clemson, “that play and lose — consistently — to other major conference schools” in the SEC or Big Ten. Having developed “a reputation, among the press in particular, of being a second rate football conference,” the ACC couldn't afford to lose USC or even Clemson, for that reputation “will be further magnified” if they “should withdraw.” Such a drastic step seemed to him, at this date at least, “an outside chance.”

Far from Dietzel's rant against the Big Four for intentionally limiting the number of football scholarships, Corrigan placed this rule “among [the] best football legislation that the ACC presently has.” Nevertheless, “it seems to me that the time has come to bend a little.” The idea of “a specified number” of exemptions — “student athletes below 800” — appealed to him “as long as they meet the NCAA 1.600 requirements” and they were “residents of the state of the various institutions” (e.g., a black athlete from Columbia being allowed to play at South Carolina, and not Duke or UVa). While “we cannot, in justice to our coaches and athletes, be for the complete elimination of the 800,” since “it would tend to put us at a further disadvantage,” Corrigan did see some wisdom in finding common ground with USC, especially in light of UVa's own need for athletes of color. “It is possible that allowing several athletes in under 800 might very well help Virginia with a few Negro student athletes

who have high IQ, class standing, and recommendations, but very low college boards. It is, in short, something that we can live with for the good conference.” That said, he harbored little sympathy for Dietzel’s self-serving agenda, or Clemson athletics director Frank Howard’s complicity in it. “Dietzel and Howard, to my way of thinking, do not have any idea of how difficult it is for an athlete to compete academically within the Virginia student body.”⁴⁴

Corrigan’s letter neatly framed the central considerations in what had, by then, become an absurd situation, mostly of Dietzel’s own making. For those administrators and coaches, who dealt daily with the realities of running a football program, Dietzel did have a point: the ACC was founded in 1953, as a *football* conference, but allowed its gridiron ambitions to atrophy during the sixties. These eight programs, in their way, were balancing a faltering competitive profile with their efforts to attract black talent which could easily go elsewhere. A solution — at once fair to football and academically respectable — was paramount. Even Chancellor Caldwell’s own faculty athletics chair, NC State dean of Engineering Ralph Fadum, who would be elected president of the ACC later that year, had privately proposed correctives similar to Corrigan’s. His “reasonable solution” was that “the student would be eligible either if he made 800 or above or if he is in the top 50% of his class.” “On the face of it,” he told Caldwell, “it would not appear that we are lowering standards.” For State’s coaches, this plan would “ensure that the action that we might want to propose” wasn’t “contrary to their interests.” More important, “this has the special merit that it be especially helpful to the black students inasmuch as they frequently have high class standings, yet low SAT scores.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Eugene F. Corrigan to Alan Williams, October 14, 1970, Folder “Athletics — ACC,” Box 8, Presidents’ Papers, RG-2/1/2.741 (1970-1971) (quotations). Corrigan served as ACC commissioner from 1987 to 1997.

⁴⁵ R. E. Fadum to John T. Caldwell, May 15, 1970, Folder “ACC Study — Student Athlete Eligibility Requirements, 1970-1971,” Box 52, Office of the Chancellor General Records (quotations).

The hard line was drawn, instead, by the institution heads themselves. Many were resentful of the disingenuous way in which Dietzel and, to a lesser degree, Jones had browbeat the ACC with racial imperatives. A university that hadn't demonstrated the slightest interest in desegregation until it was a competitive necessity wasn't bound to win much sympathy, or support, from the other seven institution heads, each of whom were dealing with the same set of problems. Indeed, on the morning of October 21, before gaveling his appointed meeting to order, Caldwell phoned Corrigan's boss, Virginia president Ed Shannon, who couldn't attend in person. For more than a half-hour, Shannon outlined UVa's opposition to any change in the 800 rule — a far more conservative critique than that which Corrigan put forth. Like USC, Virginia was “struggling also with HEW,” particularly its Charlottesville regional chief, Eloise Severinson, and her “push to get more blacks” on the Cavalier teams. But such pressure from external forces, he argued, couldn't push aside the necessity for these eligibility standards. “Strongly” of the mind that the ACC “ought to hold [to] the 800 rule,” Shannon advised Caldwell that it was “not discriminatory” since it “applies to whites and blacks”: “so low,” in his view, that it was “not [a] true hurdle.” Indeed, the purported dimension of racial discrimination here — as alleged by Dietzel and Jones — was “not a problem.” “Any student ought to be in if he is in,” Shannon stated, with each member “maintaining — or trying to — institutional prerogative on admissions” of African Americans, athletes or not.⁴⁶

Reading from a scribbled set of notes, Caldwell summarized Shannon's objections later that day for the institution heads who could attend the meeting: Jones, Edwards, J. Carlyle Sitterson of

⁴⁶ This paragraph is based on both Caldwell and Shannon's handwritten notes of the same conversation, which were nearly identical. See Edgar F. Shannon, Jr., “Notes of telephone conversation with John Caldwell for ACC Presidents' Meeting, 21 Oct. 1970,” October 21, 1970, Folder “Athletics — ACC,” Box 8, President's Papers, RG-2/1/2.741 (1970-1971); John T. Caldwell, “Notes on Ed Shannon Conversation,” October 21, 1970, Folder “ACC Study — Student Athlete Eligibility Requirements, 1970-1971,” Box 52, Office of the Chancellor General Records.

North Carolina, James Ralph Scales of Wake Forest, and Duke chancellor A. Kenneth Pye, who Dietzel (an observer to the proceedings) dismissed as “some young Turk out in left field,” showing himself to be “antagonistic toward sports.” (Wilson Elkins from Maryland couldn’t make his flight “because of inclement weather.”) With the Big Four leaders all seated on one side of the table, and Jones, Dietzel, and Edwards on the other, the meeting, by its nature, was a showdown between two competing notions of what the ACC should be: a highly regulated league with high-minded academic ambition; or one that accommodated the vicissitudes of competition in the standards it adopted to govern eligibility. The answer to that quandary was likely to reveal whether South Carolina would remain in the ACC. In that way, Caldwell understood how the survival of the league as it presently existed hinged upon placating Dietzel and Jones without giving in to their every demand. So, in a sort of bombshell, he informed the group that campus leaders like Fadum “feel State should go” to the NCAA’s 1.6 standard, rather than continuing with the 800 rule. “Dr. Caldwell,” Dietzel exclaimed, “seems to be with us all the way.” Taken aback by the apparent defection of one of the Big Four, Pye snapped at Caldwell, reminding him that USC and Clemson were “only interested in lowering the standards to bring in pro athletes” — those players, whether white or black, who could simply help them win. Before either Jones or Edwards could rebut these charges, Sitterson leapt into the fray, declaring that his own coaches “would not want to lower the 800 college board score.” Nor could Jones and Edwards possibly appreciate how Duke was “so high geared in academics that lowering the 800 would put them out of business.” “I gather,” Dietzel noted of Duke athletics, “they are running on about a half million dollar deficit at the present time.” Yet, to his mind, fealty, not finances, bound these two rivals each-to-each. “Duke also pats North Carolina on the back for their high academic standards; however, it is a known fact that no one else in the United States is patting

them on the back as there are many fine institutions with great football teams and their 1.6 seems to fit their shoes and keep their academic standards at the highest level.”

There was no shortage of backpatting on the other side of the table, either. Dietzel praised Jones for how he “presented our case with the most talented knowledge in both phases of academics and athletics.” “Firm, strong in your convictions, and very pleasant,” Jones laid out the competitive exigence resting behind the proposed move toward the NCAA standards. Utilizing the letter which Byers supplied him after their Kansas City meeting, he revealed that 569 NCAA member institutions used the 1.6 GPA as their eligibility standard — in essence, attempting to persuade Pye and Sitterson that USC wasn’t asking for a diminution of standards, but a coordination with nearly everyone else. Edwards, who Dietzel claimed “did a fine job,” invoked the political minefield into which the league had recently wandered in the Woolbright Case to illustrate the seeming pitfalls of the 800 rule. “No young man would want to continue taking tests,” he asserted, “when he knew that he could be accepted at several outstanding schools of higher learning” with Woolbright’s 790 score.⁴⁷

It was no use. Neither Jones nor Edwards could make Pye and Sitterson budge. The meeting ended without any resolution on the issue. Though finding Caldwell “agreeable” to the 1.6 standard, thereby bringing NC State round to their side, was a small triumph for South Carolina and Clemson, Jones and Dietzel returned to Columbia convinced that USC wasn’t going to win this debate so long as the “academic” members — Duke, North Carolina, Virginia, Wake Forest — continued to oppose any revision of the 800 rule. Edwards’ mood seemed even darker. “I wish I could be optimistic about the possibility that we shall ever be able to reach an agreement within the Conference,” he wrote

⁴⁷ Paul F. Dietzel, Notes from ACC Meeting of Presidents, October 21, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series (quotations). Dietzel’s notes of the meeting are remarkably detailed and the only firsthand account to survive.

