

## *Journal of Issues in* **Intercollegiate Athletics**

### **The Fall of Sewanee from “Big-Time” College Football**

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*This article examines the role of presidential leadership in the decision of Alexander Guerry to remove the University of the South, better known as Sewanee, from the Southeastern Conference (SEC) in 1940. Only three institutions have ever left the SEC (Walsh, 2006), and Sewanee is the only former member that no longer competes in Division I (NCAA, n.d.). Historical sources for the paper include Sewanee’s university archives, as well as archival documents from other SEC institutions. The article argues that Sewanee’s chancellor, Alexander Guerry, ceased offering athletic scholarships and withdrew from the SEC because he believed subsidizing the athletic department with university resources to compete in “big-time” college football was incompatible Sewanee’s liberal arts mission.*

*Keywords: college football, college sport history, University of the South, presidential leadership, Simon’s Incompatibility Thesis*

The University of the South, better known as Sewanee since the campus is located in Sewanee, Tennessee, completed one of the most dominant seasons in the history of college football during 1899 (“Sewanee Saga,” n.d.). The Sewanee Tigers won all twelve of their games and scored 327 points while only giving up ten. During the 1800s, it was not unusual for small institutions like Sewanee to compete against state flagship universities (Katz & Seifried, 2014), as could be seen from their wins over Texas, Texas A&M, Louisiana State, Tulane, and Mississippi, all over the course of seven days (“Sewanee Saga,” n.d.). College football in the South, however, lacked national prestige during the 1800s (Doyle, 1997). A few Southern teams such as Alabama and Georgia gained national recognition during the 1920s (Oriard, 2001). By the 1930s, Southeastern Conference (SEC) programs such as Georgia Tech, Mississippi, Mississippi State, and Tulane reached their first bowl games (Georgia Tech Football information guide, 2017; Mississippi State Football media guide, 2017; Ole Miss Football media guide, 2017; Tulane Football media guide, 2017).

Unlike the rest of the Southeast region, Sewanee football deteriorated during the 1920s and 30s. The Tigers did not have a losing season from 1898 to 1918 (Sewanee Football media guide, 2011), but only managed two winning seasons while competing in the Southern Conference from 1924 to 1932. When Sewanee and twelve other institutions left the Southern Conference to form the SEC in 1933, the program’s success in the “big-time” was over. During 1936, one journalist summed up Sewanee’s poor performance by pointing out that the team had only scored five touchdowns in their last two seasons, and had lost their last twenty-seven conference games (“Sewanee’s Fine Football,” 1936). In 1938, chancellor Alexander Guerry abolished athletic scholarships upon his arrival to Sewanee (Bulletin of the, 1938), and two years later, withdrew the university from the SEC (Guerry, 1940) without having ever won a football game in the conference (Sewanee Football Media Guide, 2011).

Only three institutions have ever withdrawn from the SEC. Two of them, Georgia Tech and Tulane, still compete in NCAA Division I, while Sewanee eventually joined the lowest level of NCAA competition, Division III (NCAA, n.d.). Georgia Tech left due to their disapproval of an SEC regulation which prohibited the offering of more than 140 athletic scholarships (Corrie, 1970). Tulane became an independent so they could be more easily matched with their athletic competitors (Walsh, 2006). Why was Sewanee unable to sustain their early success? More importantly, why did Alexander Guerry ban athletic scholarships upon his arrival to Sewanee, and remove the university from the SEC two years later? While Sewanee was initially capable of contending with other top teams in the South, other SEC football programs grew to the point where Sewanee could no longer remain competitive. The extent to which the rest of the conference grew, coupled with Alexander Guerry’s philosophy towards “big-time” college football, led to his reforms.

Alexander Guerry’s motives for reforming athletics at Sewanee are worthy of study. Examining this case in college sport history can provide further insight regarding the motives of presidents who reform athletics. Previous historiography demonstrates that some college presidents in between World War I and World War II reformed athletics at their institutions partially out of a disdain for them (Doyle, 2004; Lester, 1995; Smith, 2011). This motive did not apply to Guerry.

During a 1938 speech to the student body, Guerry (1938) asserted that:

The manner in which Sewanee has expended her energy and her efforts upon her football program has retarded her growth and development, and is at least partially responsible for Sewanee's small enrollment, her limited resources and her fiscal difficulties (p. 4).

In plainer terms, Guerry believed competing in "big-time" college football was incompatible with Sewanee's educational mission because university resources subsidized the program. Despite this perspective, Guerry should not be remembered as a chancellor who disliked sport, although some university leaders are guilty of value dualism, or believing that mental activities are superior to physical ones (Kretchmar, 2005). Guerry serves as evidence that reformers who criticized college sport for being incompatible with the academic mission of universities during the Great Depression were not necessarily value dualists. In other words, the story of Sewanee and Alexander Guerry shows us that not all critics of "big-time" college sport undervalue physical activity.

