

11-3-1999

On Sport and Society 11-03-1999

Richard C. Crepeau
University of Central Florida, richard.crepeau@ucf.edu

 Part of the [Cultural History Commons](#), [Journalism Studies Commons](#), [Other History Commons](#), [Sports Management Commons](#), and the [Sports Studies Commons](#)
Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety>
University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Commentary is brought to you for free and open access by the Public History at STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in On Sport and Society by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "On Sport and Society 11-03-1999" (1999). *On Sport and Society*. 540.
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety/540>

SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
NOVEMBER 3, 1999

There are several items to note in this potpourri of sports which has been delayed while I try to recover from the pain of watching the Atlanta Braves get turned every which way but loose by the New York Yankees. Realistically I did not think the Braves would beat the Yankees but I did expect to see a competitive six or seven game World Series.

Instead this World Series was like a quick surgical air strike but with greater precision than usually displayed by the military. The Yankees were nearly flawless in every aspect of the game and enjoyed considerable advantage over the Braves in relief pitching, fielding, and hitting--especially that category known as timely hitting. All the Yankee strengths were displayed and all the Braves' weaknesses were magnified.

It would not be difficult to conclude that this Yankee team under Joe Torre is one of the best ever. Back to back Series sweeps, twelve straight series wins, three championships in four years, and a playoff record over the past two years of 22 wins and three losses establishes a level of dominance out of which legends are made.

The unfortunate thing is that this World Series may turn out to be best remembered for its one major piece of minor drama, if we can dignify the Rose-Gray incident with that label. First, let me say that I don't like Pete Rose and don't care if he is ever in the Hall of Fame or any other hall; and I don't like Jim Gray and if there were any standards of dignity in broadcast journalism Gray would never have appeared on your TV screen.

Second, Pete Rose should not have been at this event. He should have been excluded from the voting for the All-Century Team. He also should not have been voted to the team because there are any number of outfielders in baseball history who belong on the All-Century list before Rose. Who in their right mind would choose Rose over Clemente or Musial?!

My own feeling is that Pete Rose was voted to this team, not because people thought him better than Clemente or Musial or whomever, but because many people who are Pete Rose fans saw this vote as an opportunity to have their

voices heard on the Pete Rose issue. Many fans out there feel he has been treated badly by baseball, that he should not be banned by baseball, and that he belongs in the Hall of Fame. This was their chance to send Bud Selig a message. As soon as I saw that Rose was on this list of nominees I knew he would be voted to the team. This was the fan's Hall of Fame vote.

So back to Jim Gray's marvelous moment with Charlie Hustle. Jim Gray has a history of ambushing interviewees and I was not surprised in the least by what happened. Gray had every obligation to ask his initial question about the gambling, the answer to which he already knew, and he knew would not change. What was inappropriate was the continuing prosecutorial tone taken by Gray and his refusal to move on. I really thought, and indeed hoped, that Rose might deck him on the spot and thus end any further discussion for the moment. This would also have ended discussions about Rose's future with baseball.

There is a clear difference between hard questioning and badgering, and it is clear that Jim Gray does not understand that difference. It is also clear that the officials at NBC who have watched him develop this style and have reward it, do not understand that difference either. A look at the Howard Cosell special this week might prove instructive.

If Jim Gray wanted to ask difficult questions about Pete Rose and his presence on the team and the ovation he received, he would have been better served by questioning the Commissioner of Baseball. If Jim Gray wanted to better serve the moment he might have interviewed such minor figures as Willie Mays, Ted Williams, Hank Aaron, Stan Musial, or Whitey Ford, and all those others present that evening who collectively made it such a distinguished gathering of baseball talent. Instead Gray gave us a petulant and silly badgering of Pete Rose and tarnished the evening. The subsequent reaction to Gray's blunder in turn tarnished the memory of this World Series.

Last week I heard from a former colleague asking me if I had seen the new Nike commercial in which Randy Moss and Jason Williams are featured as bad boys now made good. Did I think it appropriate to offer Moss and Williams as role models, I was asked. After looking at the commercial several times, and after going back to look at Randy Moss'

past, and reviewing in my mind the checkered record of Jason Williams I can only wonder at Nike's decision.

I am sure that Nike officials would argue that both of these new stars at the professional level have paid their dues. Moss and Williams are now on their good behavior and they should be admired for these changes. I would not argue with that proposition, but I would argue that it is a bit early to assume that all is well with these two young men. Being convicted of assault, smoking dope, and being thrown off teams and out of schools is hardly a behavior pattern to be admired or emulated.

None of this seems to have been an issue for Nike as the commercial featuring Moss and Williams, high school teammates, clearly glories in their troubled past and suggests that it is related to their current glory. They are shown in action from past and present as Waylon Jennings sings the theme from "The Dukes of Hazzard:"

Just two good old boys, never meanin' no harm...
Beats all you never saw, been in trouble with the law
Since the day they was born.

Role Model This!

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.

Copyright 1999 by Richard C. Crepeau