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Melodrama

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Did you ever stop to think that Dennis Rodman is the author of the number one best selling non-fiction book in America? Other than the fact that this gives the term "non-fiction" a peculiar meaning, what does this say about the current state of affairs in American Sport and American Society?

Rodman brings the NBA one step closer to the World Wraslin Federation, although it was clearly close without him what with its overblown player introductions and the growing amount of trash talking and PR hype all of which are variations on the same theme.

If Dennis Rodman is not resigned by the Bulls or anyone else in the league he now has several options available. No doubt the best selling author has at least one sequel in him. With a few more pounds of beef he could move right into the WWF where he would be a natural, or he could make the intermediate step and become a wide-receiver in Arena Football. If he can sing Dennis would be a knockout in Key West as a nightclub performer in drag. The hot pink boa and silver dress with matching hair and pumps were just smashing and would knock'em dead on Duval Street.

Hockey has not escaped this increase in volume and hype either. Openings for hockey games in Orlando and in many of the NHL cities now feature show business melodrama worthy of the owner of the Anaheim Ducks. The throwing of squid, rats, fish and, in Orlando, sunglasses, onto the ice has cheapened, and in some cases overshadowed the hockey players. The music and the mini-contests in the stands during breaks in the action further dilute attention from the athletic skills and demean both the players and the sport.

But then all of this seems like one more step into the madness that one finds in other facets of modern sport. Owners continue to be an amazing lot of fools. Marge Schott has distinguished herself with a string of ignorant comments and foolish cost-cutting measures that have overshadowed the Cincinnati Reds baseball team in that community. Once again Schott has demonstrated that to get rich in America requires little or no intelligence.

Schott's fellow-baseball owners find it easy to match her. Thinking that somehow suspending her from the game will serve

any useful purpose is at best silly. At worst it is a blatant display of a double standard. Baseball owners who are ignorant men apparently are acceptable, while ignorant women are not, in this dubious fraternity of fuzzing thinking millionaires. None of this surprises anyone as these are the same people who cancelled a baseball season and then cancelled a World Series for no apparent reason, other than their own inability to restrain themselves from paying out too much money to mediocre talents.

Owners are also the ones who have created the phenomenon of selling the name of arenas and stadia for commercial purposes. We now have 3-Com Park in San Francisco, several airline arenas, the Arco Arena, and the Target Center. I am not sure who started this sleazy practice but it reached a new low with the announcement last week by Malcom Glazer, owner of the Tampa Bay Bucs, that he was renaming Tampa Stadium, Houlihan's Stadium. So here we have it, a public facility carrying the name of a middle-brow restaurant chain, owned by Glazer and not even operating in Tampa. I suppose this is no worse than being named after a discount chain like Target, but where will it stop? I wouldn't expect an answer to this question soon, as we are still a long way from the bottom in public taste.

Of course owners do not have a monopoly on public ignorance. Albert Belle's various PR disasters make him the poster boy for athlete's foot-in-mouth disease. Lawrence Phillips has just added another line to his resume, thus rewarding the L.A.-St.Louis Rams for their own form of ignorance. My guess is that Phillips was simply off-track because he did not have Nebraska football and Fr. Tom Osborne Flanagan to give the proper structure to his life in Lotus Land.

Of a less serious and more humorous nature are several recent quotes. Harry Cary commented after a game that ended with a homer and a Cub victory that if you looked over into the Phillies dugout you could see "the other emotional extremity." And just which one is that Harry?

On the NBA radio broadcasts Brent Musburger kept calling Jack Ramsey, Dr. Jack, providing a dark Kevorkian side to the games.

In Atlanta John Schmoltz was recently quoted about his success near the end of last year, producing this double whammy: "I think my career is ahead of me now. I don't think I've even tipped the iceberg on how good I could get."

And finally in a stroke of sheer brilliance and with more truth than no doubt intended, Steve Garvey said during a telecast of the College World Series, "I have long since given in to the other gender." Thanks for reminding us, Steve.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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