Caldwell the next day. “Barring a miracle, however, I don’t see how it can happen.”⁴⁸

Although the “lack of agreement on retaining or dropping the 800 rule became evident,” Caldwell attempted to put the best face on a bad meeting. “It also became evident that we each and all needed a more penetrating analysis of the actual meaning of the present 800 SAT minimum and its effect on our individual campuses and admissions results.” He asked the institution heads to have their admissions directors work with a consulting firm on an additional study of the league’s SAT data, which would be completed in time for the ACC’s winter meetings in Greensboro. Yet the time for further study had come and gone at South Carolina. “It is our considered belief,” Dietzel railed, “that we have patiently awaited relief on this problem far longer than should be normally expected.” Pouting, now, that USC’s sway with the ACC brethren was at a low ebb, he protested that “no one school can ever dominate conference legislation nor should any member’s needs and wishes be totally ignored.” Every conference requires “a give and take attitude . . . if the group is to survive and grow.” And, yet, USC had given the ACC grief for most of the year, dominating league business with Dietzel’s scheme to improve the fortunes of Gamecock football. Beat at its own game, it was — in the quintessential act of a loser — taking its ball and going home. Or, at least taking its services elsewhere. “In view of the fact that the ACC ‘signing date’ and the Winter Conference meeting are both in early December at almost the exact same time,” he insisted, “it is not in the best overall interest for this institution to continue in this academic year with the scholarship requirement policies of the Atlantic Coast Conference.” Playing the race card again, for good measure, he charged that “recent events, of national significance” — that is, desegregation — “have pointedly emphasized the

⁴⁸ Paul F. Dietzel, Notes from ACC Meeting of Presidents, October 21, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series (first quotation); Robert C. Edwards to John T. Caldwell, October 22, 1970, Folder 23, Edwards Correspondence (second quotation).

gravity of some of the specific problems facing at least some of the state universities in our conference.” “Acutely aware of the possible consequences,” he concluded, “we feel that we have no further alternatives” that to chart a new course.⁴⁹

But alternatives abounded. USC could have made due with the 800 rule. Dietzel could have found black athletes who did score 800 on their SATs. He and Jones could have tried a lighter touch in bringing the matter before the ACC brethren, who, in turn, might have been more receptive to their concerns. By bulldozing its way forward, dispensing with any diplomatic sensibility, always trying to compel others to do its bidding, and pursuing Dietzel’s agenda with a brazen degree of self interest, USC painted itself into a corner. Its leaders, not the ACC brethren, left its program with few options but the most drastic ones. On October 23, then, the Board of Trustees issued a press release, announcing how they had “authoriz[ed] the Athletic Department to proceed with recruiting athletes in accordance with the NCAA national entrance standards for intercollegiate participation.” They arrived at this decision, their statement averred, so that Dietzel might “assure recruits” that NCAA standards “will prevail at Carolina” at the time of their entrance in September of 1971, “thereby assuring their eligibility to participate.” Pledging their determination to “continue to work diligently within the ACC . . . toward readjusting eligibility requirements,” the Trustees similarly attested — astonishingly enough — how their decision to forego the 800 rule “does not involve any violation of ACC by-laws.” Except that they had merely dispensed with a bylaw that didn’t suit their interests, suggesting that USC would operate thereafter by a single standard: doing anything and everything

⁴⁹ John T. Caldwell to ACC Institution Heads, October 22, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings,” Box 6 (1970-1971) (first and second quotations); Paul F. Dietzel, Draft Resolution of the University of South Carolina, undated [October 1970] (third through sixth quotations); Paul F. Dietzel, Draft Resolution of Clemson University, the University of Maryland, and the University of South Carolina, undated [October 1970] (seventh and eighth quotations); both in Folder “Athletic Affairs: Misc.,” Box 4 (1970-1971); all in Jones Series.

that might help Dietzel finally make the Gamecocks into a winner.⁵⁰

No matter how many times Dietzel proclaimed publicly that “we have no desire to leave the conference,” South Carolina’s withdrawal from the ACC looked, to one and all, as pretty much a *fait accompli* by this point. And the reaction to the Trustees’ announcement was, unsurprisingly, overwhelmingly condemnatory. “The ACC deserves credit for establishing its higher standard,” an editorial in the *Durham Herald* declared. “Its teams may not win as many games, but after all athletic excellence is not a primary purpose in higher education — although it must be admitted that, from the emphasis on winning teams, a good many people would appear to think so.” The *Charlotte Observer* worried that USC’s move gestured toward “a questionable practice”: “admitting borderline cases . . . knowing that the athlete may never graduate from school.” The student paper at NC State, *The Technician*, blasted the act as a violation of USC’s academic mission. “Schools should not be forced by its athletic programs to alter this philosophy by bringing in a special group, with special requirements, opportunities, and privileges.” While Jones protested that “we will be governed in recruiting under the same standards as . . . Harvard,” even a Boston sportswriter couldn’t help but lampoon how the “one answer” to getting these athletes into USC was “to offer courses in the pre-Civil War South”: “to pass these courses the athletes will be required to sip bourbon in the moonlight under a magnolia, while attending cock fights and horse races.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ Statement made by T. Eston Marchant, October 23, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Misc.,” Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series (quotations).

⁵¹ Hyatt, “Dietzel Awaits ACC Struggle,” C4 (first quotation); “Athletic and Academic Showdown,” *Durham Herald*, November 1, 1970, clipping found in Folder 1916, Box 53, Hahn Papers (second quotation); “Without Compromise, ACC May Have to Let S. C. Go,” *Charlotte Observer*, October 27, 1970, clipping found in Folder 23, Edwards Correspondence (third and fourth quotations); “ACC Should Keep 800,” *The Technician*, October 30, 1970, clipping found in Folder “ACC Study — Student Athlete Eligibility Requirements, 1970-1971,” Box 52, Office of the Chancellor General Records (fifth quotations); Thomas F. Jones to Jeff Weiner, April 2, 1971 (sixth quotation); Boyce Harman, “Cock Fighting Next at South Carolina,” *Boston Globe*, undated clipping [circa

“Maintaining integrity has always been a justification for secession,” this same sportswriter observer. “This time academic rather than political integrity is the reason for the split.” Like those Palmetto state firebrands in 1860, who, objecting to the ascendance of Abraham Lincoln to the White House, left the Union, “South Carolina has seceded again.” Some in the USC camp worried that, for a petty squabble over policy, they weren’t pulling the temple down on their heads. One Gamecock fan — who much preferred basketball over football — warned Jones that “it would be foolish to jeopardize” Frank McGuire’s “successful program . . . by leaving the best basketball conference in America” in favor of “some hoped-for results in football.” To him, the root of this whole situation traced back to Dietzel’s ambitions. “It would seem that Coach Dietzel’s argument for the NCAA standards would be more digestible if in fact Carolina had enjoyed tremendous success against other ACC foes (having equal entrance requirements) and poor success against out-of-conference foes. This has not been the case since Carolina enjoys only one ACC football title.” And the shine on that championship trophy was tarnished somewhat by the dismal showing of Dietzel’s team in 1970 — 4-6-1. Not the sort of play by which winners are made. If anything, his preoccupation with winning in the board rooms, and not on the field of play, resulted in a sort of Pyrrhic victory. He had secured his long-sought-after break with the ACC — by policy first; then, in March of 1971, by practice. One must wonder, though, if, competing in the years to come as an independent, consigned to the same vagabond status as Georgia Tech, unmoored from its “old and valued opponents” in the ACC, facing one losing season after another, any trace of doubt ever ran through Dietzel’s head.⁵²

April 1971] (seventh through tenth quotations); both in Folder “Athletic Affairs: Misc.,” Box 4 (1970-1971), Jones Series.

