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James F. Engstrom
January 11, 1971

A STUDY OF THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED ATHLETES
AND NON-ATHLETES AT MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

by

JAMES PETER JORGENSEN

A professional paper submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

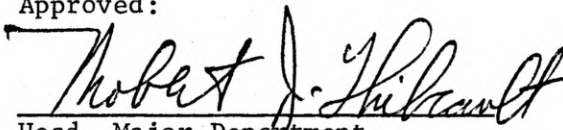
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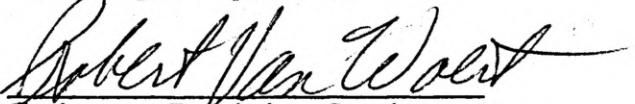
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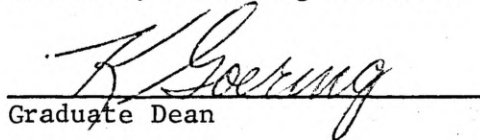
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Chairman, Examining Committee



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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

June, 1971

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer wishes to express his sincere appreciation to Dr. Robert VanWoert for his valuable assistance and encouragement in writing this study. The cooperation of the Athletic Department, it's staff, the Office of the Registrar, the Registrar, Mr. Jospeh Frazier and his staff, and Montana State University is gratefully acknowledged.

Appreciation goes to the writer's wife, Marlene, for her assistance and encouragement throughout the writing of this study.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess how well the athlete performed academically as compared with the non-athlete at Montana State University. To do this, the names of athletes receiving athletic scholarships for a minimum of two years, beginning in 1965-66, were taken from the files of the Athletic Director. Next, the files of the athletes were examined from the time these individuals entered, through summer quarter, 1970. A group of non-athletes were then matched to the athletes according to sex, curriculum, entrance test scores, and geographic origin. Grade point averages and attrition rates were computed from both group's academic records, and comparisons between the two groups were made.

It was found that the non-athlete had a 7.2 percent higher attrition rate than the athlete. There was no attrition for either group during the first year of attendance at Montana State University. It was also noted that the attrition rate for athletes was highest during their last years of attendance at Montana State University.

The grade point averages of athletes and non-athletes were examined, and it was found that the grade point average of the non-athlete was .08, on a four-point scale, higher than the athlete by matched pairs over a five year span. In nine of the fourteen matched pairs, the non-athlete had a higher grade point average. The non-athlete received a higher grade point average in four of the seven curriculum areas. As compared with studies done at other four-year institutions, the Montana State University athlete did comparably well academically.

The average number of quarters attended was 13.14 for the non-athlete and 14.00 for the athlete, and 57.1 percent of the athletes graduated as compared with 50 percent of the non-athletes.

The findings of this study, along with other research which was recommended, should aid the athlete with regard to his academic progress in terms of attrition, academic achievement, and in graduation. It was felt that by furnishing more information on the athlete to college counselors, the athletic coaching staff, and student advisors these people would be in a better position to assist the athlete in academic counseling.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Educators and coaches have for many years been faced with the problem of involvement in athletics at the college level. Coaches will argue that involvement in athletics brings about a closer relationship with the school and, as a result, the athlete becomes more interested in academic subjects and does a better job scholastically. Yet, college coaches are often criticized because some athletes do not receive a college degree; the athletes are in school only to play ball.

In the past, the athlete's scholastic ability has been downgraded. Assumptions have been made that athletics either attracts students of low mental ability or that it adversely affects the more capable student. However, the days of such attitudes are fast coming to an end (Edwards, 2:75).

Educators and coaches are beginning to recognize their responsibility in connection with athletes. The scholarship of athletes is of concern because participation in intercollegiate athletics should be considered a privilege and a responsibility, not solely because of the influence of athletics on academic achievement. In order that both may work effectively with athletes, educators and coaches need to determine what effect participation in athletics will have upon students and use this information in such a way that the athlete's education will not be impaired.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine all athletes entering Montana State University on athletic scholarship in 1965-66, as compared with a like number of non-athletes entering during the same period. The examination was focused on the academic performance and attrition rate of these athletes and non-athletes.

