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## The Draft, new bowls, Army, and sportsmanship

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE  
The Draft, new bowls, Army, and sportsmanship  
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This is always a difficult time of year for me. I am never sure which leaves me with a greater numbness of the brain, the NFL Draft or grading final exams. This is a question that will have to be resolved by greater minds than mine, particularly in my current mental state.

The NFL Draft is clearly the biggest non-event on the sports calendar. ESPN has created this monster by its ill- advised decision to televise the draft, and then has made it grow by incessantly hyping this non-event. If I had a dollar for every minute that ESPN has expended on the draft over the past decade I would be able to retire in luxury. If I had a dollar for every word uttered by Mel Kiper over the same time frame, I would be a billionaire.

Sports Talk Radio has picked up on the draft and compounded the cacophony geometrically. Never has so much been said by so many about so little.

The other day a colleague asked what could become the most feared question at ESPN: "If Mel Kiper is so good at draft analysis, and capable of critically grading the performance of the New England Patriots who seem to do fairly well drafting, why is Mel not working in the NFL?"

Once the draft ends and the analysis subsides, although it never ends, then it is time to look ahead. Not to the actually football season, but to next year's draft. I believe it was Tuesday that ESPN.com was already asking if three top college quarterbacks would be first round picks next year. Only an air strike on Bristol, Connecticut can save us.

In their effort to trump this madness the NCAA last week approved two new bowl games. One is the Congressional Bowl which reports say will feature Navy against a team to be determined by the most effective lobbyists in D.C. or an ACC team. I am not certain which.

The only thing to top this is that St. Petersburg (Florida not Russia), is also getting a bowl game. Because the weather is so bad in Florida in December (lovely, warm, beautiful) the game will be played indoors in the facility affectionately known as

The Can. I assume they will set the air conditioner to 20 degrees and pump in some snow to maintain the proper bowl atmosphere.

The addition of the St. Petersburg Bowl and the Congressional Bowl brings the total number of bowls to thirty-four, and if my math is correct that mean 68 college football teams will go to bowls and no doubt all 68 will be worthy of the honor. The new bowls will be played in that bowl frenzied period of the week before Christmas when everyone is home clinging to their remote controls in hopes that another bowl game will soon be here.

The chair of the NCAA Postseason Football Licensing Subcommittee actually said: "The addition of two new bowl games will only provide more quality experiences for the student-athletes, institutions and fans." Such an experience apparently was not found hidden within the bid from the Rocky Mountain Bowl proposed for Salt Lake City.

Returning to the subject of the Army's policy of allowing West Point athletes to pursue their professional sports careers rather than take up the more traditional duties of West Point graduates, an item appeared in the New York Times this week that amazed me. The Detroit Lions drafted Caleb Campbell in the seventh round and if he makes the team he will not be going to Iraq or Afghanistan with his colleagues.

Campbell said that he has heard stories about service in Iraq and Afghanistan, and then added, "In another sense, the NFL is just as much pressure. You're out there to take somebody's job. . . . We're talking about the NFL here. This is a cutthroat business."

The lack of perspective is stunning, matched only by the policy makers.

In contemplating all this, Jack Higgs, a graduate of the Naval Academy, has another suggestion on this policy:

"Thankfully there really is a lot of talent in diverse areas in these tax-payer supported schools. Football is singled out as the most significant when ironically that is the one area where such places have the least to contribute. How about tours of duty for young ensigns in the poorest parts of Philadelphia and Detroit and Los Angeles to teach basic math and science and history, and to deal with gangs, set up running and exercise

programs etc.? In some instances this might be more challenging than combat duty."

Indeed why only sport as a means of service to the nation by West Point, or any of the other service academies? Why not let the cadet choose from a number of options as Jack suggests? "Be All That You Can Be," would then have even more meaning.

There was at least one saving grace in sports this week. In a softball game between Western Oregon and Central Washington, senior Sara Tucholsky of Western Oregon hit the first home run of her college career. As she rounded first base she tore ligaments in her knee and fell to the ground. She could not go on without assistance, but the rules prohibit any teammate or coach from providing that assistance. Central Washington senior Mallory Holtman suggested that she could assist Tucholsky in circling the bases. Checking with the umpires and getting their approval Holtman and one of her teammates carried Tucholsky around the bases for the first homerun of her career.

A gesture of sportsmanship like this helps to make the rest of the week tolerable, and in fact is inspirational for all those who care about sport.

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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