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## Mid-Summer Beauty in Sport: The Events and the People

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE  
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We are without a doubt deeply into the dog days of summer. That catatonic look brought on by unrelieved heat is commonplace. The celebrations of the fourth of July, the Wimbledon fortnight, and baseball's All-Star game are all behind us. The grind of baseball's pennant races are beginning to take their toll. Everyone seems to be a bit testier than usual, some even more so than Roger Clemens.

What a surprise then to see the platter of sport on display via the miracle of modern television on Sunday. From morning to night came, in order, the final round of the British Open, the final stage of the Tour de France, the induction ceremonies for Baseball's Hall of Fame at Cooperstown, and the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Finals. Lost in the shuffle were the U.S. Women's Open in golf and the Davis Cup semifinals.

I don't know anything at all about astrology but my guess is that the planets were aligned in some peculiar or special fashion on this day. Mid-summer Sundays never look this good except at a beach in the south of France.

Each event came with its own special drama or story, and none of them disappointed the faithful.

Beginning with brunch at the British Open the promise of the day flowed over us. Tiger Woods did what Tiger Woods is now expected to do. He set records on his way to demonstrating again that he is an authentic superstar in a world that routinely overuses the word. Shot after shot, hole after hole, Woods moved relentlessly toward the inevitable. There were those fleeting moments when it appeared that someone would challenge him as when David Duval got to within three strokes of Woods. And then boom, the lead was four, six, eight, ten, then finally settling at eight.

Tiger Woods is now the youngest and only the fifth golfer to win a career grand slam. He won the Open at 19 under par, the lowest score against par in the history of the event. He played all four rounds in the sixties, something he had not previously done at a major. People finishing at nine and ten under par for the tournament looked up to the leaderboard as they walked off the 18th green only to see that they were eight, nine or ten strokes behind the leader.

And poor David Duval, the planets were not aligned for him. He watched as Tiger pulled away and then totally self-destructed on the seventeenth hole using four strokes to get out of a bunker in an excruciating five minutes of humiliation. In the process he fell from second into a tie for eleventh place, twelve strokes behind his playing partner.

During the British Open the Tour de France came to its conclusion in Paris. There was no great drama in the moment as Lance Armstrong had wrapped up his second consecutive Tour victory several days earlier in the mountains. Nonetheless it was a great moment because Lance Armstrong is a great story with his triumph over cancer and his dedication to his sport. The picture of Armstrong holding his nine-month old son could easily be seen as a symbolic statement in the life of this remarkable athlete.

A bit later in the afternoon the baseball faithful gathered in Cooperstown at the Baseball Hall of Fame for the annual induction of new members. As always this is a day of memory and nostalgia for this sport that is steeped in both. It was a special day for the city of Cincinnati as two members of the Big Red Machine of the 70s, manager Sparky Anderson and first baseman Tony Perez were inducted into the Hall, along with Reds broadcaster Marty Brennaman. As icing on the civic cake Bid McPhee Red's infielder from the 1880's joined this group.

The non-Reds to make it this year were Carleton Fisk whose most famous career home run came in the sixth game of the 1975 World Series against the Reds. Fisk is clearly one of the great catchers in the history of the modern game becoming a legend with both the Boston Red Sox and the Chicago White Sox.

The other entry this year is Norman "Turkey" Stearnes who played in Detroit but not with Ty Cobb. Stearnes is regarded as one of the great outfielders in the history of the Negro Leagues. Never able to show his stuff in the major leagues, Stearnes would now be 99 years old had he lived to celebrate this richly deserved day.

As evening came in the East it was late afternoon in Sacramento, California. The Olympic qualifying events in track and field closed a memorable day of sport across America. The great Marion Jones won the 200 meter event, Gail Devers set an American record in the 100 meter hurdles, Stacy Draglia set a world record in women's pole vault, and the Clark family swept the women's 800.

The anticlimax came just before 9 p.m. EDT when the men's 200-meter showdown between Michael Johnson and Maurice Greene took place. In fact it was their second meeting in less than two hours. Johnson finished second and Greene third in the semi-final heat to John Capel. In a startling finish to the this remarkable day both Johnson and Greene within a few seconds of one another blew out their left hamstring and the showdown was over. Capel won again and neither Johnson nor Greene will compete in the 200-meter event in Sydney.

In the midst of this crowded day Spain shut out the U.S. in the Davis Cup semi-final, and Karrie Webb won her first U.S. Women's Open Golf Championship. It is Webb's third major in the last four, and her fifth tournament win this year. The parallel is obvious, though the achievement is less feted.

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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