Who gets the coverage? Time and effort don't seem to make the front page

You see the complaints in the Letters to the Editor every week: "How could the newspaper have missed the event we sponsored last week? Thousands of people lined up to pay thousands of dollars for charity and broke three records in the Guinness Book?"

Or this one: "Our choir concert won the Southwestern regional church competition for best performance on a Christian score, and we didn't see anything about it in this paper."

Some of the letters make a good point: The newspaper should have known about the event and sent a reporter to attend. Others, though, fail to grasp the realities imposed on those who print words for money. There is limited space, and even less time and resources, allocated to a daily newspaper.

What pleases the taste of the most readers is often the best that can be done, and for the special interests of the minority must be satisfied by small, specialized magazines and tracts.

The answer is not always simple, and the following example illustrates the well.

On Monday, the University of Kentucky's debate team advanced to the semi-final round of competition at the National Debate Tournament. What's more, Jeff Jones, one of the UK debaters, was voted the tournament's top speaker, the best debater in the country.

If Steve Mancuso or Jeff Jones were basketball players, as the classic argument goes, their names would be household words throughout the Bluegrass. Also, there is a greater degree of disorder in the spotlight will never shine their way, their fame restricted to those who know them well. Or watch them play. They will not survive in their popularity, as have many UK basketball players.

Surely, the victorious debaters merit more media attention than any other Kentucky basketball players covered by CBS in depth, and the endless post-season basketball play continues to receive ample newsprint.

Should a UK athlete travel to California for the national tournament, the media will follow along, sending back reports by telephone and generally, the story to death. Not only do the debaters not have to worry about phoning in the reports on their own, they would have to confront the gazing eyes of more attention than most professional athletes.

When Mancuso and Jones lost in the semi-final round of the National Debate Tournament in Pomona, California, Monday night, they arrived home without the burden of inquiring reporters or the glare of television mini-cam spots. Maybe Wednesday, when they returned home, someone would call the media or UK's Information Service, but then the story would be worth, at least for a few seconds, or two, at most.

It is hard to draw comparisons between different activities, even different athletic endeavors. But debaters put in at least the same amount of preparation for just as extended a time period.

Debaters spend hours a day, on average, year round, with full practice sessions (more than five hours a day) throughout the regular season, which runs from October through April.

When the debaters attend a tournament, they debate more than eight times a weekend, sometimes even nine. They may spend a dozen tournaments a year, traveling to both coasts and across the nation.

They miss more than their share of classes, a liability compensated by meager partial scholarships and time-consuming work-study programs.

Roger Solt, UK's assistant coach, lives on what can only be described as a poverty-level wage. He is forced to work on a part-time basis for a work-week that frequently runs more than 80 hours.

Dr. J.W. Patterson, UK's head coach, has a budget that is a fraction of what is necessary for the task. The last month, 140,000 to 150,000 yards from the debate offices there is a field of meet Gil Skillman, a UK graduate, off to his hotel room without the burden of inquiring reporters or the glare of television mini-cam spots and the cumulative effect of media attention.

Debate alumni also contribute to the university's coffers and are consistently among the most interested, giving back in ways, to assist the university and direct its future?

Who is to blame for the neglect of activities like debate?

Before indicting the media, consider the circumstances they face—low reader interest, lack of space and time, and the need to focus on their assignments. If the media are to help build interest, they need the cooperation, indeed, the assistance of the university in sharing the results of these times.

Is it true, though, that a paper that is cutting corners trying to get a recouping response to public expression would fail to seek out examples of success—whether it be in the form of a letter or an essay?

Before blaming the debaters, consider the circumstances they face—awareness and need for attention. They know the public has no interest, so they neglect to put the information before the editor's eyes.

The debate team, though, should certainly assume the responsibility of helping on its own behalf. Scholastic sports have benefited from this strategy, and debate should benefit, too. In the final analysis, however, it is