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## Rich DeVoss and the Girls - Orlando Sports

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE  
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Last week Larry Guest reported on the reluctance of the Orlando Magic to share this city with any other major league professional sports franchise. In the course of his column Guest quoted Magic owner Rich DeVoss as saying about his conversations with County Chairman Linda Chapin and Orlando Mayor Glenda Hood: "I talked to the girls and asked them how many sports dollars are there to go around in Orlando."

This little two line comment raises two major issues. First, the condescension and sexism in Mr. DeVoss' comment is unbelievable in the mid-90s, even for Central Florida. It reveals a total lack of sensitivity and judgement, and raises serious questions about this major corporate figure.

To refer to the Mayor of Orlando and the County Chairman of Orange County as "the girls" shows DeVoss not only as sexist, but also as having a very low regard for the views and opinions of Orlando's political leadership. Clearly DeVoss does not take them seriously. In DeVoss' world there is apparently no room for women in power positions, and he seems incapable of thinking of women in those terms.

The fact that there has been almost no public comment on this insensitive comment by the Magic Boss is equally a measure of the deference that the news media pays to the Magic and its leadership. Nearly everything Magic is above reproach. Nor did Larry Guest make any comment on DeVoss' impropriety. But then Larry is not known for his sensitivity or liberalism on the major issues of our time.

The second issue raised in the column is also of some concern. As I have been saying for a year now, it is clear that the Magic rushed the Solar Bears into Orlando in order to keep the National Hockey League out. It was nice to finally see Larry Guest suggest this on the Sentinel sports pages after all this time. The city rushed to provide the DeVoss family with a lease for the Arena within a week of the announcement that Universal Studios would seek an NHL franchise for the city of Orlando.

The Magic and the DeVoss family do not want to share the sports dollar and the sports pages with another major league franchise in the City Beautiful. Now with the Tampa Bay Bucs eying Orlando as a place to relocate, the DeVosses are again nervous. Papa DeVoss wonders aloud about the whether Orlando has enough sports

dollars to go around, and Mayor Glenda Hood is suddenly very cool about the idea of the NFL stopping here.

This is a peculiar dance and one that the people of Orlando should not tolerate. Rich DeVoss and the Orlando Magic should have nothing, absolutely nothing, to say about who is or is not going to do business in this city. The city of Orlando owes them nothing. The DeVoss' did not bring the Magic to Orlando. The team was already here and very popular when the family purchased them as a highly lucrative franchise for an investment property. It has paid off handsomely for them already, and they are likely to continue to reap the profits for many years to come. In addition the city continues to subsidize their operations with the highly favorable terms of the Magic contract for the Arena.

The DeVoss family is owed no more by the people of Orlando. The DeVoss family should not be allowed to tell the mayor, the country chairman, or the Orlando Area Sports Commission what it should be doing. This practice of allowing sports entrepreneur's to control the market makes no sense, and is dangerous for the future of major league sports in the city.

In fact another example of this has already occurred. It has been reported that any move by the Tampa Bay Bucs to Orlando, or presumably any other franchise to Orlando that would need a stadium, can not take place without the approval of Norton Herrick. He has been given an exclusive right to the stadium, and anyone seeking to build a new stadium must settle with him first. This is incredible. Who is responsible for giving a man who has never done a thing for Orlando, this kind of power over the future of sports franchises in this city?

This is the kind of bad judgement that comes from the willingness of cities to prostitute themselves to those waving major league franchises before them. This is the mentality that leads sports owners to run from city to city looking for the biggest subsidy they can find. This is the kind of thinking that will leave Cleveland without a football team, Houston without a team, Los Angeles without a team, and fans feeling betrayed across the land.

It is also the kind of public policy perversion that will leave sports owners with pockets full of public funds for their dining and dancing pleasure.

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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