House bill aims to decriminalize marijuana possession

BY MARIA ESQUIVARA

The Prosector

It was a regular Sunday evening for Daniel González, until his friend took a wrong turn and they got stopped by a cop. His friend got a DUl, but González got arrested for being in possession of two marijuana joints and drug paraphernalia and was sent to jail.

"He's in the same jail cell with a rapist and a thief, that's not right," González said. "I'm not hurting anybody, you know?"

González, a sophomore communication major, was arrested and sent to jail. It was his third time getting charged for possession of marijuana, and under Texas law that's a felony. He was able to get a good lawyer, who got his charge dropped from a felony to a class B misdemeanor, allowing him to attend UTEP.

A new bill introduced into the Texas legislature could help people in his situation in the future.

The bill authored by Texas representative Joe Moody, D-El Paso, would decriminalize marijuana by making possession of one ounce or less of marijuana a class B misdemeanor and subject to a $100 citation, removing the possibility of arrest, jail time and a criminal record.

"HB 507 will push forward to helping people like myself to stay out of jail, and it's just a waste of money putting me in jail, putting me in the court system," González said.

Currently, in Texas, possession of two ounces or less of marijuana is considered a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to 180 days in jail and a $2,000 fine. Ellic Saahaula, chief of staff and general counsel for Rep. Moody, said there are 70,000 arrests for marijuana every year in Texas, which costs $734 million each year.

"What we do get are people—mostly young people—being convicted for drug offenses," Saahaula said in an email. "Those convictions give them a permanent criminal record that can lead to financial aid for school being pulled, loss or denial of jobs or housing... and even deportation. Government imposes laws that lead to smart, fair outcomes in a cost-effective way."

The 2015 Texas Crime Report by the Texas Department of Public Safety states that the number of arrests for drug possession in 2015 was 123,653—marijuana possession comprised 57 percent of drug arrests. Out of those arrests, the 20-25 age group had the highest amount of arrests.

"It's not stopping individuals from doing it, all it does is create a burden for the system," said Dr. Mary Cuadrado, chair and assistant professor of the Department of Criminal Justice. "The only reason it's a crime is because we have defined it as such."

Figures from the 13-Paso District Attorney's office reveal that 4,752 cases were processed between 2013 and 2014 for possession of less than two ounces of marijuana.

Critics of current marijuana laws also point out that laws present a civil rights concern.

"We supported HB 507 because marijuana arrests disproportionately impact African Americans. This makes marijuana policy a civil rights issue," said Matt Simon, senior policy strategist for the ACLU of Texas, in an email.

A report on marijuana by the ACLU in 2010 showed that nationwide the white arrest rate was 192 per 100,000 whites and the black arrest rate was 716 per 100,000 Blacks, indicating that racial disparities exist nationwide regardless of household income level. However, marijuana use is roughly the same among blacks and whites. In 2010, 14 percent of blacks and 12 percent of whites reported using marijuana.

"There's clearly some kind of bias and how we're enforcing these laws, and if we want to actually have real justice in our country, we need to change these laws so they're not disproportionately affecting certain demographics of our communities," said Hunter James White, communications director for Republicans Against Marijuana Prohibition.

HB 507 is one of 13 bills related to marijuana that have been introduced into the state legislature, including HB 2367 by state representative David Simpson, R-Longview, which would remove language from Texas statutes relating to marijuana so it wouldn't be considered a crime.

"It is a bipartisan issue certainly amongst the younger generation of Republicans and Democrats, the views on marijuana have very clearly changed," White said.

A poll conducted by the 2013 survey by Public Policy Polling, revealed that 61 percent of Texas would support decriminalization.

"Many Republicans hold the idea that the government should interfere as little as possible in a person's life. Nothing says interfering with someone's life like telling you what you can or can't put into your body," White said.