⁵² Harman clipping, Folder “Athletic Affairs: Misc.,” Box 4 (1970-1971) (first and second quotations); William R. Moore to Thomas F. Jones, December 15, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Misc.,” Box 6 (1970-1971) (third through fifth quotations); Statement from T. Eston Marchant, Chairman of the University of

There was little doubt that many in the ACC were very happy to see the Gamecocks go. “Let them withdraw if they want to,” Pye exclaimed. “I think we would be much better off in a six-team conference than we would be in an eight-team conference where we would face varsity players whom we cannot recruit, but who will find a happy home at South Carolina.” What’s more, he told Jones that “I could not vote to entrust the chicken to the fox.” Sitterson argued that compromises did no good for institutions, like South Carolina, which “had violated regulations with all of the facts before them.” Frustrated by the lack of a compromise “between those of our Conference members who think we ought to have a higher standard and those who think we ought to have the same standard,” Caldwell complained that, “if we can’t hold all the member in it [the ACC] on the basis of agreed upon standards, then let the dissident members go.”⁵³

Caldwell’s own study, presented to the institution heads during the ACC’s winter meetings in December, showed almost all of South Carolina’s claims to be specious — save one. On whether the 800 rule was “particularly disadvantageous to an institution in the recruitment and admission of black athlete students,” his results found that “this appears to have some validity.” While the SAT was found to be “just as valid” for measuring the performance of “disadvantaged minority groups as for others,” he found that “this single criterion operates with special severity in the fairly common situation of the black student who finds himself ranking very high in a not-too-demanding high school but low on this test score.” Yet USC officials had already arrived at this conclusion based on sheer

South Carolina Board of Trustees, March 29, 1971, Folder “Statements,” Box 1 (1970-1971) (sixth quotation); all in Jones Series.

⁵³ A. Kenneth Pye to Allan Kornberg, January 19, 1971 (first quotation); A. Kenneth Pye, Notes on ACC Meeting, December 9, 1970 (second quotation); J. Carlyle Sitterson to A. Kenneth Pye, February 12, 1971 (third quotation); all in Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference, 1969-1971,” Box 1, Pye Records; John T. Caldwell to ACC Institution Heads, draft, December 17, 1970, Folder “ACC Study — Student Athletic Eligibility Requirements, 1970-1971,” Box 52, Office of the Chancellor General Records (fourth and fifth quotations).

hope. Just seven days after the Trustees announced that South Carolina would no longer follow the 800 rule, Jones submitted to the HEW regional office in Atlanta “a follow-up report” on the progress his institution was making on complying with Title VI. Far less combative than his May letter to regional chief Dewey E. Dodds, this document set forth a more affirmative vision for the cause of diversity at the university. Reporting to Dodds on progress in black recruiting in athletics, he noted that “this policy change” adopted by the Board “should be beneficial to minority students in becoming eligible to receive athletic grants-in-aid.” Results, even at that early date, were being seen: “sixteen black athletes have been contacted this fall concerning the possibility of accepting a University grant-in-aid” to play football.⁵⁴

Unshackled from the 800 rule, Jones and Dietzel intended to increase that number with each passing season. That left many of their former conference mates to look upon them with suspicion — “irritated,” observed Bob Quincy of the *Charlotte Observer*, “by South Carolina’s freedom.” “South Carolina is recruiting like the Southeastern Conference,” Clemson head coach Hootie Ingram complained. “They have accepted a realistic academic standard — and they’re going after numbers. [. . .] Clemson must compete with South Carolina above all and we can’t do it following ACC rules.” Quincy noted how “South Carolina is now an island with its own rules and lofty ambitions” — just where it wanted to be — which also meant the pressure to win, for Dietzel, was that much greater.⁵⁵

In ways large and small, Dietzel, like many southern coaches, had staked his success on an

⁵⁴ “Introductory Remarks by Chairman Caldwell to ACC Institution Heads,” December 9, 1970,” Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings” (first through fifth quotations); Thomas F. Jones to Dewey E. Dodds, October 30, 1970, Folder “Atlantic Coast Conference: Misc.” (sixth through eighth quotations); both in Box 6 (1970-1971), Jones Series.

⁵⁵ Bob Quincy, “Hootie Is Hootin’!,” *Charlotte Observer*, October 28, 1971, clipping found in Folder “Athletic Affairs: Director,” Box 1 (1971-1972), Jones Series (quotations).

exponential number of black athletes buoying his program with their talent. Grambling State legend Eddie Robinson — who was as active in the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) as Dietzel — once observed how “there were certainly some coaches whom I worked with or against who integrated their teams just to try to get better teams,” especially “at big southern state schools,” where “they realized there were many black players who were future all-pros with great speed, size, quickness, and intelligence.” “So it wasn’t so much a matter of what they felt about integration; it was mostly about wanting to win” — doing so “out of necessity.” For his part, Dietzel believed that the black athlete would be the treadmill for the Gamecocks’ future success, that their mere arrival would presage a golden era. In a June 1973 report to HEW, Dietzel touted how “successful” football had been “this year, as well as other years, in recruiting student-athletes from minority groups.” Unlike those Gamecock teams of the late sixties, which Dietzel inherited, the early seventies brought about a more diversified program. The success in black recruiting foreseen upon USC’s departure from the ACC had been realized.⁵⁶

If only success, in general, had been so forthcoming. The 1971 season — the Gamecocks’ first as an integrated team *and* an independent — brought mixed results, a 6-5 record that included a 28-12 embarrassment at the hands of Duke as well as Dietzel’s first loss to Clemson since 1967. The 4-7 mark posted by his 1972 squad was redeemed, somewhat, by the 7-4 record of 1973. And, yet, by then, Dietzel had (in the warning the LSU Board of Supervisors once received about him) worn thin on USC loyalists. When the 1974 season started with a loss to Duke at home in Columbia,

⁵⁶ Eddie Robinson with Richard Lapchick, *Never Before, Never Again: The Stirring Autobiography of Eddie Robinson, the Winningest Coach in the History of College Football* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 145 (first through fifth quotations); Paul F. Dietzel to Barry H. Rosen, memorandum, June 7, 1973, Folder “Health, Education, and Welfare: Compliance Review,” Box 11 (1972-1973), Jones Series (sixth quotation).

Dietzel went to the locker room, consoled his team, and then marched outside to a press conference where he announced he would resign at the end of the season. The Gamecocks would stagger to the finish line, posting another 4-7 record and falling far short of the ambitions Dietzel once set for the program. Perhaps, in that way, Dietzel exploded the final stereotype of the black athlete in southern football: that they weren't superman, capable of lifting a program's fortunes with their mere arrival in the locker room. In the end, it comes down to coaching. And, with Dietzel, as with so many others of his coaching generation in southern football, by resisting the black athlete, then shamelessly sating his roster with them, he built a program at South Carolina that was destined to lose.

CODA
“A natural thing”

Whatever his intentions might have been for recruiting black athletes, Paul Dietzel did have a point. With segregation no longer either a legal and cultural impediment, the South's traditionally white institutions were free to recruit as many African Americans as they wanted — especially in-state prospects. It wasn't as if Dietzel was the first to notice that there were any number of athletes of color within state borders with enough skill and ability to compete at the highest levels of college football. Just weeks before Charleston native (and a former prep athlete) Harvey Gantt integrated Clemson, in January of 1963, its president, Robert C. Edwards, received a letter from an alumnus, who contended that “it is my honest belief that Frank Howard” — the Tigers' irascible head coach — “would not object to having a couple of colored whippets, such as J. C. Caroline of Columbia, that could win him a couple of ball games.” A halfback at Columbia's Booker T. Washington High in the late forties and early fifties, Caroline headed for the University of Illinois, where, in 1953, his sophomore season, he led the nation in rushing. As crass and exploitative as his feelings about “the

racial situation that is developing at Clemson” might have seemed, this alum merely gave voice to what football fans across the South knew was taking place: black stars were forced by law, custom, and popular will to compete outside the region, taking with them their talent and potential, thereby delivering northern teams to the gridiron glory they so wanted for their own southern ones.¹

How high could Clemson or South Carolina have climbed with a local standout like Caroline running out of their backfields? Such is the stuff of parlor games, perhaps, but it is worth considering given just how many African Americans played elsewhere because they were barred from doing so for their segregated state universities. Rather than playing at Syracuse, could Brunswick native Jim Brown have powered Georgia or Georgia Tech to the top of the rugged Southeastern Conference in the mid-fifties? Instead of lifting Minnesota to the 1960 national title, might Outland Trophy winner Bobby Bell, of Shelby, have done the same for any one of the programs in his home state of North Carolina? How much more formidable would Darrell Royal’s Texas defenses of the mid-sixties have proven if Beaumont’s Bubba Smith became a Longhorn, not a Michigan State Spartan? Segregation, then, allowed southern coaches to deny the obvious: there were black players as good, if not better, than the whites they recruited no more than a few minutes’ drive from their campuses. With the advent of federally-led desegregation, identifying qualified black prospects was a pressing necessity — the sooner, and the closer, the better. Lampooning Alabama’s lily-white teams in his December 6, 1966, *Los Angeles Times* column, Jim Murray told Paul “Bear” Bryant to “disconnect your long-distance phone to Pennsylvania and New Jersey for football players” like All-American quarterback Joe Namath, a native of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. Instead, “you can get a national championship

