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Milk, fashion, and the Love Boat

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
Milk, fashion, and the Love Boat
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It's difficult to know where to begin in this late October silly season that has produced some of the wackiest and best examples of self-righteousness by the people who claim to be 'leading' the major sports. Once again they have come forward to 'protect' our children from all sorts of evil forces loose in society.

Did you know that there is a new commercial for milk, yes, milk, that has the baseball commissioner's office in a dither? The California Milk Processor Board has produced a new promotional spot for milk in which a player is removed from a game for testing positive for a performance enhancing substance. The substance, of course, is milk.

'There is nothing humorous about steroid abuse,' said Tim Brosnan, executive vice-president for business for baseball. 'I would think that the California Milk Processor Board and their advertising agency would know better regarding an issue that threatens America's youth.'

Indeed, I too am shocked by the obtuseness of the CMPB. What's wrong with these people? Don't they know that there are certain taboos in comedy? If not stopped now, the CMPB will next be making jokes about the President of the United States, George Steinbrenner, or even the Commissioner of Baseball.

It is good to know that baseball's administrators are looking out for these dangerous developments rather than troubling themselves over the fact that team after team seems to be ignoring and circumventing the Commissioner's directive to hire minority managers. So far this post-season several new managers have been hired, a few old managers have been recycled, and the speculation surrounding other open positions seldom includes the names of minorities. Good to know, then, that the Commissioner's minions are holding the line on milk.

Meanwhile in the world of sports fashion comes other news. At Arkansas State University a basketball player was benched by the school because he refused to wear Adidas shoes. The school has a contract with Adidas, but apparently not with the player. Yes, contractual obligations are the name of the college game and these student athletes better learn that lesson pronto. After

considerable publicity, the school and Adidas backed off, apparently having embarrassed themselves enough.

The bigger fashion note came from David Stern. The NBA will now have a dress code. Described as 'business casual,' the code requires a shirt with a collar, slacks, shoes with socks, no headgear, chains, or other neck gear. Hip-hop is out, hip-boardroom is in. It is difficult to determine whether the dress code itself, or David Stern's pronouncements, or some player reactions, are the most ludicrous aspect of this flap.

This may be the most significant development in the NBA since the league airbrushed Allen Iverson's tattoos away for the cover of the league publication Hoop Magazine in 1999. As one would expect, this is all being done for the children of America who may have been sent the 'wrong message' by the prevailing fashions of the last few years. I know that seeing AI 'dressed to code' will have an immediate impact on the overall moral fiber of the young people of America, and maybe even the world.

Finally comes the National Football League, where the levels of hypocrisy over the Vikings' Love Boat adventure have been high enough to make people forget the revelations of Bill Romanowski on CBS's 'Sixty Minutes.' For those who have forgotten, Romanowski discussed his use of a massive number of pharmaceutical products, both legal and illegal, which seemed to assist him in maintaining his body in this body-wrecking sport. He said that at one point he took steroids, human growth hormones, and was even 'injected with cells from Scottish black sheep.' In short, he took everything and anything he thought would help him stay in the league by healing and strengthening his body. Romanowski added that the 'only way to survive in the NFL was to hit with overpowering strength and hatred.' I hope the youth of America was taking notes.

Romanowski's obsessive use of drugs, vitamins, supplements, and anything else that seemed like something to enhance performance, or even make performance possible, is not typical. However, it is indicative of the fact that, despite the public posturing of the NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue, the league does have as many problems in this area as in any other sport's league. Given the violence of the NFL and the pounding taken by the human body, it is even likely that the NFL has a more serious illegal substance problem than any of the other major sports.

The Commissioner's public pronouncements before Congressional committees and television cameras should be regarded as skillful

public relations rather than a report on the state of pharmacology in the NFL. No one in the press who covers the NFL has any doubt about the levels of illegal substance usage in the league, but the NFL has been able to avoid the wrath visited on baseball by its aggressive policy of self-righteousness coupled with decades of the care and feeding of politicians.

When something like the Vikings' Love Boat scandal comes along, the league goes into high gear with a public relations blitz of pronouncements on the moral depravity of the players and the determination of the league to stop it. Certainly there is no one in a NFL boardroom, or in the Commissioner's office, and there are no journalists covering the NFL, whoever did anything to match the moral degradation of the Vikings' latest fumble on Lake Minnetonka. Not even Bill Romanowski.

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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