This study should be of interest to all people concerned with athletics at Montana State University. It should be of particular interest to the head coaches of each sport, the athletic director, student advisors, and the entire academic community. The researcher believes that this study contains useful information to those persons who are responsible for setting academic policies and standards for all athletes at Montana State University.

Questions To Be Answered

All questions answered in this study pertained to athletes and non-athletes entering Montana State University. They are:

1. Is there a difference between the attrition rates of athletes and non-athletes?
2. Is there a difference between the grade point averages of athletes and non-athletes?
3. What is the average number of quarters needed for graduation by athletes as compared with non-athletes?

Procedure

The data collected consisted of grade point averages and attrition rates for all selected athletes and non-athletes at Montana State University beginning with their quarter of entrance, Autumn of 1965, until their last quarter of attendance, Spring of 1970. The data was coded with matching entrance test scores and the curriculum of matriculation. The necessary data was collected from the records of the Director of Athletics and the Office of the Registrar. The data was collected during the Autumn quarter of 1970.

Limitations

The following limitations should be recognized when interpreting the results of this study:

1. The study is limited to athletes who received athletic aid for at least two years beginning in 1965-66, at Montana State University, who participated in intercollegiate athletics.

2. The curriculum of the non-athletes was matched to the curriculum of the athletes. These non-athletes and athletes were also matched within one standard deviation on entrance test scores.

3. All participants of this study were students enrolling at Montana State University in 1965-66 as freshmen.

Definition of Terms

Athletes. The athletes were the individuals granted athletic

aid and competing in intercollegiate athletics.

Grade point average. This term referred to the system used at Montana State University whereby each letter grade is assigned a numerical value, as follows: A = 4; B = 3; C = 2; D = 1; and F = 0.

Non-athlete. Non-athlete referred to those selected individuals who did not participate in intercollegiate athletics.

Intercollegiate athletics. Intercollegiate athletics concerned those sporting events occurring between two or more colleges or universities.

Summary

Athletes have come under extensive criticism regarding their achievement academically in the past few years. The increasing prominence of intercollegiate athletics in many educational institutions today has brought about unusual interest in the quality of scholarship of the athletic groups or individual athletes as to their success as compared with the non-athlete. Many people believe that some athletes enroll in college solely for participation in athletics with no concern for academics or pursuing a degree and subsequent graduation. If the athlete does show an interest in academics, some people believe that athletic participation leaves insufficient time for study.

It was hoped that this study would help college and athletic administrators equip themselves with a body of knowledge to assist athletes in their course of study. An awareness to some of the special

concerns unique to athletes would be made available to coaches and advisors.

Chapter 2

SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

There have been numerous studies done on the scholastic achievement of athletes and non-athletes. Despite this, there is considerable disagreement whether athletes do achieve at a comparable level of non-athletes.

A survey at the University of Wisconsin in 1929 found that athletes were superior in scholastic achievement. Athletes at this University excelled the average of the university, as a whole, consistently for a period of six years.

Cormany (1:356-61) compared the scholarship of the high school athlete with the academic record of the non-athlete and found a slight trend in favor of the athlete. He drew the conclusion that interscholastic athletic participation has little effect on the scholarship of the athlete.

Athletes are often accused of selecting easier subjects in high school and college than do the non-athletes. Jones (6:101-110) investigated and found that as far as high school athletes were concerned, they compared favorably with students who did not participate in athletics. He also found that athletes performed as well scholastically as did the non-athletes by use of grade-point average.

In a study at Ohio State University, Hindman (5:93-96) compared the scholastic records of athletes in all sports with those of non-

athletes. The athletes were found to be slightly inferior, especially in the College of Engineering. He concluded that there was no indication that athletes secured better grades than did non-athletes, nor did it indicate that scholarship was adversely affected by participation in athletics.

Shannon (10:1928-30) used objective English tests in his comparison of high school athletes with non-athletes after they entered college. The athletes were below the other groups in intelligence, but they were superior in achievement.

A recent study by Eidsmoe (3:106) gives the following information of a survey made in Iowa of boys that played basketball during the years 1960-61:

Schools were asked to report the grade average at the end of the first semester of the 1960-61 academic year for every player in each course he was enrolled and also to find the grade average of the entire class in the course.