¹ Jack H. Hendrix to Robert C. Edwards, undated [December 1962], Folder 216, Edwards Correspondence (quotations).

team by going to the top of the Birmingham Bankhead Hotel and hollering.”²

Bryant wasn't hollering yet, though he was clearing his throat. In a March 1967 report to Alabama president Frank Rose and his top lieutenant, Jeff Bennett, at the time of HEW's first round of Title VI compliance reviews, the Bear confessed that his program hadn't made any progress on this front — nor even really tried. “We have not actively attempted to recruit any colored athletes in the State because we have had none that we felt qualified both academically and athletically,” he informed them. The few furtive glances he and his coaches cast toward black prospects always ended badly. One prospect from Huntsville, in whom “we were interested,” was undeniably “a good athlete, but did not qualify academically.” “Another one from a local school” in Tuscaloosa drew his interest, “but he was expelled from school before graduating.” At the time he offered this report, he informed Rose and Bennett, “we are genuinely interested in two local athletes” from the black high school in Northport — the town directly across the Black Warrior River from campus — and “we are watching their progress both athletically and academically.” (Eventually, these prospects were judged to have made insufficient progress on both scores.) Bryant believed that the interest he had shown in these two athletes was evidence of his recruitment of black athletes. Parsing such interest, however, he carefully asserted that, while his program “certainly would be interested in any who qualify within the State,” “we do not plan to recruit colored athletes from out-of-the-State at this time.”³

Strategic indecision: this was the company line when it came to race in Bryant's department. “While we do not at the present have any black athletes on athletic scholarship,” sports information

² Murray, “New Era in Dixie,” *LAT*, December 6, 1966, C1 (quotations).

³ Paul W. Bryant to Frank A. Rose and Jeff Bennett, memorandum, March 20, 1967, Folder “Athletics Department 1967,” Box 2, 084-078, Rose Papers (quotations).

director Charley Thornton told one inquiring mind in the summer of 1968, “we are trying to recruit the same caliber Negro athlete as we do white athlete.” As evidence of such progress, “we offered two in-state boys basketball grants this past year but were not successful in our recruitment of them.” This failure aside, Alabama, by his estimation, wasn’t deterred. Bryant’s coaches were keeping “a lookout for these type young men” and, he wagered, they would finally find “the type we are looking for this coming year.”⁴

“Every individual who appears to have an even outside chance of gaining admission to the University,” claimed Clem Gryska, one of Bryant’s assistants, “. . . is given careful consideration” — “regardless of race.” By the late sixties, a few of Alabama’s black students were determined to see to it that their institution not only lived up to this standard, but practiced it. In mid-August 1968, two undergraduates, Edwards Nalls and Moses Jones, scored an unprecedented, even unlikely, face-to-face meeting with Bryant himself, so that, as faculty athletics chair Willard Gray put it, they could “discuss . . . the complaints which they had registered in an earlier meeting which I attended.” As leaders of the Afro-American Association (AAA) — a campus group that advocated for the interests of the university’s African American community — Nalls and Jones were keen to offer their services to Bryant in helping him recruit black athletes. “All in all,” Gray recalled, “the discussion was a most cordial one,” and even Bryant, for his part, was “very much impressed with Nalls.” And, yet, “as you might readily imagine,” Gray noted, “Coach Bryant was on the offensive throughout the conversation and the meeting resulted in a rather one-sided score.” Bryant would later recount how both students “said they wanted to help and . . . I think we had some names, [and they asked if they could] entertain

⁴ Charles J. Thornton to Eddie Mullins, August 14, 1968, Folder “Athletics 1968,” Box 5, 085-046, David Mathews Papers, UA (quotations).

a boy or two for us.” He didn’t mind the idea of some help: “I told them exactly, hell, we want a football team, don’t care what color, we want winning players.” What he did get his back up were their attempts “to take time and sit up here and try to talk me into taking somebody” — “the alumni doesn’t pick them,” and neither were a couple of precocious kids. Nonetheless, the students “left with a pledge to assist with recruitment of outstanding, well-qualified, black athletes.”⁵

But, as Bryant observed, Nalls and Jones and the AAA soon “changed their attitude toward us.” Indeed they did. Without the participation — or direct input — they sought, the AAA believed that any attempt to win over Bryant was a waste of time. “I haven’t got the time,” he informed Nalls and Jones, to have the AAA serve as “liaison” between the athletics department and black prospects. So, in March 1970, the AAA filed suit against Bryant, the university and its Board of Trustees, and its new president, David Mathews. Awakening the Bear from his hibernation was their real intention, however. Charging Bryant with “failing to seek out with equal diligence and activity black athletic talent from all-black high schools, and integrated high schools,” as white ones, the group was especially dismayed that he hadn’t “award[ed] black high school athletes from the State of Alabama athletic scholarships in a proportion reflective of the number of black and white high school athletes in the state.” In so doing, they alleged that Bryant had “denied on behalf of the State of Alabama to black high school student the right to equal opportunity, and benefits to higher public education, to which black Alabama citizens are entitled.” The university — under NCAA rules, it should be noted

⁵ “Black Student’s Demands: An Analysis of the Demands Made By Black Students at the University of Alabama,” compiled by the Afro-American Association, March 24, 1971, Folder “Afro-American Association, 1970-1973,” Box 1, 117-046 (first quotation); Willard F. Gray to David Mathews, memorandum, August 19, 1968, Folder “Athletics 1968,” Box 5, 085-046 (second, third, fifth, and tenth quotations); both in Mathews Papers; Deposition of Paul W. Bryant, Case File 69-422W, General Case Files, United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama, Western Division (Birmingham), Records of the District Courts of the United States, NARA-SRU (hereafter Bryant Deposition) (fourth and sixth through ninth quotations).

— would only permit those athletes with scholarships administered by the athletics department itself to participate, not those who “hold scholarships from community organizations and other community assistance groups but for whose financial assistance these students could not afford to go to college.” As such, the AAA contended, this refusal “discriminates against the poor,” “a racial act” that blocked black students from securing the “money to get a college education” — “economic opportunities otherwise unattainable.”⁶

In ways large and small, the AAA’s lawsuit was a public relations gambit: an effort to shame Bryant into at last recruiting a black athlete. Indeed, its members felt as if they had already effected some success in this area, alleging that the Bear and his coaching staff only recruited James Owens — a prospect from an integrated high school in Fairfield, who ultimately signed with Auburn — “in response to pressure upon the University . . . applied by the Afro-American Association.” For his part, Bryant saw what the AAA was up to. “All it” — their lawsuit — “does, although they want to help, all it does is hurt, because again it doesn’t help our image with the black athlete in Kentucky or [the] black athlete in Mississippi.” However, the black athletes in those places didn’t matter quite as much to the AAA as those in Alabama, which they believed he had wilfully neglected. In fact, three of the plaintiffs — Lindsay Harris, Isaiah Lockwood, and Andrew Pernell — had been prep players at local high schools, all of whom were “never considered” for football scholarships “because of the University’s policy of not recruiting black athletes.”⁷

So, in open court, the AAA wanted to ask Bryant, point blank, as its counsel U. W. Clemons

⁶ Bryant Deposition (first and second quotations); *Afro-American Association, et al, v. Paul “Bear” Bryant, et al*, Amended Complaint, Case No. 69-422W, General Case Files, United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama, Western Division (Birmingham), Records of the District Courts of the United States (hereafter AAA Complaint) (third through tenth quotations).

⁷ AAA Complaint (first, third, and fourth quotations); Bryant Deposition (second quotation).