"That's why we have a high following of Republicans within this movement, because it is a right and they're starting to notice it," he said. "People believe that everybody that smokes cannabis is a loser that lives on their mom's couch and that's all they do in smoke weed. There's a lot of people, a lot of professionals, people like myself, we work really hard, we have our MARIJUANA on page 8."
As I stood in front of the restroom of the Family Life Center on Austin, an older lady came out of the stalls. She said “hold up, I’m just going to put some lipstick.” From one of the stalls another voice was heard, “I’m going to do the same,” she said. As she came out she jokedly added, “what else does a transsexual do in the restroom?”

As I look back now, I think how symbolic that moment was for Freedom Advocacy Day. As a member of Texas Freedom Network, I joined a group of students, activists, organizers, trans men and women alike, who came together for a day of lobbying against anti-LGBTQ legislation at the Capitol on April 13.

Fluddled at the steps were 120 supporters of the LGBTQ movement, the event was spearheaded by Equality Texas, and joined by the Human Rights Campaign and Texas Freedom Network.

“it is a day of advocacy, where people have come together to share their stories about how the laws in Texas can have a negative impact on their daily lives,” said Chuck Smith, executive director of Equality Texas. “The laws in this state don’t treat everyone equally based on sexual orientation and gender identity.”

This day was particularly important considering the slew of nasty, anti-gay bills that were introduced into the legislature. More than 20 anti-LGBTQ bills were introduced, representing a 30 percent increase from the previous legislative session.

Among them are HB 1747 and 1748, both authored by Texas Rep. Debbie Riddle R-Tomball. HB 1747 would prosecute transgener individual for using a public restroom that is appropriate for their gender identity, but that does not coincide with the gender on their driver’s license. HB 1748, but it would prosecute a trans person for using a public locker room, shower facility or toilet facility, appropriate to their gender identity, but not to the individual’s chromosomes.

While HB 2801, co-authored by Rep. Pelaia-R-Pasadena, would fine school districts up to $2,000 for allowing students to use a bathroom or other public facilities that do not coincide with their sex chromosome.

Bills Kathy Miller, president of the Texas Freedom Network, called “state-sponsored bullying.”

I’m reminded of the trans women in the restroom, who was full of life and humor. She was also black. I mention her race because being black and a trans woman means that the ugly fabric that dictate the oppression and marginalization of minority groups, are emmeshed by a magnified Eraser into their everyday life.

It’s America’s little unreported secret that trans woman, and in particular trans woman of color, get murdered under a veil of invisibility.

Latina Kristina Gomez, was the seventh trans woman to get murdered this year. The other six were trans woman of color.

Not only are transgender people getting murdered by a society that is silent and blind to the violence they face, but now they are being targeted by politicians who are using them as their political pawns.

“We cannot let homophobia and heterosexism and transphobia to exist in our state and we are glad they are here to say that we will not allow these bills to pass,” said State Rep. Mary Gonzalez D-El Paso, who is openly gay, when speaking to the crowd on Freedom Advocacy Day.

But the transphobic bathroom bills are just the beginning. Others include Amendments to the 1999 Religious Freedom Restoration act, which would allow business owners to deny service to individuals based on their religious beliefs. It has been compared to Indiana’s RFA act.

A slew of five bills such as HB 1911 would nullify non-discrimination ordinances in cities, even if they were passed by popular vote.

“When can this become a conversa- tion about people that they know… if that can become a conversion that relates to someone that they know, then it becomes much harder for people to stand on the side of discrimination,” Smith said.

We’re all touched by members of the LGBTQ community, they are our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, cousins, friends, colleagues and peers. People fighting for the minimal of rights.

But if TFN, and advocacy day have taught me anything, it is that we ALL participate. As state Rep. Celia Israel, D-Austin, said, “this is your Texas, so own it”.

If these issues matter to you exercise your right to make your voice heard, VOTE, vote crazy Republicans like Riddle and Tomball out of office.

Send a letter, an e-mail, drop by their office.

Make your voice heard, so everyone can be heard. Maria Eguina may be reached at morequinca@gmail.com.

OFFICE OF THE PERSPECTOR

As a member of Texas Freedom Network, I joined a group of students, activists, organizers, trans men and women alike, who came together for a day of lobbying against anti-LGBTQ legislation at the Capitol on April 13.