Fourteen out of the total of sixteen schools involved turned in complete reports, thereby recording the results of 168 players out of a possible 192. The figures are significant as they provide assurance of a high degree of reliability for all members of the boys teams represented at the tournaments. The grades as reported by each of the schools were changed from a letter system to a 4.0 basis. The grade point results for the 168 players in all courses enrolled averaged 2.5666. The grade point results for all members of all the classes in which these players were enrolled averaged 2.186, showing a difference in favor of the athletes.

Analysis of data on the grade point average by classes shows the following:

Team		Average of Players	Entire Class
Iowa Senior Boys	74	2.622	2.003
Iowa Junior Boys	57	2.551	2.148
Iowa Sophomore Boys	29	2.321	2.296
Iowa Freshman Boys	8	2.406	2.531

The survey showed that athletes such as basketball players who are highly competitive in their chosen sport are also above the average of their fellow students in academic performance, a point which in many cultural circles has been definitely denied or in doubt.

Lee (7:29-31) studies the effects of athletic participation at the University of Utah in 1963 and found that non-athletes achieved more academically during the first year of college, but this difference decreased each subsequent year and was negligible at the end of four years. According to Lee, athletes achieved .23 lower grades, on a four-point scale, than did non-athletes; however, the results show little support for the person who attacked athletics.

In respect to attrition at the college level, McCammon (8) found that students on scholarship were less likely to withdraw from school than those students who financed their own education. The chief reason was the simple fact that the cost of education for students with scholarships was much less, and they felt withdrawal would prevent them from ever obtaining education so reasonably.

The Educational Policies Commission (9:108) stated in 1960 that the role of intercollegiate athletics in student life and the effect of

intercollegiate athletics on student scholarship and conduct are of considerable importance in higher education. Intelligently conducted, intercollegiate athletics should engender respect for good sportsmanship and an appreciation of moral values.

Walker (13:21-23) found that the non-athlete at East Tennessee State University has a better college grade point average than the athlete. His survey covered all participants in intercollegiate athletics from 1963-65 and matched fifty athletes and non-athletes according to high school grade point averages, marital status, and college entrance test scores. He concluded that athletics do consume too much of the athlete's academic study time.

Summary

The study of related literature is lengthy--much work has been done in the area of academic achievement. However, the researcher was able to find only one article on the attrition rate of athletes. The studies do indicate a need for further research in this area. The researcher also wrote letters to the Athletic Directors at the University of Idaho, Washington State University, and the University of Washington asking if any studies on attrition rate on athletes had been done. All three Athletic Directors replied with a negative answer. Taken collectively, the studies all disclose that although academic and athletic success were related, neither was the direct cause of the success or failure in the other. (See Appendix)

Whether or not participation in intercollegiate athletics adversely affects scholastic achievement is still a controversial issue. Although the results of these studies do not always agree, they seem to denote that athletes may be scholars and do not enroll in college solely to participate in athletics.

Chapter 3

METHOD AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Procedure

The major thesis of this study was to investigate the athlete's attrition rate and academic achievement at Montana State University as compared to that of the non-athlete. In order to adequately investigate this problem, it was necessary to identify the population and obtain their grade point averages. In addition, information on the student's curriculum and attrition rate were collected and compared. This chapter will show the procedure for data collection.

Population

The population investigated in this study consisted of selected athletes who received an athletic scholarship for a minimum of two years, beginning in 1965-66 as freshmen. The scholarships occurred in all Varsity sports according to the regulations of the Big Sky Conference. The athletes were paired with the non-athletes on the basis of the following criteria: (1) date of entry at Montana State University, (2) entrance test scores (within one standard deviation), (3) curriculum, (4) sex, (5) age, and (6) geographic origin. The non-athlete did not receive any financial assistance from sources outside his family.

Data Collection

The initial phase of data collection was to examine the records

of the Director of Athletics to obtain a list of athletes. The researcher went to the Office of the Registrar at Montana State University to locate the academic records of all members of the population. After the necessary records had been located, the second phase of data collection began. This aspect included the pairing of athletes to the non-athletes in terms of test scores, curriculum, sex, age, and geographic origin.