— a distinguished black attorney from Tuscaloosa — did, “Does the university recruit black athletes for various teams?” That way, he would finally have to confess to the institution’s racist policies. Only, when Clemons posed this question, during a July 8, 1970, deposition at the federal building in downtown Tuscaloosa, Bryant gave a totally unexpected answer. “We certainly are trying to,” he retorted, “we certainly are working at it.” He testified that “three or four years ago” — 1966 or 1967 — “we began looking in the State” because “our thinking was that any good one came along, we certainly didn’t want them to get away.” Within the two previous years, in particular, “we really worked at it very hard” and “this past year we tried all over the country,” “scouting them thoroughly” in the same way as white prospects. Most of Bryant’s deposition consisted of Clemons reading off a list of names, supplied by the defense counsel, to have him explain why “all of these athletes either went elsewhere or did not qualify academically.” One prospect, Bryant recounted, elected to sign with Florida, though “I thought we had a real good chance of getting him.” Another — “one hell of a football player” — “we couldn’t get very interested in us up here.” He judged a recruit from Iowa “probably the best running back in America,” and, yet, “he told us he wasn’t interested,” opting for Iowa State instead. Although a junior college star from Northeast Community College in Oklahoma had assured the Bear in his office that he wanted to play for Alabama, “he cooled off” suddenly, signing, in the end, with the University of Tulsa. A prospect from east Tennessee had already told one of his assistant coaches that he wanted to play for Tennessee, so “I imagine it will be pretty hard to get [him].” As for Owens, Bryant swore that he “looked me in the teeth and said he wanted to come to Alabama and wanted to be here, but we lost him to Auburn.” Why, Clemons asked, did he work the state first, then cast his eye elsewhere? “We felt we had to start in Alabama and we got to get the good ones, you know, in Alabama.” After all, “it was kind of ridiculous that we could go to

California . . . and try to get a black athlete with the image that we have here in Alabama.” What image was that? “I was referring to what a black athlete, what he sees on TV and reads, might think of Alabama.”⁸

And, yet, as he explained in his 1974 memoir, Bryant wanted any black athlete he signed to reflect a certain image of Alabama — the university, not the state. “I wanted him to be treated and to act like any other Alabama player. And I damn sure wouldn’t stand for him showing with a bunch of photographers and some big-talking civil rights leader trying to get publicity.” As he was being deposed that afternoon, he knew he had already signed that sort of black athlete: Wilbur Jackson, the quiet son of a railroad man, from Ozark, Alabama, would report for fall camp that August, and compete all season long on the freshman team. During Jackson’s campus visit that spring, Bryant “laid it on the line,” telling him, “Wilbur, this is all new to me. You got to have problems. Our white ones have ‘em. I can’t tell you you won’t, or what they’ll be. But before you go to anybody else with them, you come to me.” “Not in four years” did Bryant have “to raise my voice at Wilbur.” After his freshman year, though, the Bear observed that he “did not figure to start. We still had him at flanker then, which was our mistake.” His coaches eventually had to convert Jackson to a running back: “We had to. He dropped every pass that was near him.” At halfback, by contrast, in the Tide’s new wishbone attack — which the Bear borrowed from Darrell Royal at Texas — “he wasn’t just good, he was great,” utilizing his 6’2, 210-pound frame to average 7.7 yards per carry in 1972, and 7.9 yards as a senior in 1973. So good, in fact, that he was selected in the first round of the NFL Draft by the

⁸ Bryant Deposition (quotations).

San Francisco 49ers — Alabama’s first black draft pick.⁹

Jackson was simply the first in what became a steady progression of black stars into Bryant’s program. “I think you have to have good athletes to win,” he contended, “and when the blacks are good they should be playing. I would rather have them for me than against me.” By May of 1971, he had signed four more in-state prospects — Ralph Stokes and Mike Washington of Montgomery; Sylvester Croom of Tuscaloosa, who, in 2003, became the SEC’s first black head football coach, at Mississippi State; and Johnny Mitchell of Mobile. Enough, in fact, that Clemons agreed to let the case be dismissed, without it ever going to court. Like Jackson, all four of these athletes satisfied the parameters of the AAA’s original complaint — that the university, and Bryant as its agent, denied opportunity to black Alabamians. Not that the Bear himself really knew where to look on his own accord. In the case of Mitchell, who was to become, in 1972, Alabama’s first black All-American, it took Bryant’s good friend and coaching colleague, Southern California head coach John McKay, to alert him to how good he was. Comparing a list of recruits, McKay chortled, “Well, hell, Paul, the best one out there isn’t even on your list . . . and he’s from Mobile, Alabama.” “And,” applying a sharp elbow to the Alabama coach, “I want him.” Within hours, Bryant scooped McKay, getting his own recruiters over to his home, calling him long distance to lobby him to sign with the Tide, and even eventually winning over his skeptical mother. “I don’t have any white ones, I don’t have any black ones,” he told her about his players. “I just have football players. They come in all colors.”¹⁰

A charming sentiment, indeed. Yet Bryant’s ignorance to the black talent in the state — not

⁹ Bryant with Underwood, *Bear*, 302 (first through third quotations), 303 (fourth quotation), 304 (fifth and sixth quotations).

¹⁰ Bryant with Underwood, *Bear*, 305 (first quotation), 303 (second and third quotations), 304 (fifth quotation); Andrew J. Thomas to J. Rufus Bealle, May 10, 1971, Folder “Afro-American Association, May 1971,” Box 22, Mathews Papers.

wholly benign — was one thing that Clemons was able to bring out in the deposition. He asked the Bear “whether there are certain black schools in the State which send athletes to the Big Ten, Big Eight, and Pacific Coast Conference[s]?” Bryant thought for a moment. “Well, I know Birmingham sent [Buck] Buchanan wherever he went” — to Eddie Robinson’s Grambling State program — “I wish he had been around. Of course, Willie Brown” — who also played for Robinson — “I know him personally, he is on John McKay’s staff, and [Willie’s brother] Ollie Brown from right here in Tuscaloosa; of course, they didn’t play here.” Turning it over in his mind, “outside of them, I don’t know of any from Alabama, really.” Clemons inquired whether he knew Leslie Duncan, another native Alabamian, who was then playing professionally for the San Diego Chargers. “I don’t know if I ever met him or not; seen him on TV.” What about the Cleveland Browns’ Ben Davis? “I didn’t know he was from Alabama, is he?” Their talk circled back to Buchanan, a giant of a man, who was the very first athlete ever drafted into the American Football League, or AFL, in 1963, spending his Hall of Fame career with the Kansas City Chiefs. He was undeniably one of the best to ever come out of Robinson’s powerhouse program — “they had had so many,” Bryant observed, jealously. Told that Buchanan played his high school ball at segregated Parker High, not far from Legion Field, in Birmingham, the Bear shook his head. “I wish we had that big rascal.” Then, with the next breath, he tossed off a comment that summed up the impact that desegregation was already making on black programs like Grambling State. “I tell you, Robinson and Jake Gaither [at Florida A&M],” the Bear quipped, “they are really going to be displeased with you all, they used to get all of those athletes.”¹¹

* * *

“When I started at Grambling” in 1941, Robinson confessed, “I never thought schools like LSU and

¹¹ Bryant Deposition (quotations).

Alabama would integrate. I just wasn't thinking that something like that could happen. I realized that I was coaching some fine athletes, and I just figured that each year would bring more." But happen it did, making "a profound impact on Grambling" and other traditionally black institutions. "When [Bryant] signed Wilbur Jackson as his first player," he argued, "it was good for football. It was even better for America." And the thawing of segregation on and off the gridiron demonstrated that, "sooner or later, even racism can be overcome by the desire to be number one!"¹²

Robinson knew a thing or two about being number one himself. He would, in time, surpass Bryant in the record books to become the winningest coach in college football history, eventually recording 408 career victories in a 56-year career spent entirely at Grambling State. When he stepped off the train in the hamlet of Grambling, Louisiana, in the prewar summer of 1941, his new boss, Grambling president Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones, advised him while driving him to campus that "this is your first year and you may not win any games." This former Negro League pitcher was nearly right: Robinson's team that season, his first, made a dismal 3-8 showing. The following year, Grambling's last before suspending football for the duration of the wartime effort, proved just a little different — 9-0 — undefeated *and* unscored upon. With war's end came the return of pigskin and the arrival of Robinson's first great star, Tank Younger, who, in 1949, became the first athlete from a black college signed to a NFL contract, with the Los Angeles Rams. By the time Willie Davis joined the program in the early fifties — in advance of a professional career with, among others, the Green Bay Packers, that made him, in Vince Lombardi's estimation, the best linebacker he had ever coached — he helped set Robinson on the path to the first of his nine black national championships in 1955. The second half of the fifties, when Robinson plucked Buck Buchanan and Willie Brown from the

¹² Robinson with Lapchick, *Never Before, Never Again*, 140-45 *passim* (quotations).