The rest of this article will define the Incompatibility Thesis (Simon, Torres, & Hager, 2015) and explain the relevance of it to Guerry's reforms at Sewanee. Then, the author will examine value dualism in college sport during the Great Depression to demonstrate that some stakeholders in college sport, such as university presidents and journalists, held this philosophy. Then, I will analyze the impact of the Great Depression on Sewanee's athletic department. After that, I will describe sources used in the paper. Subsequently, I will argue that Sewanee lost the ability to compete in SEC football because 1) Other SEC teams increased the size of their stadiums from the late 1800s to 1940 2) Sewanee's status as a private and rural university prevented it from developing a large fanbase 3) Sewanee's coaching staff became less specialized than their competitors. The inability of Sewanee to remain competitive in the SEC helped make reform possible. In regard to Guerry, I will argue he ceased offering athletic scholarships and withdrew Sewanee from the SEC because he thought subsidizing the athletic department to compete in the "big-time" unjustifiably harmed the university. Comments from his speech to Sewanee's students when he announced the end of athletic scholarships, his background in sport, Sewanee's high participation rates in intramural athletics, Guerry's involvement in the hiring of head football coach Jenks Gillem, and the fact that Sewanee competed in football during World War II provides evidence that Guerry viewed sport as an important part of campus life.

## **Relevant Sport Philosophy and College Sport Historiography**

### *The Incompatibility Thesis*

Guerry's belief that competing in the "big-time" harmed Sewanee's academic mission is an expression of what sport philosopher Robert Simon (Simon, Torres, & Hager, 2015) calls the Incompatibility Thesis. This thesis states that "Intercollegiate sports are incompatible with the academic functions of colleges and universities" (Simon, Torres, & Hager, 2015, p. 160), while the weaker version argues that this incompatibility only holds true for high-profile Division I programs. The focus of this article is to examine why Guerry believed participating in "big-time" college sport harmed the University of the South, since this is how he justified his reforms.

### *Historiography of Presidential Leadership and Value Dualism in College Athletics during the Great Depression*

Sewanee, under Guerry's leadership, was not the only university to drop out of "big-time" college athletics. The leadership of University of Chicago president Robert Hutchins in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century serves as an example of a reformer who disapproved of commercialism in college sport and believed in value dualism. In an article published by the *Saturday Evening Post*, Hutchins (1938) criticized the commercialism in college football by declaring "The trouble with football is the money that is in it" (p. 1). In addition, he claimed that "The development of the body is important, *but secondary* [emphasis added by the author]," and "Young people who are more interested in their bodies than their minds should not go to college," (p. 1). During the next year, Hutchins convinced the University of Chicago's trustees to abolish the football program, which competed in the Big Ten (Lester, 1995).

Oriard (2012), without explicitly mentioning value dualism, provides evidence that it was prominent in the media's perceptions of college sport during the Great Depression. He notes that according to the Carnegie Report of 1929, the academic performance between athletes and non-athletes was not very different in quality. Despite this finding, he describes the stereotype of the "dumb jock" as a "Familiar figure in print and film in the 1930s" (Oriard, 2012, p. 9). This point suggests that during the Great Depression, some film producers and journalists believed that athletes were intellectually inferior to non-athlete students, although the evidence in the Carnegie Report suggested no large difference. It could be inferred that this stereotype showed signs of value dualism because the media portrayed athletes in a negative light for prioritizing their sport over their academics. In addition, it should be noted that Oriard (2012) described this stereotype as having "A distinctly local ethnic flavor," (p. 9) meaning that value dualism was not the only potential influence.

### *The Role of the Great Depression*

While Guerry reformed athletics at Sewanee, the United States was suffering from the Great Depression, which lasted from 1929 to 1941 (Kennedy, 1999). A 1938 government report titled "The Report on Economic Conditions of the South" found that the South, Sewanee's location, was the poorest region in the country (Carlton & Coclanis, 1996). It described items such as cars, radios, and books as ordinary items in the rest of the nation, but not the South. The report also noted that as of 1937, the average annual income in the Southern United States was \$314 per year, while it was \$604 in the rest of the nation. While living in the South may have been cheaper, the cost of living was not so low as to compensate for the wage gap. Therefore, the region's standard of living was lower than the rest of the country (Carlton & Coclanis, 1996).

This means that the entire Southeastern region struggled economically while Guerry reformed athletics at Sewanee. Sewanee's athletic department, however, averaged a deficit of approximately \$11,000 in each of the two years before the Great Depression began, while only averaging a deficit of around \$8,000 during the first eight years of the Depression (Financial Statement of, 1932; Financial Statement of, 1937). This means that Sewanee's athletic department struggled financially before and during the Great Depression, but the nation's economic hardships do not appear to have had a significant impact on the bottom line of Sewanee's athletic budget, although the Great Depression certainly did not make it any easier for the Tigers to generate revenue.

