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Coaches Behaving Badly

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE - COACHES BEHAVING BADLY
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Since the beginning of this month the news from the world of sport in the United States has been dominated by coaches behaving badly. More accurately perhaps, the behaviors could be classified as bad, worse, and worst. I will not try to classify these, but feel free to do so.

Where to begin?

It was announced this week that Mark Few, head basketball coach at Gonzaga University, has been suspended as a result of his DUI citation in early September. The suspension covers Midnight Madness, two exhibition games, and the season opener against Dixie State. How seriously does Gonzaga take Few's DUI?

Should we say Few has been suspended for three games or one game? Reports vary, although Few describes it as a three-game suspension. Luckily, he will not miss the second game of the season against Texas, a team likely ranked considerably higher than Dixie State. Gonzaga is likely to be ranked number one as the season opens.

Another interesting drama is being played out at Washington State University where the head football coach, Nick Rolovich has refused vaccination for Covid-19. At present, he is appealing for an exemption on religious grounds. State regulations require all state employees be vaccinated. The university will not allow students to register for classes unless vaccinated, but Rolovich has stood firm. Not surprisingly, this has become a divisive issue on campus and in the community. Football coaches talk frequently about the need to avoid distractions, but, in this case, the coach himself has created the distraction. It is not clear what Rolovich will do if his exemption is denied.

The past week's news in the NFL has been dominated by Jacksonville Jaguars head coach Urban Meyer. Following a heart-breaking loss to the Bengals in Cincinnati, Meyer chose to stay in Ohio rather than fly back to Jacksonville with his team. He said he wanted to spend time with his grandchildren, which he may have done, but what made headlines was the time he spent at a nightclub where he was caught on a phone video allegedly groping a lap dancer. In the NFL, this is not considered a

serious issue, but abandoning his team after a brutal loss is considered a major issue. Because of Meyer's track record of pious posturing and arrogance while coaching at Ohio State and Florida, the sports media came down hard on him. Across the league, players and coaches willingly offered quotes about Meyer's unprofessional behavior. Any punishment, if there is to be any, is pending.

Over the weekend a ten-year-old email from Jon Gruden, coach of the Raiders of Vegas, surfaced. When "Email" is part of a headline, it is certain the contents of the email are not good. *The Wall Street Journal* released the email which was sent by Gruden to Bruce Allen president of the Washington Football Club. In it Gruden referred to the NFLPA Executive Director DeMaurice Smith as having "lips the size of michellin tires." By any standards this was a shocking comment, as was the fact that Gruden felt comfortable enough to use this language in an email to an NFL executive.

The racist insult came in the midst of a lockout of the players by the NFL. At the time, Gruden was working at ESPN and not part of NFL management. He said the comment was made in anger and has apologized for it since the release of the email. Gruden also met with his team prior to the release to let them know what was coming. Gruden also used an expletive while referring to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

These revelations were followed on Monday by several more emails that have broadened the portrait of Jon Gruden. These emails were also sent by Gruden to Bruce Allen and were reported by the *New York Times*. They sealed the fate of Gruden. There was something in them to offend nearly everyone.

Gruden referred to the Commissioner as a "faggot," and a "clueless anti football pussy;" referred to a openly gay player as a "queer;" insulted several owners, coaches, and journalists; and said that Eric Reid should be fired for kneeling during the National Anthem. Some of the emails were also sent to Ed Droste a founder of Hooters, Nick Reader a founder of PDQ Restaurants, and Jim McVey an executive who has run the Outback Bowl in Tampa.

This group exchanged photos of topless women, denounced the use of women as referees, and sympathized with Allen over the Washington Football Team's cheerleader scandal. Gruden referred to then Vice-President Biden as a "nervous clueless pussy," and tossed off insults at President Obama.

When it became clear that Gruden's racist comment about DeMaurice Smith was not a one-time outburst as was first claimed, Gruden clearly had no future in the NFL. Wisely, he resigned before being fired.

Given the history of inconsistent disciplining of players, coaches, and owners in the National Football League, it would have been interesting to see what action the league would have taken. Jon Gruden saved the public from that potential spectacle.

What is perhaps most disturbing of all is what this reveals about the inner culture of NFL where coaches, executives, and others who felt free to express themselves in racist, homophobic, and misogynistic language.

Coaches behaving badly seemed to be a theme of the week in Sportsworld, but those related here are but the tip of the iceberg.

More on that later.

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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