Mit sports funding: Where does $1.3 million go?

By Steve Kim

Every information brochure that MIT releases includes the following line: "With the exception of those sports with the largest number of intercollegiate sports of any college or university in the nation, the Institute has always taken pride in this fact." Years ago, the Department of Athletics has been successful in bringing the students here a wide and extensive program of sports. It has helped to produce nationally-ranked teams in soccer, row, pistol, and sailing teams in recent seasons. The structure of the department and the method of financial distribution guarantees that every aspect of MIT athletics will be given fair and equal treatment.

Ross Smith, the head of the department, has been at MIT for nineteen years. He directs the department with the aid of two advisory councils, the MIT Athletic Association Executive Committee and the Athletic Board. Students participate in both councils.

Two assistant directors, Jack Barry and Jane Betts, head up the administrative staff. It is composed of business manager Rod Arthur, equipment manager John "Murphy," Murphy, facilities manager Al Bianco, sports information director Ken Cerino, and sports medicine director James Lester. The department then breaks down into five program divisions: intramural athletics, coordinated by David Wills; physical education, coordinated by Barry; recreation, coordinated by Barry; men's intercollegiate athletics, also coordinated by Barry; and women's intercollegiate athletics, coordinated by Betts.

Each of the division heads consults with the people in their respective programs in order to determine that program's needs. This list of necessities is then presented to a committee made up of Smith, Barry, Betts, and Arthur. They then decide how the finances will be divided among the different programs and teams.

Barry and Betts work personally with the coaches to arrange a team's road trips and schedules. Depending on the amount of money available for that particular year, the schools on a team's regular season schedule will be limited to those within a certain radius. If the team wishes to venture outside that radius, it must pay for the trip on its own.

Thus, the fencing team was not funded for the long southern road trip it took this season since the schools in that area were all located outside its radius.

This is not to say that the athletic department will never fund long trips by MIT teams. On the contrary, if training is essential and cannot be done here due to winter weather, the department has supported trips to warmer climates for this purpose. For example, the crew team goes down to Florida every January in order to work out on an indoor rowing river. Should a squad be skilled enough to go to a post-season collegiate tournament or meet, MIT has always been happy to foot the bill. Returning to the crew team, if a boat is fast enough to get invited to the Henley Regatta in England, the Institute will pay for the journey.

The key word in the previous examples is "collegiate." The athletic department will not pay for post-season trips to non-collegiate tournaments. For this reason, the women's crew team was denied funding a few years back when they wanted to go to the National Women's Rowing Association Championships because the NWRA is not a collegiate organization.

With regard to women's athletics, it is evident that the controversial Title IX has not had much effect here, since the laws of Title IX were already in effect at MIT long before Congress passed it. The Institute comes closer to total compliance than almost any other school in the nation. "The budget for the women's program is much larger than most other schools our size," says Betts.

Much of this is a large part due to a task force on women's athletics that was formed here in 1975. This was one of the main turning points for women's sports. As a result, the women's budget was increased and more coaches were hired for that part of the program. Unlike many other schools, the women's teams travel the same way, get the same accommodations, and receive the same quality equipment as the men.

Last year, the entire athletic budget at MIT came to the sum of 1.3 million dollars. Roughly fifteen percent of this is revenue from the sale of athletic cards. The rest is made up from the Institute budget and donations. "One of the nice things about MIT is that the administration budgets the Department of Athletics much like it would the Department of Chemistry or such," said Smith. "Our goal is to stay out of the gate-receipt dependency that other schools are deeply into."

Donations from alumni help greatly in the realization of this goal. The Development Office handles most of these. Others donate to a specific sport, such as the donation of crew shells.

Smith says there may be a cut-back on some of the intercollegiate schedules in the near future due to the influx into the intramural program from Next House. A cut-back like this would be considered grounds for extradition at a place like Ohio State, and it is a good example of how fairly everyone is treated. As Betts says, "The results of the program are determined and then funded to the best of our abilities."

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