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***'They have to balance practice, and keep certain grades to keep their eligibility, and perform well enough to keep their scholarship.'***

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when they drop out.

"A student who has fulfilled Proposition 48 has a better chance," Devaney said.

Despite the efforts of Proposition 48, there may still be the potential for some athletes to receive special attention from professors.

A recent Daily Nebraskan poll determined that most professors have not felt pressure from the athletic department to change grades. But of those professors polled, some refuse to see the athletic department as beyond reproach.

Out of a total of 50 questionnaires sent randomly to UNL professors, one out of 19 said they had been pressured, while one out of 20 said they had felt the need to change a student athlete's grade through their own discretion.

The survey also revealed that none of the respondents had changed a student athlete's grade for any reason, nor had they been more lenient toward a student athlete.

A professor who revealed he had been pressured by the athletic department in 1970 or 1971, wrote that "some athletes haven't done well because they are so poorly prepared — even some who have considerable trouble reading and writing," and that "some athletes haven't done well because they don't seem to care — this could be a defense for not being able to read, etc."

However, he added that some athletes are as well-prepared and motivated as any other students.

"The one thing we have seen some indication of is very poor advising, e.g. students who have taken far too many electives and 200-level courses," the professor said. "It would seem some advisors in the athletic department are interested solely in keeping athletes eligible and not in their appropriate progress toward a degree."

Another professor expressed his concern about athletes taking five-week courses during the summer.

"I teach a five-week course and athletes who take it frequently miss a total of a week's worth of classes," the professor wrote. "This is very difficult for them. I often wonder whether athletes should take five-week courses at all and I know that there are many for them to take. Many are required."

Another professor wrote that "two of my worst students were athletes. One of my best students was an athlete."

He said he was once pressured by a student who couldn't go out for baseball until the professor changed a grade of "F" to an incomplete.

"He made his request (strongly) while retaking the course," he wrote. "If he hadn't been in the process of retaking the course I would have said no."

Another professor said a basketball player in one of his classes a long time ago missed the final exam because of "sheer exhaustion." The player had an "A" average.

"To have given him an "I" would have made him ineligible for the Big 8 tournament, so I talked with the athletic director about this," he wrote. "His recommendation was that I give the student a stiff makeup exam as soon as possible but turn in a grade of "C" immediately.

"If the student did poorly, I could lower the grade later, but otherwise the "C" would stand. He was almost furious with the student. I did as he suggested, but as I expected the student did very well on the makeup exam. Therefore, I quickly raised

his grade — as I would have for any other student under similar circumstances."

On the other hand, another professor said: "I have taught a variety of athletes over the past 23 years and have never once been pressured to give special treatment."

While most professors said athletes in their classes attended regularly, one said "attendance may be less than desirable, but no worse than from certain non-athletes."

There is a trend, though, for former players like Kelvin Clark to return to college after initially dropping out to pursue their professional career after their eligibility is used.

Clark said he was contacted by Tom Osborne after he retired from professional football in 1985. Osborne also got Clark a job in the west stadium weight room.

Clark said he will probably finish his degree in physical education next August. Although he only had two semesters left when he dropped out, he must now complete four because the curriculum changed in the time he was gone.

Being away from the books so long made it harder for Clark to come back to school, he said.

"It really was tough," he said, "I had to study hard."

Many former athletes would probably find it hard to make the transition back to academic life, Papik.

"It becomes difficult because when they are making money, it is hard to discontinue that income," Papik said, especially when they have played for a pro team.

Clark said he was able to put some money away, so "it hasn't been too hard since coming back."

What it comes down to is that it is up to the individual athlete, Devaney said. Whether they graduate or not, or get a decent education, Devaney said, is up to each and every student.

"It depends on how badly they want to succeed, even if they're not a top student," Devaney said. "A lot of it is in the person."

— by Kip Fry