best black high schools in Alabama, Grambling's star was on the rise. Like Notre Dame in the Rockne era of the twenties, an impressive public relations effort transformed Grambling State into the most nationally renowned program in black college football, employing "its unmatched contributions of stellar performers to professional football," as one commentator put it, to earn "a national reputation." In time, Grambling would become for black college football what Notre Dame was the first sport in general: the tent pole.¹³

But even a program, like Grambling's, which had sent more than 100 of its athletes to the pro ranks by the dawn of the seventies, wrestled with the consequences of desegregation. Of course, the right to matriculate at TWIs was something for which black southerners had fought long and hard. Even Robinson himself remarked that, growing up as he did in Baton Rouge, "it was painful for me the first time I learned that I couldn't go to LSU as a student or even watch a game there simply because of the color of my skin." (In fact, once he was "caught and beaten trying to sneak into an LSU game.") Nevertheless, as a coach, "I never hated LSU. I looked at it and I dreamed. . . . I wanted to know why LSU could do some things and Grambling couldn't. I thought Grambling should get the same scholarships and grants as LSU. But that, of course, has never happened. It's not stopping us from trying. So we had to do more with what we did get."¹⁴

With HEW field agents from the Dallas regional office pressing Louisiana's 11 TWIs — including LSU — to recruit black athletes, Robinson recognized that doing more with less might now also mean doing more with lesser talent. "If we don't work harder," he told the *Washington Post* in

¹³ Robinson with Lapchick, *Never Before, Never Again*, 65 (first quotation); Vernon Jarrett, "This Football Game Is Something Else," *CT*, September 15, 1971, 23 (second and third quotations).

¹⁴ Robinson with Lapchick, *Never Before, Never Again*, 124-25 (quotations).

September 1974, “black football could be in real trouble.” After all, “I know in Louisiana there aren’t as many black high school coaches anymore. In integrated schools, most black coaches were sent down to the junior highs. So while we get cooperation from the white high school coaches when we went to talk to a prospect, he isn’t pushing for us like the black coaches used to.” Met with an intractable dilemma, then, Robinson saw black football’s salvation in an unlikely inversion of the competitive paradigm: “we must go out and actively fight for five or six of the best white players around each season.” “While the white schools are trying to recruit black players,” he proposed that programs like his battle for the best white prospects to give these TWIs “something” to worry about in their own backyard.”¹⁵

It wasn’t exactly a new idea. Florida A&M head coach Jake Gaither once observed in the early sixties that “the trouble with white colleges recruiting Negro athletes” was that he “couldn’t recruit the white boys.” In January 1965, Robinson’s Southwest Athletic Conference colleague, Billy Nicks of Prairie View, whose team finished its 1964 season as black national champions, told the *Atlanta Journal* that he would fight for the best white talent he could find. “It’s gotten to the point that the big colleges are taking away our best Negro athletes,” he argued. “So what I’m going to do is try and recruit some white boys who perhaps were not good enough for the major teams, but who want to play football and want a fine education.”¹⁶

As idealistic as Ricks’ comments might have appeared, at first blush, there were indicative of the fight in which black college football presently found itself in the mid-sixties, not just with the usual suspects — the Big Ten or the Pacific Coast powerhouses — but programs in the so-called Border

¹⁵ Attner, “Football Waning at Black Colleges,” *WP*, September 28, 1974, C1, C3 (quotations).

¹⁶ Terry Kay, “Nicks to Recruit White Stars,” *AJ*, January 30, 1965, 5 (quotations).

States, like Maryland, West Virginia, or George Washington. “When integration came to the border states,” Tennessee State head coach John Merritt explained in 1970, “we had difficulty getting a lot of good black players. They were more willing to go to white schools anywhere in the country.” The temptation to search out white players was thus born from such frustration. That, and the belief, expressed by Alcorn A&M head coach Marino Casem, that “our best players could play week-to-week with the best players in the top five conferences — Pacific 8, Southeastern, etc. — any time.” In fact, “we could stay on the same field with ‘em, I’m certain of that.” And, as Merritt observed, “if they don’t beat us” — a Vanderbilt, say, defeating a Tennessee State — “there’s a reflection on them — and they don’t want to have to live with that.”¹⁷

Beating them with white athletes might just be the ultimate revenge. “I’d love to have some white kid to play guard for me,” Merritt admitted, “the ideal situation being to find some red-headed kid from some place like Rodney or Red Gulch, Mississippi. What we’d be getting is a hungry kid and we know he’d produce like our black athletes do.” The scrappy white player — linemen, in particular — seemed to be the prototypical converts to whom some black programs turned by the early seventies. It was a chance to play, especially for those who weren’t sought after by any white programs. Indeed, in the spring of 1971, at virtually the same time that Bryant signed four African Americans to scholarships at Alabama, Savannah State head coach John Myles announced that he had landed three white recruits — Robert Gaither, Dede Rogers, and Lee Stover — all of whom were, like the Bear’s recruits, local boys. Having played together at Savannah’s Jenkins High, the three came as a sort of package deal. “The coach asked me if I knew of any more of my friends that weren’t going to school,” explained Gaither, the first of the trio Myles contacted, “so I mentioned

¹⁷ Jeff Prugh, “Black College Football in Bid for Recognition,” *LAT*, August 28, 1970, C1 (quotations).

it to Dede and then Stover.” And why not go to Savannah State? “It was free. I felt I could get a good education, and I didn’t have an opportunity to go anywhere else close, so I took it.” Myles, for his part, was “glad” to desegregate “with Savannah boys.” After all, “HEW has told us we had to integrate our athletic program.”¹⁸

* * *

In a bid to eliminate race as a determining factor in any student’s choice of university, HEW elected to enforce Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the same vigor at black institutions as it had at TWIs. In some cases, particularly with the Charlottesville regional office, the zeal of federally-led enforcement exceeded the bounds of reason and logic, holding black universities to the same exact standards of desegregation as white ones. A Legal Defense Fund report argued in a 1973 report on the future of black institutions that “the burden of dismantling dual systems and eradicating discrimination must not fall on the victims. Blacks did not create the dual system and have not been responsible for racial exclusiveness.” Any plan for desegregation, they contended, “must demonstrate that the burden of compliance falls initially on that part of the system, namely the majority white institutions, which is furthest from compliance.”¹⁹

Nonetheless, the exclusion of whites from the life of these black campuses — whether it be in admissions or athletics — plunged them into hot water. One such institution was Fayetteville State University, which, in 1969, was absorbed into the University of North Carolina System along with four other state-supported black institutions — Elizabeth City State, North Carolina A&T, North

¹⁸ Prugh, “Black College Football in Bid for Recognition,” C1 (first quotation); Norman Arey, “Savannah State Signs 3 Whites,” *AC*, March 28, 1971, H5 (second through fifth quotations).

¹⁹ Lyman Beecher Brooks, *Upward: A History of Norfolk State University* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1983), 83 (quotations).

Carolina Central, and Winston-Salem State. As part of HEW's Title VI compliance review of all 19 universities in the UNC System, including Chapel Hill and NC State, two HEW field agents visited the Fayetteville State campus in March 1970. After receiving their findings, from Charlottesville regional chief Eloise Severinson, two months later, its president, Charles "A." Lyons, Jr., was simply flabbergasted. Sure, at the time of the compliance review, there were just 14 white students enrolled in his university, and nearly a third of the 100 night school students were, as well. For him, this was "an indication of the efforts on the part of this institution to appeal not just to the black population but the people of this area who feel that they have need of and wish to take advantage of the educational services which this institution offers."

Though not for HEW — and Lyons had a sinking suspicion as much. Of course, he asserted, "we wish and will project an image of this institution as a State-supported institution serving all people without regard to race." "I am sure" the fact that Fayetteville State's white enrollment was so low "does not come as any surprise to either you or to members of your staff" — "nor should it come as any surprise to anyone who is familiar with the history and tradition, mores and folkways of this section of the country." That Fayetteville State was a black university wasn't something its administration was ready to deny. "I am persuaded that we should not attempt to rewrite history" any more than HEW should expect "we suddenly recruit white students equally with Negro students." Both options "would be unrealistic." "This institution of necessity must be inclusive and open to all," but it was "part of neither their consciousness nor their value systems" for whites to view Fayetteville State — or any other black institution, for that matter — apart from history and tradition. More important, for black southerners, "the black colleges and universities" represented "the last bastions of black leadership and black influence in education and in the communities at large." "I guess what

I am saying,” Lyons wrote Severinson, “is that ‘so-called’ integration . . . has not been integration at all; it has been largely a destruction of what has traditionally been the black system of education,” with everything “which has been so carefully and painfully built up over the years . . . now being destroyed.”

