

# Keep an eye on these

June 26, 2010

I like to play prognosticator once in a while, so please allow me to step into that role right now with respect to some news stories flying below the radar. These are things I think might be interesting to keep an eye on because they may loom larger in the future.

All the focus right now is on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf, but remember this word for future reference — Atlantis. There are 591 deepwater wells in the Gulf, but none so perilous as the Atlantis rig.

In a Rolling Stone article titled, "The Spill, The Scandal and the President — The inside story of how Obama failed to crack down on the corruption of the Bush years and let the world's most dangerous oil company get away with murder," writer Tim Dickinson says: "Most troubling of all, the government has allowed BP to continue deep-sea production at its Atlantis rig — one of the world's largest oil platforms. Capable of drawing 200,000 barrels a day from the seafloor, Atlantis is located only 150 miles off the coast of Louisiana, in waters nearly 2,000 feet deeper than BP drilled at Deepwater Horizon. According to congressional documents, the platform lacks required engineering certification for as much as 90 percent of its subsea components — a flaw that internal BP documents reveal could lead to catastrophic errors."

This week out of the blue, BP has issued statements that Atlantis is safe because it's in the production stages rather

than in the drilling stages. That's hardly reassuring given BP's record for truthfulness. With hurricane season looming, keep an eye on Atlantis.

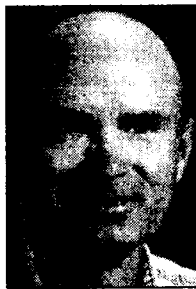
Another item to keep an eye on comes this week from the world of sports. Remember this word — Quinnipiac. A court case this week involving Quinnipiac University could have a ripple effect on women's sport programs all across America.

At issue is whether or not competitive cheerleading is a sport. Quinnipiac argues that it is and thus should count toward the school's Title IX compliance. If they win the school's women's volleyball team, which costs the school about \$6,300 per roster spot, it will be dumped in favor of the cheerleading squad which costs about \$1,250 per spot.

"The outcome of this case could have a chilling effect on women's athletic programs," says Title IX expert Mary Jo Kane of the University of Minnesota.

Folks, the bottom line here is money, so if this ruling goes Quinnipiac's way universities will have a legal basis upon which to eliminate any chosen women's sports team. I would venture that basketball is unlikely to be affected, so volleyball could wind up being in the crosshairs at many universities.

Please note that Michigan switched its high school



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sports seasons a couple of years ago due to a court case that centered around opportunities for girls to get college volleyball scholarships. There is the possibility of a trickle down effect here because what happens at the college level is bound to eventually impact the same sport at the high school level. Watch to see how this court case plays out over the next week.

How about keeping an eye on something happening in politics that both the Republican and Democrat parties absolutely hate? Anything that both parties are against has to be like manna from heaven for the rest of us, right?

Due to a recent vote in California, next year's state primaries will take on a whole new format. They've voted to replace the partisan system where you vote by party affiliation to an open primary where the top two vote-getters win.

For example, if nine candidates seek the nomination to run for governor, the top two performers in the primary would get the nod to oppose each other in the general election. If that means two Republicans face off, so be it. If two Democrats make it to the last round, that's the way the chips fall.

This is unorthodox to be sure; what else would you expect from California? But how many times have you

seen an election where a given party has a token nominee, just to fill out the ballot, while the other party actually has more than one attractive candidate? Plus, this has the potential to make the "independent" label really mean something.

Keep an eye on next year's California elections because oftentimes ideas that begin on the Left Coast find their way to the rest of the country.

On the labor front, keep an eye on the labor unrest in China. The Chinese government has been upping the minimum wage requirements for workers in foreign-owned facilities and collective bargaining agreements have also resulted in higher pay for workers. The bottom line is that those jobs outsourced to China because the labor was cheaper are now getting more expensive.

For example, Apple, Dell, and Hewlett-Packard just doubled assembly line worker pay. The result will be higher prices for American consumers, according to a study by Northwestern University.

How will U.S. companies respond? Experts say that companies may move to Vietnam or Bangladesh for cheaper labor. Ah, how's that outsourcing by patriotic American companies (who spend millions lobbying Congress for tax breaks) working for you now? Keep an eye on these guys.

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