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Young Americans for Liberty bring awareness to prison system

Vega, a UTEP music student, was one of three speakers present at the Young Americans for Liberty’s In- carpentry Nation Battle for Our Freedoms in a Police State. The event, which was held Thursday, April 9 at the Templeton Suite in the Union East Building, was held to create awareness about the rising incarceration rates and the dangers they might pose to the economy.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, an estimated 6,999,000 persons were under the supervision of adult correctional systems in 2013. About 2,238,424 of them are in prison, making the US the country with the highest prison population and the second highest when it comes to incarceration rate—767 per 100,000 population.

The problem is getting heard, considered. Especially in the state of Texas, which refuses to admit they are wrong or if there is even a problem at all,” Vega said.

As Texas goes, according to the statistical report for the fiscal year of 2014, the state is responsible for 153,261 convicted offenders; El Paso has a total of 2,210 of them, which makes it the 11th highest in the state. Harris County has the largest population with 26,647 convicted offenders.

Petitions for reform could also be signed by those who attended the event. “For an event that was planned with very little time, we are happy with how it turned out,” said Jonathan Farias, UTEP business student and president of the Young Americans for Liberty. UTEP chapter. “We would have liked to have a bigger turnout, but it’s still a good way to bring awareness."

Also present at the event was Dan- ney “Koko” Pena, treasurer and member of El Paso National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws, who spoke about the legalization of mari- juana and the criminalization of those who consume it, which has led states to spend over $3 billion in order to enforce marijuana laws every year.

“Recently, a Texas teen was facing the possibility of life in prison over pot brownies,” said William Roman, vice president of Young Americans for Liberty, UTEP chapter. “His life could be ruined for something that cannot be used to harm anyone.”

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, 53 percent of all drug arrests in 2010 were marijuana related, and more than seven million people were caught with marijuana from 2011 to 2010.

The third and final speaker at the event was Dr. Mindi Gladstein, pro- fessor of English and sponsor for the Young Americans for Liberty at UTEP, who addressed and informed the students that were present about opportunities to study outside of El Paso.

“I want to encourage you all to get out of town,” Gladstein said. “You can certainly get a quality education here at UTEP, but I encourage you to go out, meet people, explore and get educated.”

Also, the students were informed that they could only be arrested for possessing marijuana if they were caught under the influence of alcohol.

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Sophomore accounting major
"No, I don't because I'm not working right now."

SAIDA VALENZUELA
Sophomore business major
"Yes, because it's an opportunity to have extra money and I could use that towards my tuition."

JOANNA VELESCO
Senior speech pathology major
"My parents do my taxes for me. I don't want to do them on my own."

MARIANA SOTELO
Senior finance major
"I'm not a citizen of this country, so I don't do any taxes.""

OTHONE HERMOSSILLO
Junior social work major
"I do my own taxes. I'm married and independent."

NICK PETERS
Sophomore civil engineering major
"I will do my own taxes in the upcoming years. For now, I send it to people like Turbotax."

LESLIE VALDEZ
Sophomore social work major
"I used to file with my parents, but now I file by myself."

BRIAN MARTINEZ
Senior biochemistry major
"I give someone for assistance as I'm just starting to deal with taxes, and I want to learn the process."

ANDRES PADILLA
Sophomore kinesiology major
"I go with someone for assistance as I'm just starting to deal with taxes, and I need to learn the process."

ALEJANDRO ARROYO
Junior psychology major
"Not at all. I have no idea on how the process works, so I just have somebody to do them for me."

FOOTBALL IS BACK
Inside The Center for Space Exploration Technology Research Center

UTEP recently signed a five-year, $5-million contract with NASA Johnson Space Center (JSC) contractor Jacobs Technology, which assists with a number of projects. Some of those projects include support work on the main and subsystems of the International Space Station, systems development and testing of the Curiosity Mars rover and the development of the new Space Launch System. The partnership compliments the space-focused research already taking place at UTEP, such as the Center for the Advancement of Space Safety and Mission Assurance and the Center for Space Exploration Technology Research.
SGA closes out semester with confidence

BY STEPHANIE FRESCAS
The Prospector

The spring semester may be coming to a close, but the Student Government Association is keeping busy. This year’s administration has several events planned for the next few weeks, right through to the elections for next semester’s administration, which will begin April 27.