Bound up in what he considered this process of cultural devolution was football. Severinson had instructed Lyons that her field agents were concerned that Fayetteville State didn’t have white athletes. “Again,” he responded, “this is not surprising to us here”: “white athletes like white students have historically and traditionally gone to what have been accepted as white institutions.” There was no real way Lyons could see for Fayetteville State — or even for a program like that which Robinson built at Grambling State — to challenge TWIs, most of which “have traditionally and still have the kinds of athletic budgets that permit them to compete favorably for not only the white athletes but also now the best black athletes.” Therefore, Fayetteville State “finds itself in a position today like most predominately black institutions of competing among themselves for the black athletes, and often the black students, who are left after the predominately white institutions with their much more generous resources have skimmed the cream off the top for themselves.” While coaches in all sports at Fayetteville State were making recruiting visits to high schools “without regard to the racial composition of their student bodies,” he confessed “very frankly” that “at this time the outlook for the coming year” in landing white talent — in football, in basketball, or any other program — “is not overwhelmingly encouraging.” Nor were his own feelings about the overall efficacy of athletic integration. Too much racial privilege had imbued, even motivated, the gridiron ambitions of white southern football that bringing black athletes into it, and white athletes into the proud tradition of black football, proved no easy trick. “Our efforts will continue unabated on principle and our belief

that in due course the people in this area will come to recognize this institution for what it is,” he asserted, “and that the gravitation of more whites to it, both as athletes and non-athletes, will become a natural thing.” But he wasn’t holding his breath. “While we expect this will happen over a period of years gradually, we do not, nor do we encourage others to think that we can suddenly overcome 300 years of history and tradition and law which have provided for strict segregation of people because of race and of the discrimination and practices of neglect and denial which have been an integral part of the system.”²⁰

It was the challenge of the moment: how to make integration, on the field and off, a natural thing. And no single administrator could do it all. “At no university,” contended David Mathews, Alabama’s 35-year-old *wunderkind* of a president, in late April 1971, “will the faculty act merely as employees or the students act as one might expect customers.” Contrary to popular belief, there were many areas of an institution’s daily life which are “not under the direct control of the University administration.” In that way, “it would be unfortunate of people assumed that the administration had only to give or to do certain things and that everything would then be all right.” Race continued to be one of those issues at Alabama. Even though Mathews believed change was overdue, he also conceded that it wasn’t likely to arrive via administrative fiat — not at a university as hidebound as his. “All segments of the University community” had to be “persuaded that they have to spend long, hard hours working together.” The community — still largely segregated — couldn’t “satisfy itself with fixing blame” for the prevailing conditions any more than the university’s black students could “believe the lie that there is any real victory in letting someone else do something for you.” “Even as

²⁰ Charles “A.” Lyons, Jr., to Eloise Severinson, May 23, 1970, Folder “General, June 1973,” Box 5, Records of the Legal Affairs Division of the UNC System, UNC-CH (quotations).

we work on these problems,” he insisted that “we make it clear that we cannot shelter the black or the white student from the hard task of having to live together.” In sum, “we cannot return to separatism” — particularly when “there are many real and serious problems” for African Americans “in attending a university where most students are white.” The crux of these problems, then, rested in the fundamental work of integration. “What we are really up against is learning to live in a more integrated society than we have ever known in our country. What we are really up against is the great inner turmoil that the black student experiences in trying to find a sense of place and worth somewhere between a black world and a white one.”²¹

²¹ David Mathews to Joseph Mallisham, April 26, 1971, Folder “Afro-American Association, January-April 1971,” Box 22, 085-046, Mathews Papers (quotations).

TABLE 2.1 Southeastern Conference Members vs. Intersectional Opposition, 1946-1961 (number of games played per regular season)		
	Before <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>	After <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	TOTAL	
Alabama																												8
Auburn																												15
Florida																												19
Georgia																												31
GA Tech																												37
Kentucky																												26
LSU																												11
Mississippi																												19
Miss. State																												14
Sewanee^																												4
Tennessee																												11
Tulane																												20
Vanderbilt																												17
TOTAL	6	8	7	12	11	7	5	9	4	6	8	9	14	8	8	8	8	8	11	10	9	12	15	20	16	232		

Southeastern Conference was founded in 1933.

^ The University of the South (Sewanee) withdrew from the Southeastern Conference at the end of the 1941-42 academic year.

Source: College Football Data Warehouse, <http://www.cfbdatawarehouse.com>

TABLE 3.1 Southwest Conference Member Replies to Texas A & M Questionnaire, 1963*								
Question	Arkansas	Baylor	Rice	Texas	TCU	Texas Tech	A & M	
1. Is your institution now, or do you anticipate in the next two or three years, to admit and accept colored (Negro) athletes to participate in intercollegiate athletics?	No future policy established. Negroes presently not participating.	Negroes presently not participating. Board meets in November to decide.	Negroes presently not participating. Judge Peden's Court to decide.	No comment due to pending litigation.	Negroes presently not participating. No future plans.	Negroes presently not participating.	Negroes presently not participating. No future plans.	
2. What will be the policy of your institution this coming year concerning the sale of reserved seat tickets to colored people?	No established policy. Colored students are treated like any other students.	Reserved tickets for Negroes sold in segregated section. Visiting Negro students admitted with rest of visiting students.	No color line.	No color line.	Special section.	Reserved tickets sold upon request. Some control but not segregated.	No color line.	

* SMU chose not to respond

Source: Minutes of Meeting of Athletic Council, September 26, 1963, Folder "Athletic Policies, 1962-1964, Folder 1 of 2," Box VF 32F.a, UT President's Office Records, CAH.

<p style="text-align: center;">TABLE 5.1 ACC Eligibility Questionnaire Chart <i>(based on similar chart created by NC State Chancellor John T. Caldwell, October 1970)</i></p>						
	Is a fixed SAT score minimum valid for admission in addition to a calculated PGA in which the SAT score is a factor?	If your campus has no minimum SAT score as a requirement for admissions, what has been your campus experience with students who have been admitted with less than 800 minimum but who had a 1.6 PGA?	If your campus does not require a fixed SAT score minimum for admissions in general, does your analysis and research support requiring it for athletics participation?	Does your campus require an SAT minimum score for eligibility for financial aid other than an athletics grant-in-aid? If not, how do you evaluate this apparent discrimination?	The NCAA table of prediction for a 1.6 GPA requires that an 800 SAT score must be accompanied by a converted class rank of at least 52, which is slightly above the mid-point of the class. The suggestion is that an athlete applicant must present <u>either</u> an 800 SAT minimum or rank higher than 52 in his high school class, say at 54 or 56. In any case he would still have to predict a 1.6 GPA on the NCAA table.	That the Conference keep the 800 minimum but allow a fixed maximum of not more than five athletes annually to be admitted with SAT scores below 800.
Clemson University	Not valid. Minimum SAT expresses lack of confidence in class rank	1963 – 117 students between 700-800 36.7% graduated from Clemson 9% graduated elsewhere 45% have earned degrees	60% of freshmen athletes had higher GPA than predicted	Other aid recipients must have PGA of 2.0 – Discrimination is in favor of athletes	Cumbersome and contrived	Unfair to the (5) students concerned
Duke University	We have very few applicants with combined SAT scores below 800, and even fewer students matriculating. In fact, the numbers are so minuscule as to provide an insufficient base for any of our statistical studies. ¶Since the predicted grade point average is strongly influenced by each institution's grading practices, we would prefer that external criteria be used. An 800 SAT minimum, or such equivalent measures as high school grades or class rank, would be equally acceptable. ¶We still believe that the ACC should lead, rather than follow, NCAA practices in these matters.					
North Carolina State University	No. Its incorporation in a PGA formula is quite helpful. However, the placing of double standards for admissions . . . is totally opposed to intended use of SAT scores	Students with less than 800 (23) appear to have done as well as those with 800 but less than 900 (144) . Inadequate sample	Insufficient data since no athletes participated with less than 800. Few with less than 900.	Financial aid awards for non athletes based on academic competition. No discrimination against athletes	Yes – Preferable to other alternative in Column 6	Yes – But prefer alternative in Column 5 as more workable
University of Maryland	(1) We do not require a fixed SAT score minimum for admission. It may be used but in general students are admitted if they are in the upper half of their graduating classes and have a "C" average. (2) There has not been sufficient research done on this subject to provide any reliable information. (3) Since we do not have statistical evidence, I cannot answer this question specifically. It is out feeling that we should simply comply with the NCAA 1.6 requirement. (4) We do not require a SAT minimum score for financial aid to students who are not given athletic grants-in-aid. We have not attempted to evaluate this apparent discrimination, but it has been done on the requirements by the Atlantic Coast Conference. I might add at this time that we prefer to abandon the SAT minimum, but if this does not meet with the majority approval we would suggest that the Conference keep the 800 minimum but allow a fixed minimum of not more than five athletes annually to be admitted with SAT scores below 800.					

