editorial opinion

Hall of Shame?

There's a cancer growing on major league sports, and it's spreading more with each coming season. But in this case, drugs won't treat the problem — they *are* the problem.

In recent weeks, some of baseball's finest players — including former stars Willie Stargell and Willie Mays and current stars Keith Hernandez and Joaquin Andujar — have been accused in drug-trafficking trials for allegedly using cocaine and other illegal substances. Many of the Pittsburgh Pirates' 1979 World Series squad, including Dave Parker, Dale Berra and John Milner, have also been linked to cocaine use.

And the list seems to go on.

What kind of example does this set for the little league players who grow up idolizing these players, or those high school and college players who are close to signing contracts with major league clubs? Will their careers be cut short by overzealous cocaine dealers looking to make an easy buck?

How could such behavior be allowed to mar the tradition associated closely to the all-American ideal?

Life must have been simpler in the days of the Lou Gehrigs, Babe Ruths and Joe DiMaggios; the game had more romance and playing was its own reward. Pete Rose reminisced not long ago that he played baseball for the Philadelphia Phillies for $12,000 a year at first and loved it every bit as much then as he does now.

But something must have happened along the way.

Television brought the game into the public's living room and poured millions of dollars into big city teams to broadcast games. The Curt Flood case more than 15 years ago, where for the first time players were allowed to declare free agency, paved the way for players to name their price to the highest bidder. And greedy owners, ever more eager for winners, paid millions of dollars to these players. That's the tragedy of it.

It seems too many athletes are playing for headlines and multi-million dollar contracts. And, with all the accusations and charges flying around and planting seeds of doubt in everyone's mind, playing for the love of the game seems to be a part of ancient history — a part of the old hall of fame.

What is lacking in the professional athlete that would make him take drugs? What outside pressures are too overwhelming for him to handle without believing artificial stimulants are the answer? Isn't the natural high that comes with playing with the best athletes of the game enough?

Obviously, it isn't.

Heroes like Stargell, the 1979 co-National League Most Valuable Player who powered the Pirates to two World Championships, and Parker are now looked upon as criminals, not heroes, by the little leaguers.

What does Yogi Berra think about all this? What would have happened to the baseball tradition had Yogi, Jackie Robinson or Mickey Mantle succumbed to outside pressures and used artificial stimulants? They didn't need any dope-induced high to play the game; they played with heart and guts and sometimes played with pain.

No tears should be shed for the players who are charged with drug-trafficking. They were the lucky athletes who succeeded in a job where others failed. They traveled to the largest cities, ate at the finest restaurants, and stayed at the nicest hotels. They lived in a world that less skilled athletes can only *dream* of. Sadly enough, however, this dream world is becoming a nightmare as players abuse themselves and the reputation of their sport.

The cancer that is spreading over major league sports must be treated. The traditions of baseball and football must be as respected as they were when players gave it their "all" for the love of the game — not for the money; not for the headlines; but solely for the love of the game. The tradition of any major league sport should not be marred with the tragedy and shame of drugs.

the daily Collegian

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reader opinion

It's murder

As the dates of three people's deaths at Rockview Correctional Institution near, we all must realize that capital punishment does not do what it is supposed to do. Therefore, it should be abolished and these and others' lives should be spared.

Executions are more premeditated than most murders. And killing is no way to show that killing is wrong.

Granted, these people have committed serious crimes and society must protect itself against these people. We must protect ourselves, our families and our children. But is this the best method? Is this a *just* method. It is called the criminal *justice* system.

One argument for executing people who commmit violent (i.e. capital) crimes is that it teaches others if they kill or rape, they themselves will be killed. This concept of general deterence assumes that violent criminals clearly rationalize and weigh the consequences before doing grave violence. Most people who murder do not see past their actions they are so caught up in passion, or drugs or alcohol, according to Amnesty International, a world-wide movement working for human rights. They also said that when the crime is premeditated, the individual rarely believes he or she will be apprehended let alone executed. This sense of I-will-get-away-with-it cannot be wiped out of the criminal mind unless we execute all murderers and so quickly after conviction. But mandatory capital punishment is unconstitutional as cruel and unusual punishment.