“The fall semester was really just making sure that our senators and everyone in SGA knew what they were doing and what their responsibilities were,” said Hector Soltero, senior organizational and corporate communication major and SGA executive assistant. “But there’s a lot more going on with SGA this semester.”

Some of the events still to come this semester include the College of Liberal Arts Street Fair on April 15, an Earth Week competition, a symposium on how to improve the school and a variety of events during finals week.

“Last semester they had donuts and coffee, so that was really great,” said Leslie Ortho, sophomore economics major. “It was perfect, so I really hope they do that again for finals week.”

Raul Villanueva, freshman English major, said he doesn’t keep up with school events, but said that SGA has done a good job so far.

“All of our goals when we were running were practically met.”

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—Hector Soltero, senior organizational and corporate communication major and SGA executive assistant

“I did notice when they had chalkboards out, and people wrote down what they wanted,” he said. “I think they could reach out more, but that’s a pretty good job.”

The main focus of this administration’s campaign was reaching out to as much of the student body as possible, and although Soltero said there was a slow start, he was very content with what SGA accomplished and what they accomplished by the end of their time in office.

“All of our goals when we were running were practically met,” Soltero said. “One of the things (SGA president) Robert ran with was he wanted to get a scholarship where students brought in ideas of how to better our university, and it’s actually happening. Then we’ll have an actual symposium where people can present their ideas.”

The opening date for the scholarship hasn’t been announced yet, but it will take place this semester. Students who are interested in participating and competing for the scholarship will have two to three weeks to apply.

Besides popular projects like their Valentine’s Day Couple contest, Soltero said SGA worked with the university administration on several projects, many of them from the chalkboards students wrote on.

Although not all of those projects were completed this year, Soltero said the idea had been raised for things like a one-time sign in for Wi-Fi, instead of every three hours.

“I know the things that we’ve done this year have made a difference,” Soltero said. “Even though some of those things you might not see now, but you’ll definitely see in the future.”

*Stephanie Torres may be reached at prospector.daily.wn@utep.edu.*
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MARIJUANA from page 1

It’s so beneficial, it’s about keeping innocent people out of jail.

"...we’re trying to lead this movement in a positive way."

- Daniel Gonzalez, sophomore communication major

However, El Paso NORML’s goal is full legalization, and Perez said that’s why HB 507 is important.

“In Colorado and Washington, it’s not only about keeping innocent people out of jail, but it’s about keeping innocent people out of jail,” said Gonzalez. “I’m hoping the best time of my life, but if I were a student, I would have the choice to stop smoking and realize that it’s not a crime.”

— Mari Lujan may be reached at theprosector@gmail.com.

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GRAND OPENING FALL 2015
Doctoral student’s research explores the impact of yoga on diabetes

BY JULIA HETTIGER
The Prospector

Doctoral candidate, Maricarmen Vizcaino demonstrates the yoga she teaches to UTEP faculty and staff members.

“Once I graduate I would like to continue my research in this topic, investigating the impact of yoga on patients with different health status, obese or normal weight, with complications or without complications, well-controlled or poorly controlled as far as glycemic values,” Vizcaino said. “I’ve taken responsibility for my own happiness, I’ve become aware of my duty toward society and more compassionate toward all living beings.”

It has become a way of life for me. I truly believe that I’ve become a better human being because of the journey that I started.

She began conducting this research because of a sports injury she suffered in her lower back when she was 21- to 22-years-old.

“I was inspired by the life-changing experience that yoga has been for me,” Vizcaino said. “After constant yoga practice the pain was gone and never came back, not even now that I have run two half-marathons and I train for sprint triathlons.”