### *Sources Used*

This research relies primarily on sources in Sewanee's archives. These sources include correspondence such as letters between the alumni, the university chancellor, and other university employees, as well as athletic department records containing information such as coaching salaries. Other sources from Sewanee's archives include newspaper clippings and university trustee board minutes. Sources from other SEC university archives, as well as newspaper articles found on Newspapers.com, will supplement the paper to provide context for the history of Sewanee's football program.

### *How Sewanee Lost their Ability to Remain Competitive in SEC Football*

One reason the performance of Sewanee's football team deteriorated during the early 1900s is the small size of the university's football stadium. This reflected inequality with the rest of the SEC because Sewanee could not generate as much revenue as their opponents from home games, and had to face the challenges of travelling for road games more frequently than other SEC institutions (Guttman, 1978). Many SEC schools had playing fields by the late 1800s, back when Sewanee was successful, but they all only held a few thousand fans (Tutka, 2016). In 1940, when Sewanee left the SEC, the size of SEC stadiums ranged from 10,400 to 69,000, with an average size of 28,952 (see Table 1). Every SEC member except for Sewanee had either built a new stadium or expanded their current one during the Great Depression. After World War II, Sewanee's stadium still only held 1,000 ("Can College Sports," n.d.).

Table 1 (Tutka, 2016)

School	Stadium Capacity	Year Reaching that Size
Alabama	24,000	1937
Auburn	11,890	1940
Florida	21,749	1930
Georgia	30,000	1940
Georgia Tech	30,000	1938
Kentucky	10,400	1937
LSU	46,000	1936
Mississippi	26,000	1940
Mississippi State	27,000	1936
Tennessee	31,390	1938
Tulane	69,000	1939
Vanderbilt	20,000	1937
Sewanee	1,000	Unknown

Sewanee's scheduling during the late 1930s indicates that unlike other members of the SEC, their small stadium prevented them from hosting home games that could generate thousands of dollars in revenue. In 1939, the Tigers hosted one game against the Tennessee Polytechnic Institute (TPI) and lost \$241 (Report Sewanee Football, 1939). Only 947 fans attended the game. Sewanee only hosted two games during the 1940 season, and projected a

deficit of approximately \$500 per game (Estimated Budget Varsity, 1940). The statistics from these two seasons indicate that the Tigers were not capable of scheduling opponents who could attract large crowds to their home games. Other SEC institutions like Tulane gained an advantage over Sewanee from home game revenue. For example, Tulane generated \$42,000 from their 1939 home game against LSU, which almost doubled Sewanee's total athletics revenue during the 1938-1939 year (Statement of the, 1939).

Sewanee's status as a rural private university contributed to the small size of their stadium. Unlike Vanderbilt and Tulane, the SEC's other private universities, the town of Sewanee had few local fans to attract. Franklin County, where Sewanee is located, had a population of 23,892 according to the 1940 Census. The census did not record Sewanee's population in 1940, possibly because of the town's extremely small size. Tulane and Vanderbilt are located in the more highly populated cities of New Orleans and Nashville. During 1940, New Orleans had 494,537 people and Nashville had 167,402, with a county population of 257,267 (Census of 1940). These statistics indicate that football success for private universities was related to the size of the surrounding population, since Tulane and Vanderbilt remained competitive in the SEC during the Great Depression. From 1929 to 1941, Vanderbilt had a record of 72-43-8 (Vanderbilt Football media guide, 2017), while Tulane had a record of 93-30-5 during the same time period (Tulane Football media guide, 2017).

Unlike Sewanee, other rural SEC members that were either flagship or land grant institutions could fund their football program through off campus games. Mississippi State serves as one example, since only 11.9% of their gate receipts came from on campus games during the 1939 season (Mississippi State College, 1940). In all five of Mississippi State's conference games during that season, they travelled to play in more urban areas. Mississippi State athletic officials projected that their football program would earn \$1,500 from their game with Sewanee, while typically expecting around \$10,000 from other SEC opponents (Mississippi State College, 1937). In comparison, the most revenue Sewanee generated from their football games during 1939 was against Vanderbilt, where they netted \$2,359 (Report Sewanee Football, 1939). Therefore, when Sewanee played on the road, they did not gain as much revenue as other members of the SEC.

Another challenge for Sewanee's football program was that they shared the eastern half of the state with the public state flagship university, the University of Tennessee. Unlike Sewanee, fans could perceive the University of Tennessee as representing the entire state. On top of that, Tennessee had become extremely successful under head coach Robert Neyland, who had a career record of 119-14-8 from 1926 to 1940 (Tennessee Football media guide, 2017). This provided additional incentive for fans to cheer for Tennessee instead of Sewanee. Sewanee was the only rural private university in the SEC, and this combination prevented them from building a fanbase which was comparable to their opponents in size.

