

PERSPECTIVES

Sports do not stand as effective symbol of racial harmony

Bill Clinton recently held a forum on race relations and sports in Houston. Sports is not the first thing I think of as an example of positive race relations. In fact, the idea that sports is a positive example is somewhat laugh-



JOE SCHUMACHER
columnist

Sports is an area still riddled with stereotypes. Everybody has heard them: White people are better three-point shooters, although they cannot dunk. Black athletes are faster and more aggressive, however they do not make good quarterbacks, and so on. Given that alone, sports hardly seems like a prime example of positive race relations.

Today, sports is seen as one of the few ways that minorities can achieve success.

However, their success is limited to the playing field. In the NFL, only one of the 30 teams, there are only three black head coaches. There is a dearth of minorities in management positions. This "glass ceiling" of sports again tends to belittle the notion that sports are an example of positive race relations.

Additionally, the make up of the panel was rather laughable. The panel of 11 consisted of only one Hispanic, Felipe Lopez, a college basketball player, and only one female, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, an Olympic medalist. Now if the panel were to accurately represent minorities in sports, it would have to be huge. However, one or two more Hispanics on the panel probably would not have upset the balance.

The fact that only one woman sat in on the panel also indicates that women's sports are still under the shadow of men's athletics. Female athletes make significantly less than their male counterparts, and women's college teams hardly get the money or time slots on television.

While sports has improved, it still has a long way to go. Not too many athletes are thought of very highly outside of the field of sports. They have displayed a less-than-sportsmanlike conduct off the field. Charles Barkley, who plays for the Houston Rockets is a prime example. "Sir Charles," dubbed this due to his "regal" personality, threw a chair through a window during the preseason. How charming. Another basketball player, Latrell Sprewell, who has since been suspended from the NBA, attacked his coach. Many even called this an attack due to the fact that the coach was white.

Sports are not even a good metaphor for society. The aggressive behavior exemplified in sports is hardly accepted in normal society. We have laws that have to be followed, not rules of the game, and the penalties for breaking these laws can be more severe than sitting out of a game or two.

For instance, if a person attacks somebody, it's called "assault" and the person can go to jail. However, in sports it's called a foul, the offender is forced to leave the field and pay a fine, at the most, be suspended for a few games. However a player has probably never been criminally charged with any sort of crime for their action.

Besides behavior that is hardly reflective of normal society, most athletes are given special treatment. It isn't all too uncommon for athletes and coaches to be given a break for doing something that would normally result in someone of less prestige in jail.

It is also a safe argument that many college and professional athletes probably could not hold a job outside of playing sports. Although there are a couple of athletes whose intellect seem to rise above their sport, they are few and far between.

The forum on race relations seemed only to deal with the holy trinity of college and professional sports: Football, basketball and baseball. What about other excluded minorities go, what about the lack of prominent Asian Americans in these professional sports, or the decline of white athletes in professional sports? Aren't these significant issues being left with race?

The race relations forum at best was another lackluster publicity stunt pulled by our president. While sports have made great strides, it has a way to go. Many athletes that have benefited from these sports are still in their athletic prime. Great players usually make great coaches, so minority coaches are inevitable. A prime example of this is the Drexler being becoming the head coach for the University of Houston basketball program.

Given more time, sports will probably right any remaining wrongs. However, until it does, it is hardly a fine example of race relations.

Joe Schumacher is a junior journalism major.



MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA CONSTITUTION 1997

PERSPECTIVES

Public obsession with death invades privacy

Last week, Linda McCartney, wife of ex-Beatle Paul McCartney, died after a long, difficult battle with breast cancer. McCartney was famous not only because of her well-known spouse, but also for her fervor for vegetarianism and her back-up singing on Paul's albums.



MANDY CATER
opinion editor

Since McCartney's death, news coverage stories have appeared in the media on a near-daily basis. These stories, for the most part, do not focus on McCartney's achievements, her life or the issues she advocated. Instead, the media have gone mad for the macabre, focusing their attention on the details of her death.

McCartney was rumored to have died in Santa Barbara, Calif. Some investigative journalists discovered that her body was not, in fact, among those who died that day in Santa Barbara.

This juicy tidbit sent entertainment buffs into a frenzy, determined that a scandal was behind the lie. In subsequent days, the rumors began flying as reporters attempted to discover the where, when and how of McCartney's death. Her husband, Paul, was tight-lipped about the whole affair, only adding to the power of the rumor mill — raising innuendos of an attempted suicide.

Eventually, it was reported that McCartney actually died with her family at their home in Arizona. It was her favorite place in the world, and the location was kept secret because the family wanted privacy in her last days.

The question here is why people need to know so much about this woman's death. In the end, it is really nobody's business.

The woman had cancer. She and her family knew that the media would be all over them if they knew she was at the end of her life and they wanted privacy. What is so wrong with that?

Americans today have so blurred the lines between public and private lives, it seems unlikely they will ever be able to go back. They are obsessed with knowing every intimate detail of other peoples' lives — whether it be their next-door neighbor or

Hollywood stars. It seems we are driven by a need to have a picture window into other people's private business. When one is famous, it seems this interest is tripled.

People take bus tours of stars' homes, they dig through the trash of Hollywood bigwigs and they tune in around the clock to programs such as "Showbiz Tonight" on CNN, "Extra" and "Entertainment Tonight" to get the latest scoop on the stars.

