


4-25-2002

## The Bad and Ugly: Cell Phones Invade the Arena, Canadian Athem Booed

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](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "The Bad and Ugly: Cell Phones Invade the Arena, Canadian Athem Booed" (2002). *On Sport and Society*. 584.  
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety/584>

SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE  
April 25, 2002

It has been one of those weeks when the good, the bad, and the ugly have appeared on my television screen - In sports, not in the news. In two cases, the bad and the ugly, fans are at center stage.

For the merely bad I turn to a phenomenon that has been building over the past two years. It seems to have started in baseball but I have noticed this week that it is now creeping into basketball and hockey. It involves the latest toy in the American repertoire, the ubiquitous cell phone.

Have you noticed at baseball games those fans sitting behind home plate or those sitting to the first or third base side of the batter and within the background of the side angle camera shot of the batter? You know the ones. They are waving, jumping up and down, leaning this way and that as if being directed by some hidden force. It is not a hidden force. They are getting direction on their cell phone. In hockey they are sitting in the first row behind the coaches and in basketball they are in those sideline and end line positions that appear on camera. Same dance.

And what are they doing? They are on their phones speaking to someone somewhere who is watching a television and therefore can affirm their existence and give direction for proper framing. These people are the new sports nerds. They are: The Phone Phlashers.

Those on the other end of the phone affirming existence, the accomplices in this tacky mini-series, are: The Vain Spotters. I offer you a challenge to send me your names for these new characters on the American sports periphery.

They are replacing the guy on the cell phone at the urinal as my least favorite cell phone decorum violator.

The truly ugly happened Sunday in Detroit. During the playing of the Canadian National Anthem prior to the Toronto Raptors game with the Pistons the Detroit fans began to boo. Yes, boo! Coming as it did just a few days after the announcement that four Canadians had been killed and eight injured by an American bomb in Afghanistan, it could not have been uglier. (But of course it could have)

Canadians were shocked and angry. The Toronto players were highly critical of the Detroit fans and Detroit management later apologized to Canadians although that didn't come until well after the fact and on the Pistons web site. They should have taken a full page add in all the Canadian papers to apologize for the moronic behavior of their fans and to offer a thank you for the sacrifice made by the four Canadians who were killed and the eight injured by the bombing blunder.

Seeking to put a better face on matters some said that it was the Raptors being booed, not the Canadian anthem. One might like to think that, but in all my years of attending games I have never heard booing during a national anthem. If a team is booed it is during the introduction of the team. It should be added that most Detroit fans were appalled by the event.

This brings up once again the purpose of playing the national anthem before an athletic event. What exactly does the NBA or Major League Baseball or any sport have to do with patriotism? Is the anthem played to express patriotism or national unity? Or is it played so that owners and public relations officials can tie the name of their product to the flag thus exploiting patriotism for their own purposes? Is this any different than the Used Car Dealer who flies a flag bigger than New Jersey in front of his dealership?

In most cases public relations trumps patriotism. Perhaps its time to end this practice which seems appropriate on the rare occasion, but mostly out of place as a matter of routine. In fact it should never be a matter of routine.

Finally to the good. It can be found in Montreal where on Tuesday night Saku Koivu led the Canadiens to a victory over the Boston Bruins in their first-round playoff match-up. Just a few months ago Koivu was undergoing chemotherapy for cancer. He sat out the season for treatments and remained around the team to serve as an inspiration.

He has now returned to action and seems to be nearly at full strength as the Canadiens won their first home playoff game in four years. Koivu had a goal and two assists in Tuesday's affair and led the third period comeback by the Habs. He now has two goals and three assists after three games in the quarterfinal series with Boston.

Koivu is the team captain of the Canadiens and his inspirational leadership all year has now become more powerful as he returns to the ice. In Montreal it could not be a bigger story because as Canadiens assistant coach Guy Carbonneau recently reminded everyone: "Hockey is a religion here. No, it's bigger than religion. The people here would rather watch the game than go to church."

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.

Copyright 2002 by Richard C. Crepeau