General deterence is also questioned by the Supreme Court's 1976 conclusion of 25 years of research that there is no conclusive evidence that shows the death penalty deters violent crime.

Since 1972, 62 percent of the people on death row have been unskilled, service or domestic workers; and 60 percent were unemployed at the time of their crimes. Since 1930, 90 percent (405) of the men executed for rape were black. In Texas, blacks who kill whites are 87 percent more likely to receive a death sentence than those with black victims.

Is this criminal justice? Or institutional racism and systemic oppression of the poor?

I repeat: Because the death penalty does not do what it purports to do, because it is the most extreme punishment, it must be abolished. We must stop our state (ourselves?) from killing and calling it justice.

Edward A. Dougherty, junior-English

Beliefs:

The life-long struggle to find a higher purpose through a better use of mind

And you'd think with all of the genius
And the brilliance of these times,
That we might find a higher purpose
And a better use of mind.
— Jackson Browne

Bill Repsher

Dear Beth,
I'm writing this because I'm tired of arguing but realize we have to. When a Catholic boy can't discuss beliefs with a born-again Christian girl, something is wrong. You tell me to approach your beliefs with an open mind, and I do. The religious one-liners in my columns are my way of saying, "I'm thinking. I may not agree with you, and I'll use humor to show that. But I have at least considered your side."

It's ironic when you tell me to have an open mind, yet you refuse to be open to any other religion. Let's talk about Hinduism or Buddhism, without you adopting your usual "condescending Christian" attitude.

"Bill, these people are wrong. They may be good people, but unless they accept Jesus as their savior, they won't go to heaven."

That's an open mind? To me, an open mind implies a willingness to learn from any source. What have you learned of *The Koran*, or of Buddha? If you honestly believe you'll learn nothing, I suggest you read them. Wisdom is not a Christian invention; neither is faith.

I guess it's time to show you my beliefs, something you won't do for me. I believe in God; I believe Christ is His son. I accept most Christian tenets. Not all — I'd love to discuss these with you, but you've decided against that.

I'll gather wisdom from any religion. I'm a young Christian who realizes that man was never meant to *know* God exists; man was meant to *believe* he knows. That's the difference between blind faith and faith. I know, you could run all over me with *Bible* quotes on that. A Moslem could run all over me with *Koran* quotes. Anyone could produce his holy book and run all over me.

That is the antithesis of free will —passing the thin line between guidance and addiction. The *Bible* is not a "How-To" book. It seems like every time a devout Christian gets cornered, he whips out his *Bible* and uses it like a machine gun to silence his opponents. Get me cornered and I'll use my ability with words; God created reason for a reason.

Every mind somehow uses reason to justify its beliefs. You'll say, "No, Bill. Reason has nothing to do with it. If God wants you to believe, He'll guide you."

I get the impression that God wants everyone to believe. Why would He refuse to guide anyone? Wouldn't that be like saying, "Man, whom I have created equal, some of you are not worthy, therefore some of you will burn in hell without My guidance." I don't believe God would do that.

If you agree with me on that, then wouldn't your saying that only born-again Christians are being guided by God be the same as saying everyone else is going to hell? Don't say that everyone else is going to hell because they're not open to the words of Christ. I, and millions of other Christians who are not "born again," am open to His words. Yet you have this Puritan belief that you are one of God's chosen people; only those who believe the exact way you do will go to heaven.

I've decided one thing about Christianity: no matter what the *Bible* says about non-believers going to hell, I will never believe that anyone won't go to heaven. I don't care what sins he may have committed. I hope everyone goes to heaven, with separate beliefs intact. Maybe I'm just dreaming, I don't know. Neither do you, although you'd never admit that. Who *knows* heaven exists? There is only one way to be sure, and it doesn't involve reading a book. Everyone is dying to know.

