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## Dream Team II

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They called it Dream Team II. What was the point? Was it the Dream Team, the Cream Team or the Scream Team? Was this an exercise in the promotion of international relations through basketball, or another instance of Ugly Americanism in the late Imperial Age?

It could be argued that Dream Team I,--and there is no comparison between the two teams-- was an important step in the promotion and development of basketball worldwide. It could be argued that those who played against them felt lucky to be on the same floor, and that the chance for the world to see Michael, Magic, Larry, and Charles was worth putting up with the massacres on the court. It could be argued that for the world to see the grace and style with which this game can be played was more important than competitive games. And indeed all of those things seem to have been true.

But for these mismatches to be staged again with a lesser set of players seemed pointless. The conduct of the games in Toronto was less than impressive, and the antics of several of the American players on the floor with the trash-talk and the taunting, and Alonzo Mourning's seemingly endless search for someone to fight, were more Ugly American than hoop artistry.

What exactly was the point of this latest series of wipeouts? Was it necessary to show the world that U.S. professionals were much better than anyone else? I doubt it. Does the American public have some need for an ego fix with this sort of slaughter? Was this the Grenada invasion of basketball? Did it prove anything?

Well, yes, maybe one thing. It proved that Shaquille O'Neal is the best big man around. If the Russian team were given the Shaq for a game, could they have beaten Dream Team II? Maybe so. Without Shaq this was a very good all-star team. With him they were awesome. So the world got to see the Shaq in all his power and glory, and maybe that is justification enough for these massacres, but I doubt it.

Clearly the major point to this exercise is for the NBA to promote the game worldwide. Whether this sort of thing does that is an "iffy" proposition. It probably will sell more t-shirts and caps, and the presence of Shaq on the international scene no doubt offers some kind of boost for the NBA overseas,

but in the end it is difficult to see what it does for the game itself or for the American image abroad.

The other interesting development in connection with Dream Team II also came with the Shaq, when he refused to accept his all-star trophy which was in the form of a Coke bottle. Shaq has been criticized for this on the grounds that he let commercialism get in the way of his honor as an all-star. It was in some ways a replay of Michael Jordan at Barcelona and the Nike-Reebok issue. But just maybe the problem is not with the players, but with the event itself, which has allowed itself to be commercialized to such a point that an all-star trophy comes in the form of a commercial icon with international recognition. The fact is that Shaq is paid several million for his Pepsi endorsement, and he should not be put in this position by the promoters of these games who have sold themselves to the highest bidder.

Or perhaps there should be a Coca Cola Dream Team and a Pepsi Dream Team who could square off in a game presented by Bud Light. All of this is nothing more than a tribute to the crass materialism that now totally dominates sport across the globe. Check your logo at the door.

On another front there is a new candidate to replace Jimmy the Greek and Al Campanis as America's expert on race and sport. In comments rivaling the Greek and the Dodger, Jack Nicklas, the Golden Bear, Golf's near immortal, said that the lack of black golfers is due to the fact that "Blacks have different muscles that react in different ways." Jack says that his comments were taken out of context and then in a clarification said that "kids today are gravitating to the sports that best fit their body and their environment." Not much of an improvement, Jack.

Nicklaus also denied that superstars such as he and Arnold Palmer might have been a positive influence in bringing blacks into golf if they had spoken out against racism in the sport. In fact he feels that racism has almost nothing to do with the lack of black golfers on the tour, adding "I think the opportunity is there for young black kids to play golf..." No doubt Nicklaus feels this way because of the location of so many golf courses in America's inner cities.

Unfortunately Jack made these comments in an interview in a Vancouver newspaper, not on "Nightline" or the "CBS Evening News," and so he didn't receive the proper acclaim for his expertise.

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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