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Sports Drafts: The New Non-Events - XFL Championship - Mark Cuban and others

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
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Hasim Rahman is the new heavyweight champion of the boxing world, or at least that part of the boxing world governed by the IBF and WBC, whoever or whatever they may be. The only relevant questions here are: what does this mean for Don King? Who is Hasim Rahman? And where is Mike Tyson?

It has been an interesting weekend in and around sport.

Is there a bigger non-event in the world than the NFL Draft? Hours and hours of television filled with hours and hours of banal conversations and profiles of vacuous adolescents while waiting for the clock to signal the time for the next pick. Not even "Survivor" subjected its contestants to this sort of torture.

It is a tribute to something or someone that the NFL draft has become a bigger non-event every year, and that it now has led to the televising of the NBA Draft, the NHL Draft, and yes the WNBA draft. Perhaps this is all just an illusion, perhaps it is simply a tribute to the desperation of cable television programmers for "content," or perhaps it truly is a sign of the collapse of Western Civilization. Which is your "final" answer?

The fact that the XFL championship game took place last night near the end of Day One of the Draft, was a fitting programming reminder that those not drafted as well as many who were, are headed to this latest outpost of sports oblivion. That the game took place in Los Angeles, the City of Broken Dreams, where Has-Been's, Would-Be's and Never-Were's drew a crowd thirty-percent smaller than the season opener, could not have been more fitting. This gem of a game capped off NBC's grand illusion as "Smash-mouth" football produced a dismal 34-6 game highlighted by four "smash-mouth" field goals.

It should be said that the XFL might achieve one positive result. It could mark the end of the political career of NBC's color man, Governor Blow-Hard of Minnesota. It will not do anything to damage Vince McMahon's career which entered this venture already solidly entrenched in the gutter.

Baseball joined the ranks of the bearers of bad tidings this weekend when it was revealed that players are choosing which of their teams to represent when they enter the Baseball Hall of Fame by how much money they get from the team. Wade Boggs will go in wearing the uniform of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays after spending nearly all his career as a Red Sox and winning a World Series with the Yankees. Dave Winfield, in a much anticipated announcement, said he will go in as a Padre, rather than a Twin, Blue Jay, or Yankee. Reggie Jackson entered as a Yankee despite the fact he played in Oakland, Baltimore and Los Angeles as well as New York. All three are or were being paid well for their choice. Phil Mushnick of the New York Post suggested today that by this standard Joe DiMaggio should be wearing the logo of Mr. Coffee.

In other uplifting news this week Kevin Malone, the General Manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, challenged an obnoxious fan in the stands in San Diego to a fight. Malone was defending the quiet and unassuming Gary Sheffield. In announcing the firing of Malone Dodger Chairman Bill Daly noted that Malone seemed to have a talent for getting himself in trouble with his mouth. No doubt this created Malone's bond with Sheffield who suffers from the same malady. The difference of course is the Sheffield can compensate by his on-field achievements, whereas Malone's track record as GM of the Dodgers compensates for nothing.

It is always good to see executives and owners of professional sports teams distinguishing themselves in this fashion as it sets such a good example for their players.

The most egregious example of the owner role model in action has been on display this season in Dallas. Maverick owner Mark Cuban has been able to amass over a half-million dollars worth of fines from the league offices for his actions at the games and his remarks about referees. The combination of running onto the floor, obscene gestures at referees during the games, and outbursts in post-game interviews have become a part of Cuban's repertoire. Most of this is within the wide parameters of acceptable bad taste in contemporary sportsworld. Cuban is able to continue his actions because he has more money than he knows what to do with or than is good for anyone to have.

Less amusing is Mark Cuban's recent interview with Penthouse.com in which he described his relationships with

women and his sexual peccadilloes in graphic, crude and obscene language. This has apparently opened an entirely new genre for the men's magazine as a number of other professional athletes and their wives have chosen to reveal their intimate moments and practices to public view. Exhibitionism and voyeurism seem to have no limits.

Finally The New York Times Magazine in a story on the New York Knick's today reveals the "religious" views of Charley Ward, born-again player-evangelist. Ward and others freely express their evangelical Christian grounded anti-Semitism. When called on it, Ward defended himself by saying that his best friend is a Jew. Yes, his best friend is none other than Jesus Christ.

No wonder Jeff Van Gundy complained a few weeks ago that one of the biggest problems with his team was too much chapel.

I think it's time for shower.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't need to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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