We're too young to know all the answers; a 90-year-old man is too young.

I'm too young to be thinking these thoughts, and you're too old to be so emotional without a hint of rationality. You must think I'm all rationality. I am not made of steel; you know how fragile I can be. If I didn't feel a strong belief in my heart, I wouldn't dare put pen to paper. The whole idea of my Christianity is to realize that I'm not living for myself; I'm living to achieve a higher purpose through sacrifice.

Sacrifice is not the annihilation of individuality. If someone challenges my beliefs, you'll hear my words. Of course, you may hear some nasty words that I'll later regret using. But they're my words, and I thank God for giving me a free will to use them. You know I'll stand up to anyone. If my opponent says something I don't morally agree with, unlike you I'll listen and learn.

Just because I don't agree with you doesn't mean I'm attacking you. Why have you grown so defensive? You have this "it's my born-again friends and I against the world" attitude. Your ears seem deaf to anything you don't want to hear. That's a sign of ignorance, or weakness. And please, never say to me again, "You could never understand." I understand great religious philosophers who could run theological circles around us. If I can't understand, it's because you can't explain.

I don't want to change you; I only want to talk. I don't mean small talk; most of your relationships seem to be nothing but small talk. I can't be that way, and you know it. You said we can't talk about religion anymore — we'd only argue. Yeah, and sometimes we'd only agree; don't be a closet pessimist. If I always have to worry about what I say to you, I'll save us a lot of trouble and not say anything at all. I don't want that to happen. I'll accept you as you are and believe you'll go to heaven no matter what you believe in. Can you say the same to me?

We haven't come this far to throw everything away because of our silly pride. I will always be your friend, and I will do almost anything for you. I won't reduce our relationship to eternal dinner-party banter; it's impossible for me to stand on your sideline. I believe in God because of you.

Sincerely,
Bill

William S. Repsher is a senior majoring in English and a columnist for The Daily Collegian. His column appears every Friday.

opinions

SPRINGSTEIN:

The man, the myth, the voice — liver, lover, poet . . . all-around great guy

"Oo-oo-oo-ooh. Wooooh-ooh-oooh" — Springstein, "I'm on Fire."

"Aaaaaagh. Aaaaaaagh-aaarrgh" — Springstein, "Jungleland."

"O-o-ooo-oooooooooo; O-o-o-o-oooooh, wo-wo-wo-wo-woooooooooh" — Springstein, "Born to Run."

(Hey, is that spelling right?)

Dion Holland

There are three things in the world that I hate: denim, house wines, and The Boss. I'll explain denim in a future column; house wines are self-explanatory; The Boss? Three reasons: his lyrics and / or subject matter, his voice, and his fans.

Two song lyrics strike me as particularly needy. The first, from "Hungry Heart," is a classic. "Don't make no difference what nobody says / Ain't nobody likes to be alone."

Come again, Bruce? Is he speaking Old English, or is it a Nihilistic treatise? Is it a game to see if I can decipher what the hell he's trying to say? If so, you win, Bruce.

The second lyric is from his current mega-hit, "Glory Days." In it, he states that a high schooler "could throw that speedball by ya . . ." What the hell is a speedball? I think he means fastball, unless he was trying to pass judgment on the recent scandal in Pittsburgh. I guess when you are from New Jersey, you talk more about cars than sports.

When in doubt, sing (I use the term loosely) about cars, motorcycles, or some form of transmission. What a message —the human tragedy in the form of two- or four-wheeled chariot of doom and love.

When in further doubt, talk about water of some sort, especially a river. Usually driving across it to get beer. Usually with a little girl (his term) you have either just picked up or dropped. His women: mud-splattered, tough-talking women in greasy clothing who sleep with you on the first date. Where does he find these women? Remember: The Boss *is* from New Jersey.

I guess while we're talking lyrics, I'll make a standing offer: the first coherent essay I receive on the meaning of "Blinded by the Night" (2500 words or less, please) wins $10. I doubt I'll have to come up with the money.