The economic challenges for Sewanee's football team were further compounded by the university's small student body. According to Guerry (1938), Sewanee enrolled approximately 225 students during 1938. Public flagship and land grant institutions, by contrast, typically had between 3,000 and 7,000 students (Thelin, 1994, p. 69). Therefore, Sewanee had less students to sell tickets to, and produced less alumni that could potentially attend games. Their small student body size also meant that less student fees were generated. This was another important revenue source because fans could quit buying tickets when the team played poorly, as Sewanee's did during the Great Depression, but the university could choose to keep student fees at a constant rate, which made it was a reliable source of revenue.

In fact, student fees could be the second largest revenue source for athletic departments at public institutions. Mississippi State, for example, accrued slightly over \$29,000 in student fees during the 1939-40 academic year, which consisted of 27% of their athletics revenue (Mississippi State College, 1940). Sewanee's 1938-39 athletic department financial statement shows they only generated \$3,528 from a student activities fee, which covered 11% of their expenses (Statement of the, 1939). With a larger student body, Sewanee could have generated more of the revenue they needed from student fees.

SEC athletic department financial statements indicate that the size of Sewanee's budget was far behind the rest of the conference. During the 1938-1939 academic year Sewanee's athletic department spent \$31,104 while making \$22,603, leaving the athletic department \$8,079 in the red (Statement of the, 1939). From 1932 to 1937, their revenue total ranged from approximately \$15,000 to \$19,000 per year (Financial Statement of, 1937). During 1936, Kentucky generated over \$129,000 in revenue (Cash Receipts and, 1936), while Mississippi State made approximately \$109,000 in 1939 (Mississippi State College, 1940). Their lower budget must have handicapped their ability to invest in their program by hiring good head and assistant coaches, offering as many athletic scholarships as their competitors, and improving their facilities.

Another way that SEC football programs grew during the early 1900s, with the exception of Sewanee, was in the specialization of football coaches. In this case, specialization can refer to the extent to which a coach's duties solely focus on the football program (Guttman, 1978). The lack of specialization involved in Harry Clark's coaching career at Sewanee indicated that their administrators understood remaining competitive in "big-time" college football had become an unreasonable expectation. He served as the head coach at Sewanee from 1931-1939 (Clark to Give, 1939). While Clark faced insurmountable obstacles, he had a poor record of 21-56-3, and went 3-45 against conference opponents (Football Year-by-Year, n.d.). Clark also worked as an assistant manager at the university supply store in addition to coaching. He quit coaching after becoming the store's head manager in 1939 (Clark to give, 1939). A study by Tulane University which examined coaching salaries in the SEC during 1940 revealed that the average SEC coach made \$7,883 per year, if you exclude Sewanee (S.E. Conference, 1940). No 1940 salary for Sewanee's coach was preserved in Tulane's records of the study, but Clark made \$2,000 during the 1938 season, which was a low salary compared to the rest of the head coaches in the SEC (Athletic Board of, 1939).

Table 2 (“S.E. Conference,” 1940)

Coach	Team	Yearly Salary	Equivalent in 2018
Robert Neyland	Tennessee	\$12,000	\$217,198.27
Bernie Moore	Louisiana State	\$10,000	\$180,998.56
Ray Morrison/Harry Sanders	Vanderbilt	\$10,000	\$180,998.56
Harry Mehre	Mississippi	\$8,500	\$153,848.78
Frank Thomas	Alabama	\$8,000	\$144,798.85
Red Dawson	Tulane	\$7,500	\$135,748.92
William Alexander	Georgia Tech	\$7,200	\$130,318.96
Tom Lieb	Florida	\$6,500	\$117,649.06
Jack Meagher	Auburn	\$6,500	\$117,649.06
Allyn McKeen	Mississippi State	\$6,000	\$108,599.14
Wallace Butts	Georgia	\$6,000	\$108,599.14
Albert Kirwan	Kentucky	\$5,000	\$90,499.28
Harry Clark	Sewanee	2,000 (as of 1938)	\$36,199.71

The fact that Clark had such a poor record and still coached the team for eight years without getting fired shows that Sewanee’s administrators knew that they could not compete with SEC schools because of their limitations. It is unclear if Sewanee asked him to resign, or he chose to spend more time on his management job. If Clark chose the supply store over coaching, that suggests he viewed working there as a better career path. He also may have simply been burned out from losing so frequently and lost the desire to coach. Even if Sewanee did force him out, eight years was still a long time to tolerate Clark’s lack of success against SEC programs.

