

POINTS OF VIEW

Lem Barney deserves support, second chance

While I'm not well-acquainted with former Detroit Lion Lem Barney, he and I have many mutual acquaintances. My name and his have appeared together on the stationery of various egalitarian boards and I feel a personal affinity for his athletic background, his support of liberal humanitarian causes and his graceful bearing in the unflinching floodlights of media attention and crowd pressure.

I was an NCAA All-American sprinter who outran Olympic champions in faster time than they won Olympic gold, went undefeated representing the United States in Europe on the national team and ultimately was relegated to various athletic halls of fame.

Thus I speak as a man who has been tested in brutally competitive crucibles wherein many others have melted away. I also speak as a former coach of high school athletes who later gained collegiate All-America status while sometimes ignoring training rules re-

garding the use of intoxicatives — both legal and illegal.

During my days as an executive educator, I was denounced as a troublemaker by some community groups and officials — and by many of the media — not only for espousing multiculturalism but also for advocating the decriminalization of drug use.

I come from a profoundly substance-abusing Celtic family, prominently featuring my alcoholic ex-fighter father (a legendary liberal humanitarian in his time). I also confess that during my more boisterous days I didn't decline a few straight-up hits of Jack Daniels and roach clip now and then — even when I was an international athlete. And, yes I did inhale. So it is with multiple sorrows that I note Lem Barney's recent arrest for allegedly using illegal substances and his subsequent hospitalization for depression. He was one of the National Football League's greatest cornerbacks and countless people idolize and emulate him.



JOHN TELFORD

How many of us have never yielded to the blandishments of nicotine or marijuana use, or to overindulgence in alcohol, or to philandering, or to gluttony or to any other form of fleshly weakness?

If he's guilty, I can't excuse him. What I can do is empathize — particularly since the pontificating media and the pious general public judge their "fallen heroes" by a far tougher yardstick than they reserve for themselves and their own various vices.

How many of us have never yielded to the blandishments of nicotine or marijuana use, or to overindulgence in alcohol, or to philandering, or to gluttony or to any other form of fleshly weakness? Our behaving in these ways doesn't make them right, but it makes us human.

As a humanly flawed being like the rest of us, Lem Barney deserves the same second chance that we all do. Bear in mind that he isn't accused of selling drugs, as did — for example — his old antagonist Bob Hayes, the peerless sprinter who became the Dallas Cowboys' premier wide receiver.

This distinction between being accused of using rather than of selling is a significant one. Recognizing that

the role models of our younger years are prey to the same addictive predilections as you or I is a big step toward maturation.

It's time to grow up and stop blindly ascribing superhuman characteristics to people just because they've done superhuman deeds on an athletic field.

To expect Lem Barney to behave as superhumanly off the gridiron is perhaps doubly unfair to him, if only because often he has actually met such expectations.

This affable ex-superstar has contributed much to our community in the past. What he needs most from us now is sympathetic support in his very un-super-but very human struggle.

John Telford, a Rochester Hills resident, most recently was assistant superintendent in the Rochester district. He previously was executive director for secondary education in the Plymouth-Canton Schools. To leave a message for Telford from a Touch-Tone phone, dial 953-2047, mailbox 1879.

With power comes responsibility in education

QUESTION: We have a very large and vocal parent group in our community that wants a "Parent Council" in every building with the right to make decisions in their school building, including expenditures of funds, hiring and firing of teachers and what will be taught. What has been your experience with this approach?

ANSWER: This is called site-based management and is carried to the extreme in some areas.

My philosophy as an educational administrator is that the more you include teachers and parents in the decision-making process, the more they have at stake to see what is implemented is successful. The less they are involved, the less they care.

Teachers, if not included in the curriculum's development, will simply shut their classroom door, ignore what is dumped on them, and go back to what has always worked for them, and use the big, thick curriculum guides as door stops.

In one district I worked, we had (besides the PTA) a parent advisory group in each building. The parent groups were charged with identifying 1. local



DOC DOYLE

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building concerns (i.e. need lights at entrance for evening meetings) and 2. districtwide needs. They had a District Coordinating Council with representatives from each building that met a couple of times a year, prioritized needs and then periodically reported to

the board. It worked fine! However, other parent groups seem to want all the power without recognizing that with power comes responsibility. Let's say one of these local school building parent boards of education buys some faulty playground equipment on which a child is severely injured or dies.

Who's responsible? Would it be the local site-based management parental board of education that controls the budget that bought the equipment, that also approved the purchase, or would it be the existing school district's board of education, the body which was voted in by the citizens of the community?

That site-based management elementary school board of education may be backed by insurance for any legal settlement, but members of the board should also be ready for personal lawsuits. Such a lawsuit would question from where the authority came to make decisions over and above the citizen-elected board of education.

Such parents are more likely to point a finger right straight at the superintendent, claiming lack of knowledge about the laws and liabilities.

How about curriculum! Literally a

district could have 14 buildings and 14 different curriculums — some good and some terrible, some based on religious beliefs and some based on far-left beliefs — a total disaster.

And if these good-intentioned people think the child severely injured in the playground example is explosive, wait until they take on hiring and firing teachers. They best be ready to come up with about four years of their time for hearings, appeals and about \$250,000 to \$1 million in funds if they lose the case.

The bottom line is even if this site-based management local building par-

ent board model were to materialize, the eventual head that will roll, if events go awry, will be one person — the superintendent.

A superintendent and a board of education can develop and delegate a decision-making process for parental and/or teacher input, but they can never delegate away the responsibility.

James "Doc" Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator/university instructor, is president of Doyle and Associates, an educational consulting firm. To leave a message for Doyle from a Touch-Tone telephone, dial 953-2047, mailbox 1868.

LETTERS

Speaking out applauded

Mr. John Telford's comments regarding sexism, homophobia, racism and anti-Semitism in a previous column were most refreshing.

To speak out on these issues today takes a great deal of courage. It also takes a great deal of courage, on the

part of a newspaper, to print controversial opinions.

I want to laud you for your willingness to publish a newspaper that is open to all points of view and supports the right to free speech. We must all speak up or, when it is happening to us, there will be no one to speak out for us.

Bernetta Miller-Shaw
Executive Director
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