Grade point averages and the attrition rate were compiled for each group. This information was completed for work done only at Montana State University.

Analysis of the Data

The statistics employed to analyze the data were descriptive techniques. No tests of significance were used. This section will present each question and the analysis needed to answer the question.

Analysis of Questions To Be Answered

In Chapter One, three specific questions were presented as being the basis of the study. At the outset, the researcher obtained the names of thirty-five athletes who had received a full athletic scholarship during the year 1965-66, as entering freshmen, from the Office of the Director of Athletics at Montana State University. The names from this group were then taken to the Office of the Registrar at Montana State University to find non-athletes who were matched with the ath-

letes according to curriculum, similar entrance test scores, and the same geographic origin. One of the limitations was that, to be considered, an athlete had to receive his full scholarship for a minimum of two years. This limitation caused the total number of athletes in the study to drop from thirty-five to fourteen, and these fourteen were then matched with the non-athletes and studied for the five year period, 1965-70. This five year period was considered ample time to complete the requirements for a degree.

Question Three was modified because data was unavailable to obtain answers directly related to the question.

Question 1

Is there a difference between the attrition rates of athletes and non-athletes?

Table 1
Attrition Rates

Group	N	1965 1966	1966 1967	1967 1968	1968 1969	1969 1970	Total	Total Percent
Athlete	14	0	0	2	1	3	6	42.8
Non- Athlete	14	0	1	2	2	2	7	50.0

Table 1 shows the attrition number by scholastic year and percentage rate of the individuals in the study at the various class levels. The total number of fourteen individuals were observed throughout their course of study at Montana State University with regard to attrition. The total refers to all individuals who dropped out from the original group of fourteen, and the total percent is based on that same original group of fourteen. Six athletes dropped out from a total of fourteen, or 42.8 percent, and the attrition rate of the non-athletes was 50.0 percent, or a total of seven individuals. The attrition rate for athletes was highest during their last year of attendance at Montana State University. There was no attrition recorded during the first year of attendance for either the athlete or non-athlete groups.

Question 2

Is there a difference between the grade point average of athletes and non-athletes?

Table 2

Grade Point Averages by Curriculum

Curriculum	Commerce		Sec.Educ.		Gen.Studies		Math	
Group	N	G.P.A.	N	G.P.A.	N	G.P.A.	N	G.P.A.
Athlete	6	2.17	2	2.32	1	2.10	1	2.21
Non-athlete	6	2.45	2	2.24	1	2.79	1	2.30

Table 2 (Continued)

Curriculum	Earth Sci.		Chem. Eng.		Pre-Med	
Group	N	G.P.A.	N	G.P.A.	N	G.P.A.
Athlete	1	3.09	2	2.50	1	2.76
Non-athlete	1	2.56	2	2.63	1	1.80

Table 2 shows the grade point averages for all the individuals in the study, in their respective curriculums. These curriculums were selected because they were the curricula of the athletes; and, in this study, the non-athletes were matched accordingly. G.P.A. refers to grade point average, and N is the number of athletes or non-athletes in that particular curriculum. The non-athlete received a higher grade point average in four of the seven curriculum areas. The grade point average under those curriculum areas where the N is greater than one is the average of the total grade point averages of that number of individuals. In Pre-medicine, the athlete surpasses the non-athlete by .96, on a four point scale, the largest difference in favor of the athlete. The largest difference in favor of the non-athlete occurs in General Studies, where the non-athlete scored .69 higher, on a four point scale, than the athlete.

Table 3

Grade Point Averages of Paired Individuals

Group	G.P.A. Pair	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Athlete		1.94	2.76	3.09	1.98	2.64	2.21	2.36
Non-athlete		2.66	1.80	2.56	1.84	2.22	2.30	3.04

Group	G.P.A. Pair	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	Mean
Athlete		2.48	2.10	2.15	2.76	1.95	2.25	2.14	2.34
Non-athlete		2.58	2.79	1.90	3.21	2.44	2.32	2.21	2.42

NOTE: Athlete and non-athlete matched according to sex, curriculum, entrance test scores, and geographic origin.