The rest of the SEC was not patient with their head coaches during the 1930s. At the end of the 1936 season, one journalist took note that it was the first season in twenty years where no SEC school had changed coaches (Alexander, Mehre are, 1936). It is impossible to know how many coaches were actually fired instead of resigning voluntarily, but the journalist did describe the 1936 season as being “A well balanced race, with favorites holding their own and most of the so called weaker teams making satisfactory finishes,” which implied that schools usually fired coaches due to not winning enough games (Alexander, Mehre are, 1936, para. 2). One former Sewanee quarterback, Walter Fort, did try to hire Minnesota head coach Bernie Bierman while on a business trip to Minnesota during 1937 (Opens Campaign to, 1937). Sewanee’s athletic director laughed off Fort’s attempt as “ridiculous” and joked that Fort “Has no license to hire a coach for Sewanee, no more than he would to employ (president) Roosevelt as manager for a Nashville shoe store,” (Sam Baugh Interested, 1937, para. 4).

The lack of specialization in Sewanee’s coaching staff and the unequal playing conditions caused by their lack of revenue demonstrate that the football program could not generate enough revenue to remain financially self-sustaining. The small size of their stadium compared to the rest of the conference indicated that they could not generate a significant amount of revenue from home games. They attracted smaller crowds than other SEC opponents during their road games, so accruing revenue from gate receipts was difficult regardless of where they played. Their status as a private and rural university made it more difficult for them to attract fans, and their small student body prevented student fees from being a significant revenue source. Since they struggled to generate revenue, Sewanee was unable to invest in their program by hiring top coaches. Their inability to win games made the trustees at Sewanee open to hiring Guerry, who,



according to their meeting minutes, made it clear that before he was offered the chancellorship that he wanted to reform athletics (Bulletin of the, 1938).

## Guerry Reforms Athletics

Guerry (1938) demanded before agreeing to serve as the chancellor of Sewanee that the trustees allow him to ban athletic scholarships (Bulletin of the, 1938). They agreed for two reasons. First, as this article has previously discussed, the athletic department's ability to remain financially self-sustaining while competing in the SEC was highly improbable. The second reason Guerry could require the prohibition of athletic scholarships before accepting the chancellorship is the significant leverage he held over the trustees. Guerry had already declined the position back in 1936, but the trustees were unable to agree on any of the other candidates, and offered Guerry again during December of 1937 (Bulletin of the, 1938). Guerry gave up his presidency at the University of Chattanooga to come to Sewanee, so the new job was not necessarily an upgrade ("Alexander Guerry Will," 1937). Any trustee opposition to Guerry's athletic reforms was outweighed by the fact that Guerry knew the trustees highly desired his services. The trustees clearly did not feel confident in their other candidates since they offered Guerry again one year after he rejected them. The trustees were willing to give up Sewanee's participation in the "big-time" to hire Guerry because at that point, their inability to win a single conference game in the SEC showed there was not that much to give up.

Although Guerry initially limited his reforms to banning athletic scholarships, the *Tennessean*, a Nashville newspaper, speculated that Sewanee would leave the SEC in the near future (O'Donnell, 1938). They did two years later (Guerry, 1940). When sending in Sewanee's letter of resignation to SEC president Duke Humphrey, Guerry (1940) claimed they wanted to leave because "A small liberal arts college simply cannot compete in football with large universities," (para. 3). He also pointed out that Sewanee planned to play other SEC teams in football intermittently. They had played six SEC teams in 1938 and three in 1939, but only scheduled Vanderbilt in 1940 (Football Dope Booklet, 1941). While Sewanee's recent results indicated that they could not compete, Guerry also removed Sewanee from the SEC because he believed that Sewanee's participation in "big-time" college football harmed their educational mission because he viewed the athletic department as a financial drain on the university.

A few months after announcing that Sewanee would drop athletic scholarships, Guerry (1938) gave a speech to Sewanee's student body where he portrayed competing with the South's top football programs as impossible, and due to the expenses of trying to compete in the SEC, incompatible with the university's mission. He claimed that small colleges playing in the "big-time" like Sewanee "Distorts the purpose of the college, destroys its sense of values, and robs it of the opportunity to give its students a sense of values" (p. 3). He also pointed out that Sewanee's early football successes did not result in a larger student body or an increase in the size of their endowment, and claimed that "The manner in which Sewanee has expended her energy and her efforts upon her football program has retarded her growth and development," (p. 4). More specifically, he targeted the cost of athletic scholarships as detrimental to Sewanee.

Guerry may have believed that college athletics harmed many universities who competed in the "big-time", not just schools like Sewanee, since he claimed that "No great institution has been built on football victories" (p. 4) and that the alumni who conflated football success with academic prestige had forgotten how to properly evaluate the quality of universities. Guerry admitted that the commercial benefits such as "Great football crowds" (p. 4) were tempting to

any university, but accused these colleges of having lost their sense of values in regard to their football program. At the least, Guerry believed that small liberal arts universities harmed their academic mission if they subsidized their athletic department for the purpose of competing in the “big-time”.

Despite his criticisms of college sport, Guerry (1938) wanted to make it clear in his speech that he valued college athletics. He refuted the idea that Sewanee should abolish football instead of scheduling more small colleges by arguing that players and students would enjoy more competitive games. Robert Hutchins, on the other hand, decided to abolish football instead of playing institutions he deemed less prestigious than the University of Chicago (Lester, 1995). These decisions show that Hutchins sacrificed the opportunity of Chicago students to play football due to the public’s perceptions of the sport’s importance, while Guerry focused on providing the best athletic opportunities for Sewanee’s athletes.