Conducting this research and being a part of the health science doctoral program has impacted her life in many ways and requires a lot of dedication and hard work.

“Being a graduate student is not easy, especially if you go for your doctoral degree,” Vizcaino said. “You have to place your entire life on hold and have very limited time.”

While she has made sacrifices in order to be a part of this program and conduct this research, it is very rewarding for her because she loves what she does.

“Feeling passionate about this topic and enjoying what I do is what keeps me going every day even when I feel tremendously exhausted or overwhelmed about all the work that has to be done,” Vizcaino said. “When a poster gets accepted for a conference, when a presentation goes well, when a paper is accepted for publication, you know you are on the right path and you just keep going.”

Julia Hettiger may be reached at theprospectordaily.ENT@gmail.com.
The Prospector

I had the opportunity to eat at Casa Pizza, located at 1311 Magruder St. The restaurant offers a quirky mash-up of Greek and Italian cuisine. My feelings toward the experience are just as mixed as the options on their menu.

The restaurant rests in a quaint duplex building with the Timberwolf Apartments leasing office as their neighbor. On the outside, it seemed to blend in with the surrounding architecture, but the inside was full of character.

At first I thought the restaurant would be fancier, but the atmosphere was a bit more relaxed. Everything is painted blue, but not in a hospital room sort of way. It was a nice twist eating Italian food while being surrounded by Greek décor. The walls had a wide strip of wallpaper featuring Greek houses in between sheets of blue. The radio chirped quietly in the background, playing what can be considered to-day’s hits, giving the restaurant a little bit of an Americanized feel.

My friend and I were helped right away by a waiter who was more awkward than friendly. Our drinks came out pretty quickly too, but when my second friend arrived, it was about 30 minutes before she was helped.

The restaurant wasn’t too busy. There were a few other people there and the number of empty tables outnumbered the amount of seats taken. No one came to take her food or drink order for a long time. While she was waiting, she made eye contact with our waiter, but he never assisted her.

Eventually, she was helped by a different waitress, and our waiter went on to help other patrons instead of us.

The service improved a bit and our food came out shortly after.

My friends and I all ordered different variations of their spaghetti. I ordered it with sausage one of my friends got it with shrimp, and the other ordered it with meat sauce. The food I ordered tasted just as delicious as it looked in the picture on the menu. The pile of spaghetti on my plate was large enough to feed a few people, and I am pretty sure I ate enough for two people. The Italian sausage I ordered with my spaghetti was pleasantly spicy, but not in a way that my mouth was burning for an hour.

The waitress also provided us with a seemingly unlimited supply of garlic bread, which seemed toasted to perfection.

We stayed at the restaurant for a few hours, even when we had already finished and boxed our food. It was a nice environment to talk and catch up with one another.

When it came time to pay, we walked up to the counter and the man who helped us was nice, exuding the mom-and-pop friendliness you’d expect at family-owned establishments.

Although my experience was mixed at best, I would still suggest this restaurant to anyone who is a fan of Italian or Greek cuisine. The food was tremendous, the prices were not too high—and with the portion sizes as large as they are, you truly get what you pay for—and the restaurant rests on the fine line dividing fancy and overdressed from fast-food casual.

The restaurant is a different experience compared to some of the other mainstream restaurants and eateries, and it presents a nice change to the humdrum of eating the "same old, same old."

While the service may have been lacking, it makes up for it in affordable, appetizing and unique food.

Julia Hettiger may be reached at theprospectordaily.ent@news.gmail.com.
Latinitas host girl empowerment fest

The empowerment conference expects to have about 100 girls in attendance.

Pre-teen and teen girls will discuss the challenges they face today and explore positive ways to deal with stress through hands-on creative expression activities such as poetry, acting, photography, art and song.

Young girls and their mothers will also enjoy dance performances, a fashion show and musical entertainment toward the end of the conference.

"When you look at the statistics—suicide, teen pregnancy and high school drop-out rates—are the highest among Latinas," Rascón said. "That is why we created Las Latinitas 13 years ago and host events like this, so we can provide resources and assistance to girls facing similar challenges." For more information, visit latinitas.com/elpaso.