The grade point average of each member of the paired study is shown above in Table 3. Each letter represents a pair: A = Pair 1, B = Pair 2, etc. The arithmetic "mean" is computed by taking the average of all the grade point averages. The mean grade point average is higher for the non-athlete but only by .08 of a full point. In nine of the fourteen pairs, it is interesting to note that the non-athlete had a higher grade point average than the athlete; however, both groups produced the same number of individuals with a grade point average below a 2.00.

Question 3

What is the average number of quarters needed for graduation by athletes as compared with non-athletes?

Table 4

Graduates and Quarters in Attendance

Curriculum	Commerce		Sec	Educ	Chem Engr		Pre-Med	
Group	Grad	Qtrs	Grad	Qtrs	Grad	Qtrs	Grad	Qtrs
Athlete	2	13	1	16	2	14	1	15
Non-Athlete	3	12.67	1	12	1	14	0	--

Curriculum	Mathematics		Earth Sci		Gen Studies		Total	Qtr Avg
Group	Grad	Qtrs	Grad	Qtrs	Grad	Qtrs		
Athlete	1	15	1	12	0	--	8	14.00
Non-Athlete	0	--	1	14	1	14	7	13.14

Table 4 shows the number of graduates in each curriculum and the number of quarters completed for graduation for each member of the study during their five years of attendance at Montana State University. Each curriculum is listed and below that is the number of graduates and the average number of quarters required for the graduation. Eight athletes graduated from the original number of fourteen, as compared with seven non-athletes. The average number of quarters attended was 13.14 for

the non-athlete graduates and 14.00 for the athlete graduates. This appears in order, as an athlete often will take a lighter load in terms of total units and this would hinder progress in a normal four year course of study. It is also interesting to note that better than fifty-seven percent of the athletes involved in this study did graduate, as compared with fifty percent of the non-athletes. Athletes are often criticized for failure in this area.

Summary

A total of four comparisons were made in this section in an attempt to answer the questions listed at the beginning of Chapter One. The attrition rates of the fourteen athletes and non-athletes were very similar. By curriculum, the grade point averages for the non-athletes were higher than the athletes. This margin was also carried over to the mean grade point average, where the non-athlete had a grade point average of 2.42, as compared with 2.34 for the athlete. In addition, the non-athletes were able to complete the graduation requirements in a shorter period of time (approximately one quarter). However, the athletes had a larger number of graduates than the non-athletes. These findings represent only fourteen matched pairs of athletes and non-athletes during the five year period, 1965-70.

The researcher had requested a copy of the Football Letter (See Appendix) from the National Football Foundation at the suggestion of Athletic Director Stan Bates of Washington State University, but it was

not available at the completion of this study. Due to time limitations, it was not included. As of this writing, the researcher is still awaiting its arrival.

Chapter 4

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

At the outset, the researcher was plagued by a common assumption that athletes were inferior to non-athletes in the area of academic achievement. It was also held that athletes were in college primarily to participate in athletics and that education was of secondary importance. Three areas of concern to the researcher were the attrition rate, grade point average, and length of matriculation of the athlete as compared to the non-athlete. The athletes considered were to have received athletic aid for at least two years. The non-athletes were matched to the athletes on the basis of curriculum, entrance test scores, and geographic origin; and all participants were freshmen enrolled at Montana State University in 1965-66.

The literature surveyed in this area was inconclusive, some favored the athlete, others the non-athlete, in terms of academic achievement. There has been very little research done in the area of attrition rates, but previous studies indicated that the athlete did not enter college only to participate in athletics.

There were a total of four comparisons made between the athletes and the non-athletes in this study. The non-athlete had a 7.2 percent higher attrition rate than the athlete on the basis of the fourteen matching pairs. No attrition was found during the first year

of attendance. The non-athlete had a mean grade point average that was .08 higher than the athlete. The non-athlete had a higher grade point average in four of the seven curriculum areas involved, and the non-athlete achieved a higher grade point average in nine of the fourteen matched pairs. Eight athletes graduated as compared with seven non-athletes.

An in depth study to determine reasons for the factors presented was not possible due to time limitations and the limited number of students who received athletic scholarships for two years or more. The researcher originally felt that he would be able to compare approximately thirty-five pairs; yet, by his own criteria, he was unable to locate more than fourteen athletes who had full aid for at least two years.