The second reason for my intense hatred is his voice. (Wait, should his be His?)

Great musicians and singers use their voices as another instrument. Bruce's voice is an instrument; somewhere between a tuba and an out-of-tune, off-the-wall, completely ultra-punk xylophone. Two instances come to mind here as well.

His lilting, haunting subtlety in "Born in the USA" is a virtuoso performance in scream therapy. It is among the greatest screech-songs of all time, next to "Money Changes Everything" and anything by Judas Priest.

In "We are the World," Bruce gave Cyndi Lauper and Tina Turner a run for their money for worst performance. Springsteen's amazing, up-all-night, three-packs-a-day rendition with Stevie Wonder rivalled Tina Turner's self-conscious moaning and Lauper's putting three syllables in "change.' The argument was this: "He's trying so hard, he really *feels* the lyrics." Yeah, just like any Holiday Inn lounge lizard feels the lyrics to "Feelings."

The third reason is the easiest, most apparent one. With Springsteen, fan indeed seems short for fanatic. I went by a Ticketron-turned-Shantytown once when tickets were on sale (actually, it was a week prior) for one of his concerts. Some of his faithful were talking about prior concerts. I wonder if they talk about anything else. Anyway, they were actually bragging about how much they paid for their last concert.

"Yeah, man, I remember I paid 50 bucks for five straight nights in Billings. They were mid-level, and I could hardly see him, and the sound kind of sucked, but it was a great show, man."

"I was there, man! I paid 75 a night for upper-level rears. There was some Grateful Dead dude sitting in front of me, and I couldn't see Bruce at all. I think I saw Clarence, though. It was pretty awesome, man."

"I don't think Clarence went on that tour, man."

"Are you sure, man? I'll bet you, dude."

Just then a third bedenimed, unshaven, bandannaed youth enters the conversation. "Clarence went on that tour, but he passed on four cities, man: Miami, San Fran, Pittsburgh, and Billings. Where'd you catch him?"

"Shit. Billings."

The third clone continues: "I caught the whole tour, man. Worked for free. Bruce paid for the whole thing, but I had to get my meals and rooms. I slept on the trucks and I ate other people's trash." He paused. The other two watched him in awe. "It was the greatest thing that ever happened to me in my life, man. The Boss is a genius. And kind, too." These are the types of people who think that clean jeans and a Peterbilt hat constitute semi-formal wear. (As opposed to dirty jeans and a Skoal Bandits hat for every day.) I couldn't take it any more —I went in and bought a George Clinton album.

I realize I'm writing to a huge, faceless mass with baseball caps in each back pocket. But if I could reach just one person, just one soul aching for musical redemption, I've succeeded. Thanks, dudes.

Dion Holland is almost a junior and a columnist for The Daily Collegian. His column appears every other Friday.

reader opinion

It's customary

As a former service employee, I wish to comment on a much neglected business courtesy in this town. That is — it is customary, in the U.S., to tip people who provide a service to you. This includes: newspaper deliverers, waiters and waitresses, bellhops, bartenders, haircutters and delivery people. These people work for subminimal wages and rely on tips to make a living. The low wages these people receive allow their employers to sell you their products and services at a cheaper rate than would normally be possible.

The price of a tip should be included in the amount you intend to pay for a product or service. If you can't afford the tip, you can't afford the service.

Tom Hyland, senior-environmental engineering and forestry
Sept. 26

What do you think?

This Fall there are many hot issues facing Happy Valley. If you would like to speak out and voice your opinions to faculty, staff or students, write a letter to the editor with your gripe.

The Daily Collegian's opinion editor Terry Mutchler and assistant opinion editor Doug Popovich welcome the opinions of students, faculty, staff, alumni and area residents about issues concerning the readership of *The Daily Collegian.*

All letters must be double-spaced typed, and include the author's name, phone number, semester and major. Also, the author must be present with ID when submitting the letter.

So when you have a gripe or concern, don't take it out on your roommates, let the whole University know what you think — write a letter-to-the-editor.

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