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Teacher Job Fair

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Hollywood talent to give workshops at UTEP

BY FERNANDA LEON

The Prospector

The Department of Theatre and Dance will be hosting an Educational Acting Workshop with talent agent Tony Martinez on May 23 at the Studio Theatre in the Fox Fine Arts Center.

Tony Martinez is a graduate from the School of Visual Arts in New York and has worked in video production with bands such as The Black Crowes, Run DMC and The Beastie Boys.

Martinez has represented series regulars on television shows such as "Desperate Housewives," "CSI" and "Lost." He is also the author of "An Agent Told Me," a book about the acting business.

Martinez is currently working with Kauai Actors, Measures, Frankis & Associates (KMA) as part of their theatrical department.

"Tony has worked for many top agencies, he was my agent and by far he was my favorite agent at my favorite agency," said Joel Murray, chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance. "He does not mislead words and will tell the truth about the realities of Hollywood from various angles and his eye is trained to recognize talent and to recognize one’s potential." In this upcoming workshop, theater students will be able to perform scenes and monologues. Martinez will provide feedback on their work. After a lunch break, students will be able to have a question-and-answer session with him.

"I always try to make it a point to attend workshops that have guest artists," said Maria Elena Mendosa, sophomore theatre arts major. "It is important to support people from our culture. I think Tony Martinez will provide UTEP with a great opportunity to learn and grow as artists.

When it comes to talent agents, an actor should work hard to find an agent that would know his skills and abilities perfectly so he can find a job that best suits the actor.

"One needs an agent in Hollywood—90 percent of the time you cannot audition for union television, film, commercials, etc. without one," Murray said.

The workshop will help the students realize that you can do whatever you want to do; if you set your mind to it, of course.

Having a talent agent like Martinez come to the university gives students an insight about the competitive industry of acting and gives them a preparation of what they are most likely to encounter in their professional life.

"It is important for our students to gain as much perspective and experience as possible," said Adriana Dominguez, senior lecturer at the Department of Theatre and Dance.

"Tony Martinez’s personal experience and knowledge can help prepare students for their time outside of the university." For Mendosa, these kinds of workshops are of high importance to her since she is a theater major. She believes that these opportunities not only broaden her concentration, but also let her meet more people who are related to her field of study.

"What I enjoy most about attending workshops is learning how they got there," Mendosa said. "Like, what made them become an artist in that field and their background story?"

Since this is an educational workshop, students need to be prepared with any questions or doubts that they might have regarding the world of acting. Most of all, students should be ready to open themselves to new ideas and knowledge as this opportunity may be beneficial to their future careers.

"This workshop will help the students realize that you can do whatever it is you want to do if you set your mind to it, of course," Mendosa said. "Once you realize that anything is possible, and by the help of those who are already in that field, then it will open many doors."

"Female fans may be ruthless if improperly treated," artfan said.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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<tr>
<th>EVENT / DATE</th>
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<td>The Lowbrow Palace</td>
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<td>Talk in Tongues</td>
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UTOPEP PICKS TALENT

SGA hosted a talent competition at Magoffin Auditorium Saturday, April 11. The 20 finalists performed in front of a live audience and five judges. Arturo V. González, senior microbiologist, won first place. The Twin “Ukes,” made up of freshmen pre-pharmacy majors Cristina Rolph and Sydney Wharton, took second place. A prose poem titled Speak American, performed by junior nursing major Meghan Boling and junior biomedical science major Manuel Duran, won third place.
 Spieth ushers in new generation for golf

The Masters is the epitome of Golf, the highest mountain to climb and the biggest trek of them all. Jordan Spieth reached that summit yesterday, when the 21-year-old became the second-youngest player to claim a green jacket.

The native Texan had a chance to become the youngest player to ever win the coveted Masters championship last year, as he and Bubba Watson competed in the final group. Watson, of course, won that year, but it left the rest of the golfing community with a glimpse of the future.