Another point Guerry (1938) made in his speech is that the university’s subsidization of football was acceptable in some circumstances, since he admitted that Sewanee’s athletic department would regularly run a deficit. This does seem to be a slippery slope since he justified banning athletic scholarships by pointing out that they were too expensive for Sewanee to offer. That being said, Guerry clearly thought athletics played an important role in higher education because he declared “Participation in athletics and sports should be universal at all colleges,” (p. 8). Therefore, he must have approved of subsidizing athletics because not all colleges could profit from them. In short, Guerry did approve of subsidizing athletics with university funds, but believed it should be done to provide students with an opportunity to play, not to help Sewanee compete against “big-time” programs. Guerry did not even seem to oppose the idea of alumni subsidizing the educational expenses of athletes, unlike other college presidents during the 1930s who opposed athletic scholarships, especially outside of the South (Smith, 2011). He asserted in his speech to the students that he “Would not lean over backward if any alumnus, entirely in the open, desires to aid a student who is also a capable athlete” (Guerry, 1938, p. 8). Aid for athletes was permissible if it did not come at an extra cost to the institution.

Guerry’s background before becoming the chancellor at Sewanee demonstrates that he was not simply trying to appease students by claiming that he supported college sport, but that he really did value it highly. In a speech to Sewanee’s students, he shared that “I wish to make it clear that I like football tremendously. I played football and I enjoyed it more than any game in which I ever participated” (p. 1). He graduated from Sewanee in 1910, back when they could still defeat other SEC teams (Sewanee Football media guide, 2011). Therefore, Guerry was probably genuine in his claim that “I have the highest respect personally for the football players at Sewanee and in our Southern institutions” (p. 7). He also coached at a preparatory school for four years, and coached a military team during World War I.

It also appears that while Guerry served as president at the University of Chattanooga, he did not try to reform athletics like he did at Sewanee. In 1936, when Sewanee first offered Guerry the chancellorship, the *Kingsport Times*, a Tennessee newspaper, described Guerry as a “sports lover” (“Guerry Considers Offer,”). The article shared that Guerry was involved in sports by playing tennis, participating in intramural baseball, and occasionally attending football practice. Guerry’s evident lifelong interest in sport showed that he reformed athletics because of his skepticism regarding Sewanee’s ability to adhere to their educational mission while competing in the “big-time”, not because he was a value dualist.

University statistics show that during the 1940-41 academic year, 78% of Sewanee’s student body was involved with either the university’s athletic department or intramural teams

(Athletic Participation Report, 1941). 67% of the student body participated in intramurals, while 30% participated in varsity athletics. Besides offering football, basketball, tennis, golf, and track at the varsity level, Sewanee offered eleven intramural sports. The report claimed that out of the 71 students who did not participate, seven were physically unfit, fifteen dropped out of the university during the year, and of the remaining 49, seventeen were local students, which implied that local students were not as engaged in university life. A comment in the report that these 49 students “had no apparent reason for not participating,” (Athletic Participation Report, 1941, p. 1) and the observation that 17 of these 49 students were locals hints that the Sewanee administrators expected their students to participate in organized sport as part of the university’s culture because they wanted an explanation for why certain students did not participate. One limitation is that there were no statistics for other years to compare with the participation rates in this report. The important point, however, is that participation in organized sport among the entire student body was high a couple of years after Guerry took over at Sewanee. It is not evident how much of an impact he had on participation, but this high participation rate, combined with Guerry’s athletic background, indicates he at least provided the necessary support for intramural sports to flourish. It is worth reiterating that Guerry played intramural baseball while he was the president, not a student, at the University of Chattanooga, so he clearly valued intramural sport (“Guerry Considers Offer,” 1936).

Guerry’s decision to hire Jenks Gillem in 1940 shows that he did want Sewanee’s football program to be successful, even if it was not in the “big-time”. Gillem played football at Sewanee, and had spent the last twelve years coaching at Birmingham-Southern, where he had won three conference championships (Jenks to Tutor, 1940). Gillem insisted on continuing his work as an insurance salesman in Birmingham during the offseason, and Guerry relented despite wanting him to become a full-time resident at Sewanee (Gillem Intends To, 1941). Pulling Gillem from Birmingham-Southern was easy for Guerry to do because the college’s president had just abolished their football program due to the team’s high expenses (Paty, 1939). How Guerry handled the coaching hire demonstrated that he wanted the football program to be successful for two reasons. First, Guerry did not have to be personally involved in hiring an experienced and successful coach. Second, Guerry did try to persuade Gillem to live in Sewanee year round. If he did not really care about the football program, then he probably never would have asked Gillem to live in Sewanee during the offseason. Someone could counter with the argument that Guerry did not care about football because he let Gillem live in Birmingham, but that is not what Guerry preferred. With Gillem’s proven success, Guerry may have decided that having him as a coach, even if he did not live in Sewanee regularly, would be better than hiring an inexperienced coach.