This obsession with death, however, is perhaps the most disturbing facet of this phenomenon. The death of Princess Diana last summer was the first glance of this obsession. For weeks, stories of her death pervaded the media at all hours of the day and night.

There were interviews with police officers, recreations of the wreck and trips down the memory lane of Diana's relationship with Dodi Fayed.

Viewers stared for hours at the wrecked heap of the car Diana travelled in. Cameras chased down her sons and brother, as well as Fayed's father.

And, of course, there was the grand pageant that was her funeral. Watchers worldwide ogled as her family and friends mourned

their loss. The question here is where does public end and private begin. Do viewers really deserve to be involved with funerals and mourning via satellite?

Yes, the world loved Princess Diana, and Linda McCartney was a household name for many. But does this recognition entail allowing people into the most private aspects of one's life?

Perhaps the most important consideration here is one of walking a mile in someone else's shoes. If someone you loved died, would you want cameras in your face, allowing the whole world to watch as you dealt with the pain and loss you were experiencing?

The point is this: yes, people take on a certain loss of privacy by entering the public light, however everyone deserves some semblance of privacy.

Families deserve the right to mourn in private and to die in peace. And simply because someone is famous does not mean their family should suffer.

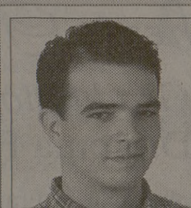
Some things should be sacred events, off-limits to the disgusting public appetite.

Mandy Cater is a senior psychology major.

STUDENT LIFE

Enjoying bliss of summer blocked by finals

When the temperature hovers around 95 degrees and it doesn't get dark until half past midnight, you know it's almost time to head home for the summer. Only one minor event stands in our way — we have to muddle through finals before we're finally through with pencils, books and teachers' dirty looks.



STEWART PATTON
columnist

Many students were nagged by the folks last Parents' Weekend about staying focused at the end of the school year. If you weren't one of the lucky ones, however, I'll be your mom for the next few minutes and show you how to stay motivated for finals — just don't ask me for any money.

The Administration has done its part by hiring several thousand motivators who have worked tirelessly all semester to keep Aggies on the straight and narrow path to good grades.

You can recognize these motivators by their callused hands, hard hats and the eerie way they all stop work to watch girls walk by during class changes. From a simple touch-up on the Academic Building to new construction next to the Pavilion, almost every area of campus screams "Stay in school."

If a student fails all his finals and ends up not finishing his Astronomy degree, one of these motivators might inform him, "You can see them stars real good from the bottom of a 40-foot sewage ditch."

Or another student flunks every final and doesn't complete her B.A. in Philosophy: "Why don't you examine the epistemological repercussions of moving this dirt from right here to over there?"

If you flip, roll, deliver or have any other relationship to food (or a food-type substance) at a part-time job, the first thought of doing that job for the rest of your life ought to scare you straight to the library.

It's a shame to see a 30-year-old man begging a line of people to move all the way to their left or asking whether you want fries with that. Did somebody say get a real job? Every order you take or slab of barbecue you run to a table should be accompanied by a solemn promise to yourself to study just a little bit longer tonight.

In today's marketplace, the old "start-at-the-bottom-and-work-your-way-up" dream just doesn't happen anymore.

Unless you happen to be a cute little chihuahua, you've already reached the height of your fast-food career.

Another reason to study for finals and make good grades is that members of the opposite sex dig it.

In my survey of over one coed, I found that most women prefer a college graduate to a "beer-swilling dropout pig who was too excit-

ed about summer to study hard for finals."

In a related survey, I found that men feel the exact same — unless a woman demonstrates that she can cook really, really well. Nothing on campus will sap your will to study like a trip to the Student Rec Center, so avoid this place at all costs.

While you are surrounded by thousands of other sun-baked and half-naked Aggies at the outdoor pool (you have to reserve a folding chair three weeks in advance), the gentle breezes will send you sailing into a chlorine-induced trance where you will while away the hours planning your summer trip to such exotic locales as Cancun or Tahiti.

In fact, you should do your best to avoid the outdoors altogether.

Being near a window is probably a bad idea, too. Old Mr. Sunshine can't bother you when you are sitting in a sunk-in chair surrounded by clocks with the wrong time and ballet practice mirrors in one of the library's second-floor luxury lounges. Wear your untanned skin with pride, Aggies, for you earned it through many hours of studying. Your GPR will thank you for it.

To make good grades this finals season, I will put away all thoughts of the summer bliss that lies ahead and study like nobody's business. Summer is lovely, bright and deep, but I have promises to keep, and finals to go before I sleep, and finals to go before I sleep.

Stewart Patton is a junior sociology major.



MAIL CALL

Volunteers deserve thanks for dance

I will remember last Saturday night for the rest of my life. My beautiful girlfriend and I went to Ring Dance with some good friends and had a great time. Ring Dance was splendid. It was obvious that much time and effort went into planning of Ring Dance '98.

However, I wanted to thank a group of unselfish Aggies, the volunteers.

Instead of going out on a Saturday night, numerous students volunteered their time to push elevator buttons, serve punch, check people in, and work many other chores. All the smiles and energy

from the volunteers made Ring Dance better than it could ever have been.

I regret that I never volunteered for Ring Dance when I was an underclassman.

So I encourage those to help out next year.

If you volunteer, you will be touching the lives of many graduating students and letting them know one more time what an incredible place Aggieland is. Thanks for all the great memories.

Chip Loomis
Class of '98

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