Conclusions

In drawing conclusions from this study, it must be remembered that the findings are based upon very small samples of the local population. A similar study at another institution might not produce identical results when conducted in a different setting. It must also be understood that this study was concerned only with male subjects with similar entrance test scores to Montana State University and from a similar geographic origin. With these limitations, the conclusions have been based on data found at Montana State University and may, or may not, have application elsewhere.

The findings of this study would support the following conclusions:

1. Athletes do graduate with the same regularity as non-athletes.
2. Participation in athletics may hinder normal progress towards graduation.
3. The athlete does no better or no worse than the non-athlete in terms of academic achievement.
4. The college athlete spends time in athletic activities which could have been spent studying.

Recommendations

It is recommended that further research be done with the athlete as compared with the non-athlete. The following areas of investigation would prove extremely beneficial in better understanding and working with the athlete and non-athlete.

1. A further study should be undertaken to determine the academic performance of athletes during the quarters of participation in comparison to quarters of non-participation.
2. A study should be made of non-academic activities, such as participating in a fraternity, working part-time, or living off campus, to determine how these activities influence academic achievement as compared to the effect of athletic activities, such as practices, film reviews, chalk talks, travel, and others.

3. Recruiters, who most often are the college coaches, should point out that the athlete will have his individual time limited by athletics; but the non-athlete will also have influencing factors too and, therefore, he will not be curtailed in his total free time much more than the non-athlete.

4. A much more extensive study survey in this area, with similar questions but done over a greater time span, should be done to obtain a greater number of athletes.

5. The results of this study should be made available to the student-athlete, to advisors, to athletic directors, to coaches, to educators, to the administrators of Montana State University, and to the public and other groups interested in the welfare of the athlete at Montana State University.

APPENDIX

—Montana State University—

Bozeman, Montana 59715

Tel. 406-537-3121

Department of Athletics

September 9, 1970

MR. JIM OWENS
Athletic Director
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington 98105

Dear Mr. Owens:

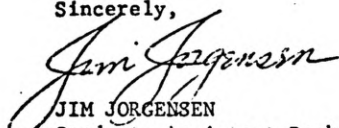
As a graduate student at Montana State University, and also a graduate assistant coach in basketball, I am writing to you for some information for a professional paper.

The topic of the paper is the attrition rate of athletes compared to non-athletes at Montana State University during a four and five year period. The grade point average will also be compared.

Have any studies of this type been done at Washington State University? If so, what have been the results? I would appreciate hearing from you on this matter at your earliest convenience.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,


JIM JORGENSEN
Graduate Assistant-Basketball
MSU FIGHTING BOBCATS

JJ/np

Dear Jim
I know of no such study
even having been undertaken
at the University of Washington.
Joe Kearney
Director of Sports

26

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
PULLMAN, WASHINGTON 99163

INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

September 15, 1970

Mr. Jim Jorgensen
Graduate Assistant-Basketball
Montana State University
Bozeman, Montana 59715

Dear Mr. Jorgensen:

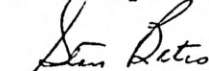
I am in receipt of your letter relative to any study we might have on the attrition rate of athletes.

We do not have any such study available now. We have made surveys a time or two, but no real study. If you do come up with a complete study, I would be pleased to receive a copy, and I am sorry I cannot be of help to you.

There was an article in the May-June-July issue of the Football Letter from the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame which you may wish to read if you have not already done so.

Thanks for writing.

Sincerely,



Stan Bates
Director of Athletics

m

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

MOSCOW, IDAHO 83843



Department of Athletics
MEMORIAL GYMNASIUM
ED KNECHT
DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

September 16, 1970

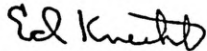
Jim Jorgensen
Assistant Basketball Coach
Montana State University
Bozeman, Montana 59715

Dear Jim:

In regard to your recent letter of September 9, concerning the paper you are writing. No such study has been done that I am familiar with. I am sure that I can not help you in this particular subject.

I hope that I will have the opportunity to meet you personally when we play the Bobcats in Bozeman this fall.

Sincerely,



Edward T. Knecht
Director of Athletics

ETK:dr
cc:

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