How Sewanee managed their college athletics program during World War II provides further evidence that Guerry viewed college sport as important to the university. Guerry did suspend the football and basketball programs during World War II, although they allowed the golf, tennis, and track teams to play shortened schedules (War Training to, 1942). As he did when banning athletic scholarships, Guerry cited the expenses of college sport as a reason for suspending the programs. Guerry also claimed that Sewanee might reinstate the football program when college football could be restored “To an amateur status at some later date when colleges and universities of our nation may see more clearly the true value and purpose of athletic sports” (War Training to, 1942, para. 1). This showed his dislike for the professionalized aspects of college football. During the 1943 season, however, Sewanee was able to play three football games since they hosted Navy trainees on campus, who were eligible to play college sports

(Purple Tiger to, 1943). Auburn, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, Mississippi State, and Tennessee had no teams during 1943, partially due to not having access to Navy trainees who were allowed to play college sport, unlike Army trainees (Grid Standings, 1943). The combination of having Navy trainees and the reduced emphasis on football by the rest of the nation made Guerry willing to reinstate the program at a time when wartime conditions pushed other universities into suspending theirs. This provides additional evidence that Guerry wanted to have athletic programs when the circumstances fit his philosophy towards athletics.

At the end of 1943, Sewanee's athletic director asked the SEC to allow the university to compete in the conference tennis and track meets, which indicated that Guerry cared about Sewanee's smaller sports and did not oppose playing against SEC teams in sports that lacked commercialism (Minutes of the, 1943). The conference refused Sewanee's request. Allowing a non-conference member to participate would have been unorthodox, and more importantly, would have violated conference regulations. The important takeaway, however, is that Sewanee was still willing to compete in SEC athletic events outside of football. The commercial aspects which were highly prevalent in football were barely noticeable in tennis and track, which may have made Guerry open to permitting Sewanee to compete in those sports. During 1943, the conference track meet lost almost \$90, which was subsidized by a civic organization in Birmingham (Minutes of the, 1943). At that time, the SEC was not even hosting tennis tournaments due to World War II. Considering that Guerry went to the effort of withdrawing Sewanee from the SEC, it seems that the athletic director would ask for Guerry's permission before allowing a few of their teams to compete in SEC events. Sewanee's attempt to compete in the SEC track and tennis tournaments sent the message that playing against the best available competition was acceptable if it was in sports that lacked commercialism. It also showed that Sewanee's leaders, whether it was Guerry or the athletic director, were active in trying to provide opportunities for their athletes to compete.

Similarly to Guerry, Sewanee stakeholders were critical of college football's professionalization and growth in the South. One journalist claimed that Sewanee players gained more personal development from playing since their program was not professionalized like at large universities (Sewanee's Fine Football, 1936, para. 3). One alum blamed professionalism for the deterioration of Sewanee's football program by describing the team as being dominant when college football was "more of a sport than a big business," (When It Was, n.d., para. 1). Former players expressed similar sentiments as well. In a recap of their 1941 20-0 loss to Vanderbilt, several former players took pride in the team's effort, and condemned commercialism in college football ('Old Grads' Proud, 1941). A member of Sewanee's inaugural 1892 team asserted that "We are all happy Sewanee is not attempting to commercialize or professionalize the game" ('Old Grads' Proud, para. 2). Another ex-player claimed that colleges would eventually "see the light" and cease professionalizing college football (Old Grads' Proud, para. 2). Admittedly, the journalist chose which quotes to put in his article. It is impossible to know if a former player criticized Guerry because the journalist could have decided to not too add such criticisms. Even if this occurred, however, the use of these quotes showed that the journalist was willing to share evidence that former players disapproved of the commercialism in college football.

Unlike Guerry, many politicians, university presidents, faculty, coaches, and alumni affiliated with SEC schools embraced college football's role as a spectacle during the Great Depression. Huey Long, the governor of Louisiana, led LSU's band into the stadium before a game in Jackson, MS, gave pep talks to the football team, and paid for LSU students to travel to a game at Vanderbilt University, all during the 1934 season (Seifried, Katz, & Pflieger, 2015).

At Mississippi State, the faculty chairman of athletics toured fifteen cities in five days to raise money for a coaching fund collection (Lucas, 1935). During 1939, Auburn's coaching staff voted to drop a football from a plane, under the condition that a picture would be taken which captured the crowd watching this spectacle (The Coaching Staff, 1939). Guerry's views, however, contrasted with the majority, which is why he is the leader who reformed athletics at Sewanee. As Guerry (1938) asserted in his speech to Sewanee's students:

The great football crowds, the brilliant bands, and skilled and powerful teams of the gridiron are, of course, a real temptation to any institution to be part of a remarkable American spectacle. But what essential part of education are these spectacles? What have they to do with the merit and quality of an institution of higher learning? (p. 4).