Much like Tiger Woods, Spieth is built differently than most golfers. Give Woods and Spieth a birdie and they come back at you with an eagle. Birdies propelled Spieth to the top early on and he never looked back. Unlike Rory McIlroy at 21, Spieth was able to go into the final round with a lead and hold it McIlroy went into the final round of the 2011 Masters with a four-shot lead and ended up tied for 3rd when it was done. For Spieth, the win at the Masters was a chance to prove that last year was more than just luck. It proves that this guy is a legit golfer and has a real chance of making a lasting impact on the game and how it is played.

Tiger Woods is now 39 and is in a race against the clock to rack Jack Nicklaus’ major win record and the title of best golfer ever. Since his extra-curricular activities found him on the cover of every tabloid, he has fought to even stay relevant in the sport. Woods finished tied for 17th after an impressive round of golf considering the past few years, but nowhere near the historic rounds he used to play.

Now, the win for Spieth does not mean he is the new face of golf or that he is the best in the world, but it’s something we’ve seen before with Woods 20 years ago.

There are a lot of parallels between golf’s old faces and its potential new one. There has been only one player before who has won the Masters at a younger age—Tiger. Spieth finished the tournament at age 18 under par, again the only person to do that before? Tiger Woods.

He even bested Woods in one category. The 28 Euros Spieth managed to score during his historic run at the green jacket are unrivaled by anyone. Spieth did what McIlroy couldn’t do earlier, he was able to replicate what Woods was able to do, he just did it more average. Spieth never looked back, even when old lefty Phil Mickelson was in second place. Again, something McIlroy could not do back in 2011.

It’s bad enough that Woods has to share his iconic Nike brand with McIlroy or that kids are now wearing bright orange like Rickie Fowler, but you add Spieth to that and now there’s a whole generation of golfers pushing Woods toward playing in the seniors’ Masters.

Spieth is probably not going to be the next Nicklaus or Woods, but he solidifies the claim of the new generation of golf being here to play.

Most of these golfers grew up watching Mickelson and Woods’ rivalry at every Masters and would probably not want anything more than to put them into retirement.

For McIlroy, Fowler, Jason Day, Spieth and others, a final round of golf is something they have already accomplished in their young careers. They are all under the age of 30, which means their best years are still to come.
"Let’s go Chihuahuas!"

1. Designated hitter Cody Decker is introduced into the starting lineup. 2. Left fielder Ryan Lillie pops up in one of his at bats against Tacoma. 3. The Chihuahua offense opens the season with an 18-hit game. 4. Tacoma pitcher Roenis Elias throws a pitch against the Chihuahuas at Southwest University Park. 5. Outfielder Abraham Almonte looks on while standing at second base.
Hunter leaves, blame it on the system

BY JASON GREEN

Last week, UTEP basketball’s top off-road player, sophomore forward Hunter, declared for the 2015 NBA draft. The 2014-15 season, UTEP scouts were seen at UTEP games and numbers circled in their notebooks as a key player to keep an eye on his NBJ career. The situation brought one of the sport’s biggest positives to his best friend.

A lot of people feel that the current system for the NBA draft is flawed. The “one-and-done” culture that has developed in the NCAA, Division I basketball ranks that has developed in recent years is looked down upon by many. The idea that a player cannot stay in college for a year knowing that they will be heading to the NBA after one season is a no-incentive to even attend class. Perhaps the NBA would benefit from a system like the one in the National Hockey League. Instead of only allowing European players to play for another team while under NBA team control, this idea can be expanded to all prospects including the ones in college.

In the NBA, a lot of the drafting is based on projected talent. Opinions vary widely on where Hunter will be drafted—his team and coaches believe that he will be drafted regardless. UTEP men’s basketball assistant coach Bob Canto believes Hunter’s was an informed decision.

“With coach Floyd’s connections, he could get any bit of information from any GM or team,” Canto said. “He’s advised Vince on his future.”

Teammate Omaga Harris also thinks Hunter will have no problem at the next level.

