

Office of the Dean of Students

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October 28, 1981

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Steve McNeil, Chairperson, Subcommittee on Physical Access

FROM: Blair Mathews *Blair*

RE: Handicapped Seating for Hockey at the Coliseum

Please review the attached letter from Professor Graaskamp regarding the above subject. I have made an initial contact with Otto Breitenbach, Associate Director, Intercollegiate Athletics, about the matter. He needs an opportunity to review the letter and the process followed for changing the seating arrangements. Otto indicated that Coliseum officials did receive advice from a former student and Madison resident who is quadraplegic.

In any case, it would seem appropriate for the Subcommittee to review the matter with Otto and the appropriate staff person at the Coliseum.

cc: John Ballsrud
Jim Graaskamp
→ Marian Laines
Gordon Orr
Jim Roeber
Nancy Smith

University of Wisconsin Madison

School of Business
1155 Observatory Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Graduate School of Business

October 24, 1981

MEMO

TO: Elroy L. Hirsch
✓Blair Mathews
McBurney Resource Center

FROM: Professor James A. Graaskamp

RE: Handicapped Seating for Hockey at the Coliseum

This note is intended to express deep disappointment with the gross insensitivity of the Athletic Department for seating arrangements provided the handicapped at Coliseum hockey games.

I had occasion to attend my first fall '81 hockey game on Friday evening, October 23, against Bowling Green. The tickets purchased specifically for handicapped seats did not indicate where to go so we proceeded directly to the specially built, railed section provided the handicapped last year, just inside the entrance to Section H on the southwest side of the Coliseum, not far from the Blue Line Barroom. The aluminum and steel platform was filled with a row of padded folded chairs which we were told were converted to season tickets for the able bodied. With some embarrassment, the usher led us down the ramp through the back door and around to the northeast corner where a special platform has been jury-rigged from stage sections directly behind the boards and plexiglass screen. The seating area is raised two feet to which access is provided by a solid plywood ramp. There is no railing on the platform and there is a half-inch high metal edge which presumably is to prevent wheelchairs from rolling off. A piece of clothesline is hung loosely on one end, presumably to warn people on the platform they are about to step off into the bracing which supports the corner. It would be easy for a folding chair to pitch backward off the back of the stand.

Granted that some people may enjoy being in the nets or having players break their sticks on the plexiglass two feet in front of their nose or watching the puck sail around the corner, rubbing the plexiglass as if one were in the inside of a pinball machine; but for the majority of us there is no sense of the sweep of the game that could formerly be enjoyed from the handicapped location in Section H. Not only are the seats the worst in the house, but they violate the 504 principle of normal accommodations for the handicapped. Normal presumes they would be willing to bring a friend or a date to sit in the same location with comfort and safety and it does not include balancing on a stage in front of the rest of the audience in a segregated area.

I'm not sure which galls me more: The converting of handicapped facilities which were several years in planning and completion to the sale of season

tickets for fat cats or the slap dash provision of alternatives that would never have passed the Chancellor's Committee for Disabled Persons review of plans for such arrangements, because they were never submitted.

Who is the running the University - the Chancellor's Office and its program for the disabled or patrons of the Athletic Department's fund raising schemes?