A Rose Is A Rose...

By JOHN DURHAM, Thresher Sports Editor '63-'64

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

—Shakespeare

And red-shirting, by any other name would still be the same thing, contrary to the opinion expressed by Rice head football coach and athletic director Jess C. Neely in one of the Houston morning papers recently.

According to Mr. Neely, Rice does not have a red-shirt program. Instead, a player merely does not play if he is not ready. OK, so we’ll call it Freebing instead. Still the University, in accord with the rest of that august body of educational institutions which make up the Southwest Athletic Conference, allows any athlete four years to complete three years of varsity eligibility.

Originally the rule was instituted to allow a player who was injured for a year to play his allotted time. Of course there is the possibility that a player will be injured for more than one year, and still “injured” remains a nebulous concept at best, ranging from sleeping sickness to eyestrain to lockjaw.

And if “injury” is hard to define, how can we conceive of what “ready” means, except to take the word of some football coach (or in a few special cases, professors)?

This is not to be taken as a full-scale indictment of the practice of red-shirting, or freebing, or hospitalization or whatever it is. Rather it is a plea for the elimination of the hypocrisy which refuses to admit that it is practiced, even if it is done behind hedges and ivy-covered gates.

Certainly we do not advocate Rice’s revocation of the policy, especially as long as the University is dedicated to excellence on the fields of manly combat, and other SWC schools condone holding out players.

But admitting that red-shirting exists, and a thorough examination of the practice seem obvious and logical steps to take.