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Richard C. Crepeau

University of Central Florida, richard.crepeau@ucf.edu

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
Dick's fantasy sports: NCAA, Yankee Stadium, and the Cubs
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Over the past few weeks I have heard and read a lot of very interesting things coming out of SportsWorld.

At the post-game press conferences at the NCAA tournament over the last fortnight I heard the ringmaster ask members of the press an interesting question: "Are there any questions for the student athletes?"

Charming and quaint questions tossed off in a matter-of-fact manner always get my attention. I immediately studied my television screen in search of the species in question. Indeed there were athletes sitting there. Young basketball players who needed a shower more than they needed to be asked such penetrating questions as "How did it feel when you made the three-point shot at the buzzer?"

In my NCAA Final Four Fantasy World, I want a reporter to ask the student-athlete such questions as:

- What does the term "student athlete" mean to you?
- How often do you think of yourself as a student, rather than an athlete?
- How many classes have you missed in the past month while participating in March Madness?
- As a student athlete what classes are you taking this term?
- How did you feel after you finished the last test in (pick a class from the previous question)?
- How long have you been at the university and when do you expect to graduate?
- Could you tell us what your favorite class has been since you came to the university?
- Does your head coach have any interest in your academic program other than your eligibility?
- How often have you been advised to take a less difficult class?

Of course, no one ever will pose these questions. If reporters raised such questions they would be hooted down by other reporters, called an "idiot" by Jim Calhoun, and would be barred by the NCAA from any further participation in their student athlete press conferences. And of course they would be fired by their employer.

Equally astounding, a day or two ago, I read a quote from Hal Steinbrenner about the high ticket prices at Yankee Stadium. Hal was quoted as saying, "There's no doubt that small amounts of our tickets might be overpriced." Such insight is rare among owners who have just received multi-million dollar gifts from taxpayers, but Hal apparently has an eye for the bleeding obvious, and lacks the ability to leave it unsaid.

In my Fantasy Baseball World Hal would have gotten up on the Yankee dugout and announced to the world that the seats located just in front of him were not worth \$2,500 each, and that it was price gouging to charge \$350 each for seats in the lower deck around the infield. "In light of that I am announcing that the Yankees will be accepting a 'free will offering' for each of these seats, and half of them will be held back for sale in the week prior to the game."

At that point a bright light would shine down on Hal from the area of the luxury boxes, and a voice sounding very much like that of George Steinbrenner would boom out, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well-pleased."

When you deal with the Chicago Cubs there is no need for fantasy as Cub reality is the biggest fantasy of all. I received an e-mail announcement from the Chicago branch of SABR, The Society for American Baseball Research, announcing that on Sunday, April 5, there would be an event called "Cremating the Curse."

It goes on: "Curses, real or imagined, have followed the Cubs ever since their last World Series title in 1908. That was the year Fred Merkle committed his famous "boner," and in so doing, according to some, cursed the ungracious and undeserving Cubs to their current status. Curses followed curses: the billy goat (1945), the black cat (1969), Bartman (2003). Enough already. Our authentic cremating ceremony, held on the day before the Cubs' season opener in Houston, is meant to eradicate a century of curses."

Cub fans are invited to join former players, local celebrities, and others at Michael's Funeral Home in Schaumburg between 2 and 7 p.m. Following appropriate ceremonies a "Cubbie Coffin" is to be turned over to the funeral director and the curses will be disposed of through cremation, a sort of bonfire of the vanities.

In traditional Cub fashion this event was cursed with horrible weather. There was an 80% chance of rain with a high of 40F in

what will truly be the windy city. Snow will arrive in the evening, and indeed Monday's White Sox game has already been postponed. And by the way, this event is being held to market a new book, Cubbie Blues. Cub fans must assume it will be the longest book in publishing history.

In my 2009 Cubs Fantasy Season this ceremony will prove more effective than the Tampa Rays' exorcism of the Devil, as not only will the Cubs win the National League pennant, they will go on to win the World Series.

Unfortunately this will be followed by the apocalypse, during which the ghost of Harry Caray will provide play-by-play and that of Jack Brickhouse the color.

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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