

# Sports fans — the truth exposed

Occasionally, and I mean very occasionally, a columnist or news commentator will touch on the hidden agenda behind America's addiction to sports. Actually, "sport" has nothing to do with it. Fans do not sit in uncomfortable stadium seats that cost as much as half of their hard-earned paychecks to watch a group of gigantic, muscular athletes play nice. I don't care if the game is football, basketball, hockey, or NASCAR racing. The thinly disguised agenda of these and a couple of other "sporting" favorites has little to do with gentlemanly contests between well-trained athletes. The purpose of these events is to stage violence and sell beer. There, I said it. It's in print. We've known about this for centuries, but rarely do we address the truth. Why? you ask. Because that would be uncivilized.

Our sports heroes, as role models, appear to set good examples for the nation's youth only because they are protected by contrived terminology. For instance, football quarterbacks are not arrogant; sportscasters call them "confident." Basketball is not a violent game; it is "physical." Charles Barkley, of basketball fame, retired from the Houston Rockets a few years ago. During his career, he won two Olympic gold medals, MVP of the year and a place in the history books as one of the most "aggressive" players in the game. However, he is as famous for his inventive quotes as for his record on the basketball court. He said this about his profession: "I am paid to wreak havoc on the basketball court, not raise your kids." Barkley attained superstar status



**You can't beat a system you can't understand**

By Sam Bari

for his "physical" approach to the game, and watching him commit flagrant fouls filled the stands with fans that clamored for his autograph whenever they saw him in public.

Long retired, football defensive lineman Conrad Dobler gained infamy for his aggressive play and merciless tackles. And he was a fan favorite. Recalling a game he played against sports commentator Merlin Olson when Olson was an offensive lineman for the Los Angeles Rams, Dobler said: "If you wanted to see how hard I hit him on instant replay, you had to go to the kitchen because I knocked him so far out of the TV frame." As sophomoric as the humor might be, he was proud of his accomplishments. Football fans loved to watch Dobler, who was the self-professed dirtiest player in football.

If the aggressive behavior that takes place on the football field happened anywhere else, the participants would be arrested for assault and battery, and possibly attempted murder. And if fighting was prohibited in hockey games, the attendance would plummet. As difficult as it might be to believe, fighting during a hockey game is against the rules. However, the sponsors (mostly beer companies) insist that the

referees tolerate a certain amount of altercation to attract more fans so they can sell more beer.

Now, NASCAR is getting publicity in the media for "road rage" that takes place during races. Drivers appear to be blatantly bumping their competitors to cause accidents. It almost looks as if a marketing ploy might be in the making to attract more fans interested in controversy and the possibility of dramatic crashes on the tracks. And who are the biggest sponsors of stock car races? Bingo! You guessed it — beer companies.

Only the people involved in professional wrestling, which we all know is a staged drama, blatantly admit to being the true descendents of gladiators, whether the contests are fixed or not. Wrestlers willingly and cheerfully attest to pursuing top billing because they can dominate through intimidation, arrogance, and violent behavior. And their fans are just as barbaric. And who are the sponsors of this sophisticated indulgence? You guessed right again — the beer companies. They learned from the Romans in ancient times. Give the fans wine and violent entertainment and they will come back for more.

However, it is ironic how team management of any sport is intolerant of behavior that might include the use of controlled substances. Sponsors thrive on creating headlines and scandal out of the smallest infraction. Why? Because they want to set a perceived good example. They want to fight drug abuse. Do you think they really care? I don't. Let's be realistic, if fans spent all their money on drugs, they wouldn't have any left for beer. It's all a marketing effort.

Now for a quick look at the non-violent sports like golf and

tennis. You never see a golfer standing toes to toes and nose to nose with a referee as they participate in a shouting contest. No — golf is much more dignified than that. Golf tournaments are sponsored by stock brokerages, insurance companies, and banks, as are many tennis matches. Why? Because the people who watch these events don't drink much beer. They drink bourbon, vodka,

scotch, and other libations that are not permitted to be advertised on the airwaves. So, sponsors sell them a drug that is even more habit forming — greed. I suppose everybody has hidden agendas that drive their need for vicarious thrills. It's all part of that system we can't understand.

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