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## Daily Beacon Article: "Bill Russell: Athlete-philosopher"

Commission for Blacks

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# Bill Russell : athlete-philosopher

4-27-73

By RANDY SCHULTZ

His hands were those you would expect to see on a basketball player. Elongated, slender extremities that often rose up to gesture as he spoke.

William Francis Russell has not played a game of professional basketball in almost four years. But his body and facial characteristics retain the sleekness and inner pride that come from winning eleven National Basketball Association championships during a 13-year career.

He evokes the image of a champion, the self-assured demeanor of one who takes life as it comes and makes no attempt to pursue any phase of life past the point where he can no longer find fulfillment.

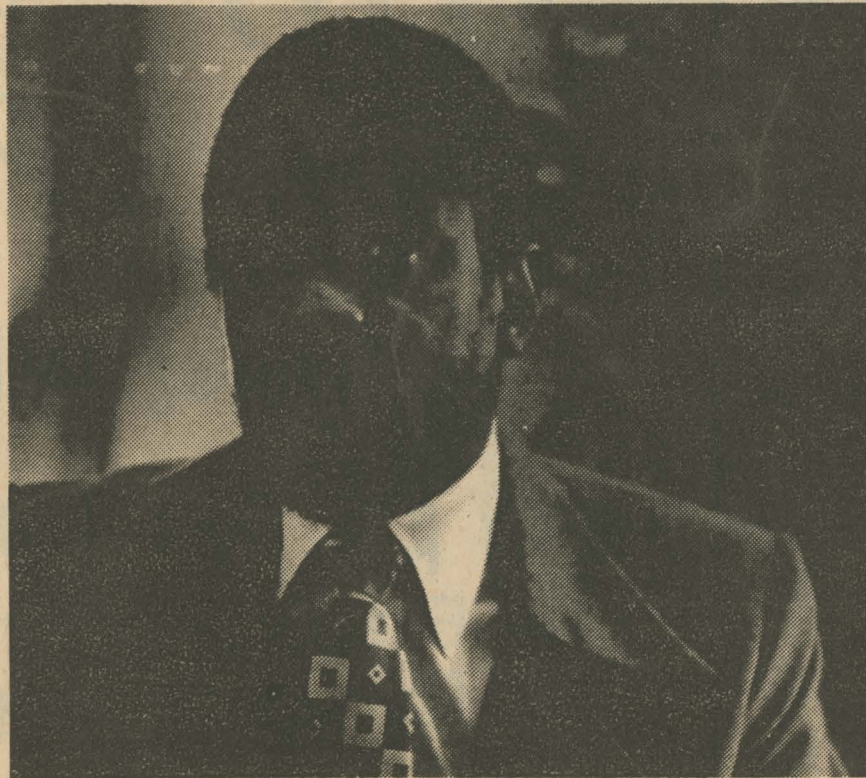
His laugh, gradually growing as famous as the man-on-man challenges against Wilt Chamberlain, is spontaneous and free. It is surprisingly high-pitched, in contrast to the low, more subtle tone of his conversation. He accompanies the laugh with a twinkling in his eyes and a don't-feel-uptight-come-on-ahead-and-laugh gaze to those around him.

He receives queries with a genuinely pensive interest and gives answers firmly with the assurance that he knows of what he speaks.

With his six-foot nine-inch frame enclosed in a subdued yet dignified pinstripe suit, resembling a Wall Street financier rather than an all-NBA pivotman, he converted his passion for

honesty and frankness to the matter of college athletics, while inserting brief interludes from Bill Russell the philosopher.

"I think college athletics can be



Staff Photo by Jonathan Daniel

*A business*

beneficial," he said. "But first you must recognize them for what they are, and that is a business.

"In most big colleges, there is cheating in recruiting. The athletes are treated

"I think college athletics can be beneficial," Russell said. "But first you must recognize them for what they are, and that is a business."

like pretty girls. That is, they're all right to have around but you wouldn't want them to say anything."

Despite the fact Russell's collegiate career at the University of San Francisco ended seventeen years ago, it is obvious the only difference in athletic programs between then and now is the higher price inflation has put on a winning program. One of the saddest ramifications of an expensive program which results in sheltered athletes is the lack of identification which the student body has with the team.

"The athlete should be an integral part of the university program," maintained Russell. "Right now, the less an athlete says, the better it suits the coaches."

There is a growing trend, practiced also at Tennessee, that constant questioning of an institution is detrimental to that institution's welfare. It seems that people won't, or don't want, to question the merits of a particular organization, namely the athletic department. Russell disagrees with this idea.

"Any institution that cannot be questioned is a shaky institution. If it is a sound institution, then it will survive."

But what about the idea of education for student-athletes? Some argue athletes are given too many academic