Guerry cared greatly for sport, especially football, but he did not place the same importance on the spectacle.

## **Discussion of Limitations and Conclusion**

The use of historical sources such as archives and newspaper articles do involve some limitations. While archives are "indispensable repositories of primary historical evidence for sport historians" potential sources can be manipulated, concealed, hidden, or destroyed (Booth, 2005). It is also important to note that several of the news articles cited in this study were preserved in Sewanee's archives, which means they are subject to similar limitations (Booth, 2005). First, it is impossible to know which newspaper articles archivists may have discarded. It is also impossible to be certain of why people chose to contribute certain articles to the archives. Furthermore, the biases of the journalists who wrote these newspaper articles could have influenced their descriptions and opinions. For example, Oriard (2012, p. 8) claims that "Sportswriters had cozy relationships with the coaches of the teams they covered."

The study had additional limitations besides those involving the archives at Sewanee. Potential sources that could have been beneficial to the study were not available. For example, Vanderbilt, Sewanee's SEC rival, has not processed their presidential papers. Therefore, Vanderbilt University Archives did not allow the author to review correspondence which may have yielded additional information, such as letters that could shed light on any dialogue between Vanderbilt employees involving Sewanee. The author has visited the university archives of every other SEC institution, however, and has not discovered any sources which discuss the management of Sewanee's football program in depth. Another limitation is that some athletic department records appear to have simply been lost. There are some records that provide highly detailed information such as how much revenue Sewanee generated from every game during a particular season (Report Sewanee Football, 1939). There are several football seasons where similar information could not be found which could have contributed to the study. Like Sewanee, the other university archives at SEC institutions did not preserve every single athletic department record, and were also missing documents such as reports like Sewanee's that detailed how much the university made from each game in a certain season.

If the reforms had any impact on the academic side of the university, it appears to have been positive. The historical record on Sewanee's academics during the 1930s is unclear. Guerry argued that competing in the SEC had held Sewanee back academically, but sportswriters did refer to Sewanee as a prestigious academic institution in newspaper articles (Sewanee and

Football, 1938; Sewanee Quits Big, 1938). Perhaps Guerry agreed with the sports writers, but believed leaving the SEC would make Sewanee even more academically prestigious. 2018 university ranking systems do indicate that Sewanee is a prominent liberal arts university. The US News and World Report ranks Sewanee 41<sup>st</sup> among national liberal arts colleges, which is higher than any other university on the list located in SEC territory as of 1940 (Best Colleges Rankings, n.d.). It is also ranked 84<sup>th</sup> in best value, despite their tuition, room and board, and fees costing approximately \$58,000 per year. Athletically, Sewanee competes against similarly sized colleges, as Guerry called for in 1938. The Tigers belong to NCAA Division III, and are a member of the Southern Athletic Association (SAA Member Institutions, n.d.). According to each institution's website, none has an undergraduate student body exceeding 2,000 members. It is impossible to be certain what academic reputation Sewanee would have had if they stayed in the "big-time", but at a glance, the university appears to currently be one of the top liberal arts schools in the South.

The lesson to be learned from Guerry's chancellorship at Sewanee is that practical and philosophic concerns guide reform. Assessing the motives of reformers either prospectively or historically must take all of these myriad factors into account. Recently, university administrators have rationalized cutting athletic programs for the purpose of saving university resources. Examples within the last decade include NCAA Division I at the University of California-Berkeley (Crumpacker, 2010), the University of Alabama-Birmingham (Culpepper, 2014), Eastern Michigan University (Kercheval, 2018), the University of New Mexico (Berg, 2018), and even NCAA Division II schools such as the University of Nebraska-Kearney ("Faced with budget," 2018). In the present, there are university stakeholders who demonstrate a belief in value dualism, which is evident from faculty criticisms at Cal-Berkeley regarding the subsidization of the athletic department with university funds. For example, Michael O'Hare, a public policy professor, declared that "The university is about the values of scholarship, teaching, and the arts, *not swimming, running* [emphasis added by the author], and haute cuisine," (Asimov, 2009a, para. 8). Computer science professor Brian Barsky proclaimed "Is it not obvious that UC Berkeley must cease putting millions into a program which *isn't part of the core academic mission* [emphasis added by the author] and is supposed to be self-supporting?" (Asimov, 2009b, para. 6).

Guerry serves as a reminder that the motives of reformers should not be simplistically reduced to value dualism. This perception shows a misunderstanding of what actually motivates some reformers. Understanding the diverse motives of why individuals like Guerry, Hutchins, O'Hare, and Barsky criticize athletics is essential to resolving important debates like those occurring at universities such as Cal-Berkeley.

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