“Everybody says he’s not ready, but his knee is his injury. He hasn’t seen his full potential,” Harris said. “When his knee gets back right, they’ll see. He’s just got to show up when the lights come on.”

If Hunter’s injury or the dearth of talent in this year’s draft were to cause him to not get drafted, he has other options.

He could end up playing with an NBA summer league team in hopes of being signed or he could head to Europe to play professionally.

If Hunter hires an agent during the draft process, the one thing he can never do again is play basketball for the Miners.

The El Paso Elites are a junior A hockey team that plays their home games at the Sierra Providence Events Center in El Paso. The players range from 18 to 20 years old and come from all over the world. They have come here to demonstrate their talents for professional and college coaches.

Rhinoceros head coach Cory Herman says that 95 percent of his players receive college scholarships following their time here in El Paso.

The NBA draft consists of players from around the world who are 18-20 years old. Unlike other NCAA sports that can be played by an NHL team and still play in college. When either the player or the team that owns his right decides that they are ready physically and mentally for the NHL, they will sign a contract and leave school. The NHL team holds the rights to the player until 30 days after they leave college.

Any player who is not drafted by the age of 21 is considered a free agent and allowed to sign with any team. Herman feels that this system is great for young players who may not be completely ready for the rigors of the NHL.

“Going to the NHL at 18 is very tough to do. Players going to college have a chance to develop, get bigger, stronger and more mature,” Herman said. “Getting a college degree that you can fall back on if hockey doesn’t work out.”

Former Miners basketball player Tyler Tolken feels that an NHL-type system could work in the NBA and that it would encourage teams to take more chances on players such as Hunter.

“I think it would give some extra advantage to teams because they are looking at long term and saying he still has some years for development instead of being thrown into the fire immediately,” Tolken said.

Under an NHL-type of draft system, Hunter would not have to develop himself for the draft. He could be drafted and still finish his time at UTEP as long as the NBA team who picked him feels that he needs to develop more.

Hunter is all for a system that would allow players time to develop and not cost them their eligibility should they decide to test the draft waters.

“I definitely support anything that allows kids more time to get ready. You have to have a lot of skill and mental toughness to make it in the NBA,” Canto said. “I think a system like the one in the NHL would be great. It would help kids have a better career and better long-term options.”

Although it seems to be agreed upon by most people that the current NBA draft system needs to be improved, anyone involved with college basketball currently is very wary of players being involved with pro teams while in school.

Canto said there is a fine line that would have to be drawn between the pro ranks and college.

“It comes down to amateurism. At a certain point a player is no longer an amateur. You have to draw the line somewhere,” Canto said. “In a perfect world, a system like that would be great, though.”

Tolken, currently a high school basketball coach, also said he sees the potential for conflict with a player belonging to an NBA team while being coached by a college head coach.

“There may be some conflict with this,” Tolken said. “The pro team might want the player to work on things differently.

It appears that the NBA could benefit from a stronger minor league system. Currently, the NBA has a developmental league with 18 teams and approximately 150 players per team. Clearly this is not enough roster space for the number of players that NBA teams would probably like to draft and watch develop.

Coach Canto would like to see the NBA develop a stronger minor league – the way that Major League Baseball has. Each MLB team typically has four to five minor league teams. Currently, due to the lack of space in the NBA D-League, many American players are playing in European leagues. Harris said that the NBA would find you there if you were truly ready.

“I know a couple of people back home that went overseas and the D-League and did all that stuff. They get their money and stuff. If you do your work, do what you’re supposed to do, you’ll get drafted up to the league,” Harris said. “The league is just the top goal to get to. There’s just steps that you have to take to get there.”

Across the board, the belief is that the system is currently flawed. It remains to be seen whether Hunter will be drafted or if he will be one of the players developing in Europe or on an NBA D-League.

A week in the process may be the answer to addressing one of college and professional basketball’s biggest concerns. Borrowing ideas from other leagues like the NHL and MLB could hold the key to improving.

The fact remains that the Miners, and possibly Hunter, would have benefited from his developing on the court at the Don Haskins Center.
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