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Catching Up Part II

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE - CATCHING UP PART TWO
JULY 21, 2021

Major League baseball once again found itself among the inhabitants of the obtuse and sinister, not to mention the silly. Baseball Commissioner, Rob Manfred, having spent much of the off-season seeking the destruction of large parts of the minor league baseball system, turned his attention to more important matters as mid-season approached.

For who knows how many years, pitchers have been doctoring baseballs. Perhaps it was the open discussion of spin rates and the revelations of the use of sticky substances by the best of the major league pitchers that led Manfred to discover that something was amiss on the mound. Having suddenly made a discovery that spin rates were improving and that the sun rises each morning, Manfred decided that something must be done about the former, maybe because he couldn't do anything about the sun.

Six weeks or so ago Manfred ordered umpires to enforce the rules of baseball, an interesting notion. That, in and of itself, should offer some sort of message. No more doctoring, no more sticky stuff. Umpires would start checking for the substances wherever they might be. Now we have the spectacle of umpires using "stop and frisk" on pitchers. It looked silly, only because it was.

We are now assured that the sticky stuff is out of baseball. We have Manfred's word for it. Well, that takes care of that, at least for the next few months until some less obvious methods are developed to control spin rate. So to the Commissioner, I offer the advice of Lenin, "Be Ready."

The All-Star Game, sans sticky stuff, took place last week. This showcase for the best players in the game offers a nice exhibition and one that I generally enjoy for at least four of five innings.

Emulating his mentor, Bud Selig, Manfred found a way to mess up the game. It was a clever move. All players would be made to look as much alike as possible by requiring each team to wear

pajamas for the game. This got rid of the ugly sight of players wearing their regular uniforms and gave them more anonymity so they would not be enhancing their star power or marketability. It also made it easier for parents to insist their very young children head off to their rooms at bedtime. "See, Fernando Tatis is ready for bed, it is time for you to go as well."

It is well-known that when it comes to obtuseness the NCAA has no peer. After getting pounded for unequal facilities for the men's and women's teams at basketball's Final Four and pledging to never make that sort of mistake again, the NCAA repeated its mistake at the next opportunity. At the College World Series, the NCAA managed to treat men and women's teams unequally. No one should be surprised, as the NCAA has a very slow learning curve.

If you have any doubt about that, then contemplate the recent remarks from NCAA President, Mark Emmert, who last week indicated that it may be time for a reorganization of college sports. This brilliant conclusion came in the face of two major setbacks for Emmert and the NCAA. First, several states have passed and implemented laws giving athletes control of their Name, Image, and Likeness. This will allow the athletes to collect fees for the use of their NILs.

Second, came the Supreme Court decision in the case of NCAA v. Alston et.al. In two separate written opinions, Justice Gorsuch and Justice Kavanaugh made it clear that the NCAA could not put a cap on education related compensation to athletes for their services. Justice Kavanaugh added what appeared to be an invitation to athletes to file more suits against the NCAA, citing many different ways in which the NCAA is in violation of anti-trust law. Justice Kavanaugh berated the NCAA in very strong terms and concluded his opinion with the simple statement: "The NCAA is not above the law."

If all of this has not satiated your sports appetite, then you are no doubt ready for the Olympic Covid Games which begin this week in Japan. What these games will bring, other than enormous debt to Japan, is anyone's guess. Covid has already eliminated several athletes from the competition in several sports. An

Olympics without fans in the stands should be the most unwelcome sight of all among all those sporting events played in empty stadiums over the past eighteen months. This is not seen as a problem in the Olympic administrative halls, where no matter what happens, the Games Must Go On.

If, however, you have tested positive for marijuana, the games may not go on for you. In its infinite wisdom, Olympic authorities accept the World Anti-Doping Authority's view that marijuana is a performance enhancing drug and, therefore, a banned substance.

U.S. Olympic sprinter, Sha'Carri Richardson won the women's 100-meter race in the U.S. trials and was a gold medal favorite for Tokyo, but her positive test for marijuana invalidated the win. She could have been chosen for the U.S. 4X100 relay team, but U.S. authorities, not interested in mitigating circumstances nor legal niceties, doubled down and did not choose her for the 4X100 relay team.

In other news leading up to the Olympic Games, the International Swimming Federation (FINA) banned what has been termed the "Soul Swimming Cap" designed to be worn over an Afro, braids, and locs. The ban was announced July 2 and produced a massive negative reaction from across the swimming and sports world. FINA's rationale offers a study in racial insensitivity, cultural obtuseness, and historical ignorance. FINA has announced it is reconsidering the ban in the wake of the protests.

This will not be an end to the nonsense surrounding the Olympics, which seem likely to produce a gold medal for the Corona virus and a major dent in the Japanese budget for the next decade or so.

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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