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IOC and Bribery - Bobby Knight and His Temper

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
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This week there was a full moon an astronomical event with which strange occurrences often coincide. So perhaps it was no more than lunar destiny that produced a rash of tortuously argued and ludicrous decisions by alleged intelligent people. Or perhaps it was just another case of arrogant defenders of privilege rationalizing themselves silly.

The first case involved the clearing of Kevan Gosper of Australia by the IOC in a bribery scandal involving the Salt Lake Olympic Committee. Gosper had been charged with accepting bribes in the form of a ski trip for his wife and child in 1993, and accepting bribes in connection with an official trip that he made to Utah in 1995. The IOC had determined his innocence before the investigation began and dutifully reported that predetermined innocence this week. The judgement strains all credulity.

Gosper in the last two weeks added to the luster of his reputation for claiming privilege when he allowed his eleven year-old daughter to bump another girl as the first Australian bearer of the Olympic torch as it began its journey to Sydney.

A fifteen-year-old Australian-Greek girl had expected to be the first to carry the Olympic torch in Greece, but Australia's leading Olympic Pooh-Bah had other ideas. For two days, Gosper maintained he did nothing wrong and feigned astonishment at the harsh reaction in Australia. In his apology he insisted that he had not sought this honor for his daughter, but rather the Greek Olympic Committee had made an offer and he accepted it. He was sorry that there was a perception that he had received a special favor.

But then if he wasn't guilty in the earlier charges why would he think that anyone would question this action? After all people have been giving him gifts and favors for years. It came with the territory.

The second major judgement rendered this week came from the Board of Trustees and the President of Indiana University in the celebrated case of Professor Robert Knight. After examination of an extensive rap sheet of bullying and

outrageous behavior including the choking of a player and throwing a potted plant off the wall behind a secretary in the Athletic Department at IU, the Board of Trustees and President found that Professor Knight had done nothing that would warrant dismissal.

In rendering the decision which includes a three-game suspension and a \$30,000 fine placed on Knight, President Miles Brand assured us that: "We have established tough, specific guidelines to send a clear message that abusive and embarrassing behavior will not be tolerated." This of course is said in the face of over twenty years of embarrassing and abusive behavior by Professor Knight.

In addition it has been made perfectly clear to Knight that if he has physical contact with another player or university employee he will be dismissed from his position. Physical contact with Puerto Rican security guards or drunken and loud-mouth fans while stuffing them into trashcans is apparently not included in this get-tough policy of "zero tolerance." It would seem that anything short of physical contact, such as verbal abuse, will not bring immediate dismissal. Rather it is likely it will bring another Board of Trustees investigation by longtime defenders of Professor Knight.

"No incident by itself rose to the level of termination," said President Brand. Choking a student certainly wouldn't qualify. Verbally abusing secretaries, university officials, athletic department personnel, the press, opposing coaches, officials of the game, or anyone coincidentally in the Knight line of fire, apparently is acceptable behavior at Indiana University. In addition Brand and the Trustees, perhaps the only people on the planet who might come to such a conclusion, indicated that there was no history or pattern of behavior that could be detected in the actions of Professor Knight.

The Trustees also noted that Knight had never before been given a code of conduct or any guidelines for his behavior. In all fairness then how could we expect Professor Knight to act like a decent human being?

If I am ever accused of wrongdoing all I ask is that I be judged by a jury that is convinced that I would and could never do anything wrong, like those who judged Professor Knight.

A few days prior to the "judgement" Professor Knight issued what the spin-meisters at IU called an "apology." What it was of course was another indication of Professor Knight's arrogance and his general contempt for all those around him.

He said that he knew he had a problem with his temper and was trying to get a handle on it with the help of his wife who left little notes around the house. But said Knight, it is so so difficult to control ones emotions especially when you know you are right.

In a recent study on competence and incompetence researchers found that the most incompetent people in our society have no idea of their incompetence. In fact they are convinced they are right and those around them are wrong.

One can only wonder when Professor Knight last experienced the sensation of self-doubt. It may have been around the same time that Kevan Gosper turned down a perquisite.

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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