

## Senator, NBA star links politics with sports

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Sports and politics might seem like unrelated realms, but former U.S. Sen. Bill Bradley said politicians and athletes share common values last night in a lecture at Traves Hall in the Douglass Campus Center.

"Sports and politics has been my life by and large," said Bradley, a Hall of Fame basketball player for the New York Knicks. "They've always been experiences that gave me depth and resonance, humor and fun, joy and challenge and inspiration."

Bradley's speech focused on what he called shared values of sports and politics: discipline, selflessness, imagination, resilience and integrity. He also stressed the importance of people playing on the same team as they face important issues such as education, health care and the environment.

Director of Intercollegiate Athletics Tim Perneti introduced Bradley to a crowd of hundreds of student alumni and guests, which erupted in laughter throughout the night.

Perneti stressed the benefit of athletics developing leadership skills, but joked that his last two days were indicative of the connection between sports and politics.

"If I could take a step back and walk everybody in this room through my last 48 hours and trying to get [the Rutgers football team] into the best bowl game possible, I'm pretty sure you'd know what sports and politics are all about," Perneti said.

He said sports are about more than revenue and wins and losses on the field.

"Athletics is all about leadership," Perneti said. "You take a risk and you put yourself out there; you display a leadership effort, hopeful to inspire other people along the way."

Bradley, who played for the Knicks from 1967 to 1977, used stories to show the connection between sports and politics.

"[Larry Bird] had a contract that said if he did not retire by Aug. 15, he would get an automatic renewal of his contract for two additional years at \$4.5 million per year," Bradley said.

Bird retired a few days before due to injuries and knew he would be unable to compete, Bradley said. The president of the Celtics told him to think about it for another week because of what he meant to the team.

"Bird looks at him and says ... 'I know what day it is and if I know I can't play I'm not taking the money,'" he said. "And [Bird] left \$9 million on the table."

Politicians are also forced to make decisions that test their integrity.

Former President Jimmy Carter faced high inflation and the fact that interest rates would have to rise to levels that would cost him reelection, Bradley said.

"Carter said, 'You got to do what you got to do,'" Bradley said.

His speech is the second lecture in the Eagleton Institute of Politics' speaker series, which aims to highlight the fact that arts, sports, medicine, science and even food involve politics in some way, Eagleton's Director Ruth Mandel said.

Eagleton is presenting the series with support from the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation.

Students and alumni were excited to hear Bradley speak at the University.

"I was really excited to hear that he was going to be here, because I've been following him in sports and in the Senate," said Patrick O'Connell, a Class of 2006 alumnus. "He's one of the few [politicians] out there who talk about bipartisanship."

He enjoyed Bradley's discussion about the "Ethic of Connectiveness," when the senator said that both the Republican Party philosophy of personal responsibility and the Democratic Party's philosophy of collective action are needed.

"You can't help but see [a picture of the earth from space] and not believe and not know that we have one global environment," Bradley said.

"We're all in this together. ... But when it comes to health care or education or taxes or pension, we have a war between two competing advocates."

He said America needs both, and that shows in the health care debate.

There are 47 million Americans without health insurance, and collective caring is needed to give everyone access to health care, Bradley said.



Jennifer Miguel-Hellman / Staff Photographer

Former U.S. Senator and NBA Hall of Fame player Bill Bradley speaks last night on the shared values of politics and sports at the Eagleton Institute of Politics speakers series, which aims to show the pervasiveness of politics in society.

But people also need to take individual responsibility for staying healthy, he said.

For David Greene of Monroe Township, N.J., the most important part of the speech was when Bradley talked about education, health care, the state of politics and the environment.

"Bradley told very interesting stories," said Greene, a Class of 1953 alumnus. "He gave us a lot to think about and an agenda of things to be concerned about."

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