University of North Carolina	For a number of years the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has had, as a part of its admissions requirements, a minimum PGA based partially on a minimal SAT score. As a policy we have assumed that an athlete and a non-athlete should be expected to meet the same PGA score. Our experience has been, on the basis of academic performance, that this is indeed valid. ¶While our experience in recruiting culturally deprived students and students of a minority race has not been all we hoped, we have made progress and expect a large increase of such students in this year's freshman class. We have also experienced considerable success in recruitment of black athletes with our existing admissions requirements.¶ Accordingly, with the support of the Faculty Athletic Committee, we have proposed that the Conference retain the 800 SAT minimum. ¶ On the question of whether a SAT minimum is discriminatory, it might be argued that the 1.6 is equally discriminatory, or that indeed whatever academic criteria an institution or the Conference adopts is to some degree discriminatory. I do not believe that there is any clear evidence that the SAT is racially discriminatory, although there seems to be some indication that it may contain some "bias" against "culturally and socially deprived" persons. Academic criteria, almost by definition, since they include major emphasis on cultural, verbal, and cognitive skills obviously give some advantages to groups with access to these opportunities and conversely place groups without such opportunities at a disadvantage. The objective, it seems to us, is to assure that such criteria are not unreasonable and have a clear relationship to educational objectives. If the SAT requirement were a high one, a good case might be made for lowering it. However, the 800 SAT minimum seems such a modest, indeed low, SAT score that we do not regard the rationale for removing it as compelling.					
University of South Carolina	No – Students with less than 800 and rank in top half can do satisfactory work	144 males below 800 60 had 2.0 94 made above 1.6	No – Minimum SAT Verbal and class rank is better for USC.	No inconsistency.	Yes.	Yes.
University of Virginia	<p>(1) The Scholastic Aptitude Test taken in combination with a student's rank in class is valid for admission. Our experience is that we must weigh very carefully the class rank factor in each student's case. The variation among secondary schools makes it impossible for the University of Virginia to use a fixed class rank scale in conjunction with the SAT. Because we recruit students nationally, the SAT has the advantage of being a nationally administered test which is <u>common to all</u> college-bound students (and in this case of the Conference in common to <u>all</u> student-athletes in the Conference).</p> <p>(2) So far as I can determine the University of Virginia has in recent years not admitted a student with a combined SAT score below 800. The University of Virginia's combined SAT scores for students in the College of Arts and Sciences is approximately 1240. In addition very few students admitted have scores close to or less than 400 on an individual SAT test.</p> <p>(3) For the past several years validity studies conducted for the University of Virginia by the College Board indicate that if an applicant were to score approximately 800 on the SAT, he would have to rank at least in the upper 10% of his secondary school class, regardless of how demanding the school, in order to predict a 1.6 grade point average at the University of Virginia. Furthermore, if he did predict the minimum 1.6 average at the University of Virginia, his chances for graduation would be only 26%. Such a student would need to spend considerable extra time on his coursework and would find it difficult to participate in as time-demanding an extracurricular activity as intercollegiate sports.</p> <p>(4) Financial Aid at the University of Virginia generally falls into two categories: [1] awards made on the basis of a student's financial need in which case the type of "aid package" for an entering student is determined by a student's predictability for academic success in which SAT scores are a considered factor; [2] scholarship and grant programs in which need is not necessarily a factor and in which a minimum academic record, SAT scores, and achievements are frequently criteria for the gaining and retaining of the award. The athletic grant-in-aid program, since it is not based on financial need, falls in to the second category.</p> <p>¶ The experience of the University of Virginia with the SAT over recent years has been positive in assisting us in predicting student academic success. In the same manner the "800 rule" has worked from our experience to assure that an athlete admitted to the University is a student fully capable of attaining his degree.</p> <p>¶ While I believe the rule has worked well for the Conference over the past decade, I also believe that even a good rule should be carefully reviewed from time to time.</p>					
Wake Forest University	<p>(1) As difficult as it may be to defend any given minimum score on the SAT as an absolute criterion for admission to college, I believe the existence of such a minimum in the ACC has in fact helped to prevent the recruitment of large numbers of athletes who have little or no interest in academic matters. The athlete who chooses the ACC in preference to conferences with lower admissions standards is, in my judgment, more likely to have at least a modicum of academic ambition. If the ACC abandons the 800 minimum, it will be perfectly natural for the general public and for future college athletes to assume this implies a lowering of academic standards for the purpose of improving football and basketball teams. The reputation of the ACC schools as universities with reasonably demanding academic programs would hardly be enhanced by such a step.</p> <p>(2) Since we do not now admit any students with an SAT score of less than 800, this question does not apply</p> <p>(3) Same as in [2] above.</p> <p>(4) Same as in [2] above.</p> <p>¶ With regard to your suggested substitutes, I have very little confidence in the validity of a 1.6 GPA prediction. There is a rather widespread belief that outstanding high school athletes tend to receive better grades than they deserve. If there is any truth in this belief, and if an applicant with an 800 score needs to be hardly above the mid-point of his high school class in order to have a 1.6 GPA prediction, then I think admitting such a person to Wake Forest would involve a very high academic risk.</p> <p>¶ The second suggested substitute — limiting athletes with sub-800 SAT scores to five a year — seems less objectionable, provided we set up safeguards of our own to ensure that the low SAT score is offset by other criteria. Even though I oppose any change in the requirements, I do not think this kind of compromise would seriously undermine us academically.</p>					
ACC Eligibility Requirements Questionnaire Chart, undated [1970], Folder "Atlantic Coast Conference: Meetings," Box 6 (1970-71), Records of the Office of the President: Thomas F. Jones Series, USC						

ABBREVIATIONS

AC
ADW
AHC

Atlanta Constitution
Atlanta Daily World
Arkansas History Collections

<i>AJ</i>	<i>Atlanta Journal</i>
AU	Auburn University
AUC	Atlanta University Center
BU	Baylor University
CAH	Center for American History
<i>CD</i>	<i>Chicago Defender</i>
CIT	The Citadel
<i>C-L</i>	<i>Clarion-Ledger</i>
<i>CT</i>	<i>Chicago Tribune</i>
CU	Clemson University
<i>DN</i>	<i>Daily Nebraskan</i>
<i>DO</i>	<i>Daily Oklahoman</i>
<i>DTH</i>	<i>Daily Tar Heel</i>
Duke	Duke University
ECU	East Carolina University
Emory	Emory University
GaA	Georgia Archives
GT	Georgia Institute of Technology
HSTL	Harry S Truman Presidential Library
<i>LAT</i>	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>
LSU	Louisiana State University
MSU	Mississippi State University
NARA-SRU	National Archives and Records Administration
NCSU	North Carolina State University
<i>NYAN</i>	<i>New York Amsterdam News</i>
<i>NYT</i>	<i>New York Times</i>
OSA	Oklahoma State Archives
OSU	Oklahoma State University
OUBRO	University of Oklahoma Board of Regents Minutes (Online)
OU-CAC	Carl Albert Congressional Research Center
OU-WHC	Western History Collections
<i>SFC</i>	<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>
SMU	Southern Methodist University
<i>SSN</i>	<i>Southern School News</i>
TAMU	Texas A & M University
TU	Tulane University
UA	University of Alabama
UAB	University of Alabama at Birmingham
UCB	University of Colorado at Boulder
UF	University of Florida
UGA	University of Georgia
UK	University of Kentucky
UKBTO	University of Kentucky Board of Trustees Minutes (Online)

UM	University of Mississippi
UMC	University of Missouri-Columbia
UMem	University of Memphis
UNC-CH	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
UNL	University of Nebraska-Lincoln
UNR	University of Nevada-Reno
USC	University of South Carolina
USM	University of Southern Mississippi
UVA	University of Virginia
VMI	Virginia Military Institute
VT	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
VU	Vanderbilt University
WM	College of William and Mary
<i>WP</i>	<i>Washington Post</i>

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