

Ethics in sports becomes heavy issue

Gambling takes center stage Athletes' morality steps into the public arena

By Kevin MacIntosh
Reporter

Ever since the idea of sports competition was first put into effect, there has always been gambling. Medieval kings and lords would bet huge amounts of gold and silver to determine whose knight was the fittest. Although archery, jousting, and sword fighting have died out, the gambling still remains.

Gambling has been an issue in American organized sports since the early 1900's. "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, who was one of the best baseball players this country has ever seen and a member of this year's All-Century team, was banned from baseball for being suspected of taking money from gamblers in the World Series. Both Jackson and teammates showed how gambling could ruin a sport if athletes are paid to throw a game. The movie "Field of Dreams" puts baseball in a better perspective as it describes the "Shoeless" Joe Jackson story in more detail as well as displaying what makes baseball America's favorite pastime.

Recently, Pete Rose, another member of the All-Century team and the all-time hits leader, was faced with a barrage of questions about his past gambling by NBC reporter Jim Gray. Controversy emerged over the manner in which Gray confronted Rose about his gambling. Rose was banned from baseball ten long years ago for his involvement with betting; meanwhile, many athletes abuse drugs and are still allowed to play the game. Freshman Ronnie Lee Brooks agrees, "Gambling

is bad, but people exaggerate how bad it really is."

Baseball, like any other sport, is about competitiveness; not who can make the most money. Today, football, basketball, baseball and hockey players all make millions and still join new teams in search of even more money. College careers are often cut short as players seek the millions of dollars awaiting them in the major leagues. In addition to the millions players make as they go pro, many still accept bribes to throw games. Senior Leary Troy says, "Gambling is one thing, but when a player throws a game for money, that is another thing entirely." This issue is accurately portrayed in the movie "Blue Chips", as it shows how athletics are becoming more concerned about the money and less about competitiveness.

However, despite the toll it has taken on the careers of certain athletes, gambling is not always a bad thing. Many people make harmless bets with their friends all the time as to whose team will win. On the other hand, gambling can destroy lives. Many go into extreme debt due to a serious gambling problem, but this is usually caused by greed, which would take a toll on the weak gambler anyway. Whether it is at a football game or in Las Vegas, compulsive gamblers will find a way to lose their money one way or another. The only time when betting ruins a sport is when an athlete takes money to throw a game. And if an athlete makes millions and is still greedy enough to take bribes, he or she should be punished, but certainly not banished.

By Warren Kuhn
Staff Writer

In today's society one would like to think that no one is above the law. However, we see athletes committing crimes and then being quickly excused to go back to fame and freedom far too often. We can no longer afford to place these men and women on pedestals, as role models, if they cannot act accordingly.

Mike Tyson is perhaps the

most familiar case. He is a man of amazing talent in the boxing ring, but that is no excuse for his repeated acts of compulsive violence. When he was 26, Tyson served six years in prison for a rape conviction. Earlier this year he was again imprisoned for one year on charges of assault. His record of imprisonment may cause his boxing license to be revoked.

In 1995, Darryl Strawberry served a 60-day suspension for violating provisions of his drug

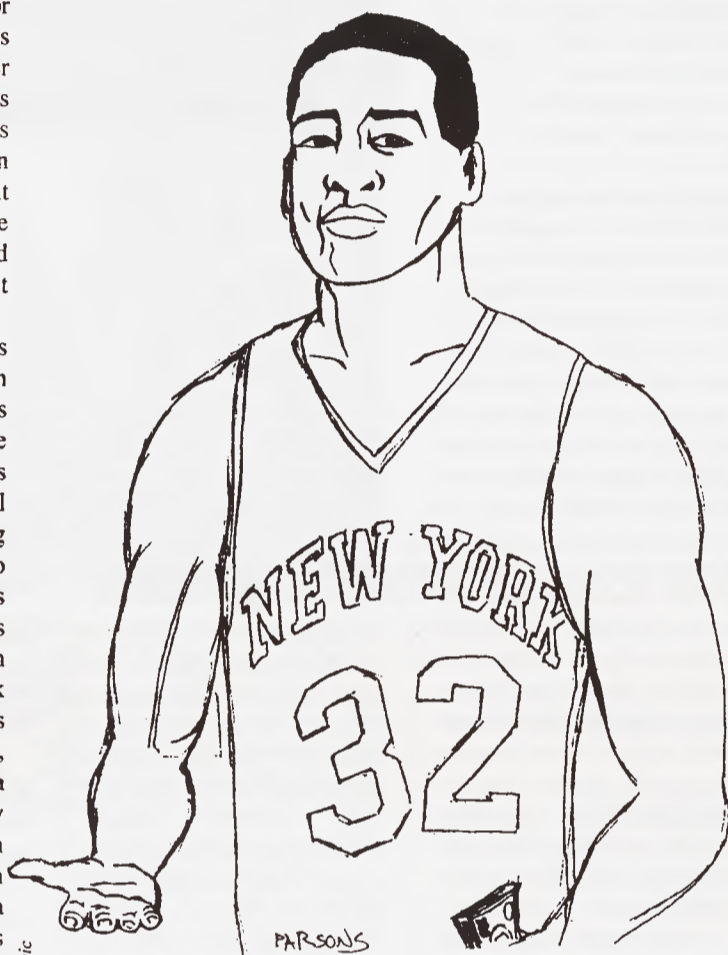
after-care program. He also admitted to beating his wife as a result of his alcohol abuse. In addition to his drug problems, Strawberry was caught with a prostitute. Later that season, when he made his debut in Yankee Stadium, fans gave him a 20-minute ovation.

Dallas Cowboy Michael Irvin was sentenced to four years probation and fined 10,000 dollars after he pleaded no contest to a felony charge of cocaine possession. Irvin was not suspended but was placed under suspicion by the NFL.

All of these men have committed acts which society deems unacceptable. If an ordinary citizen committed them, he would be hard pressed just to find a job afterwards, but fans and employers often welcome athletes back quickly.

Perhaps most disturbing is that athletes are surprised when they are penalized for their actions. In an appeal to Judge Stephan Johnson, Tyson wrote, "Jail would mean I lose everything." Tyson's lack of judgement is indeed troublesome.

Professional athletes often become role models for children. What kind of message is today's youth receiving about ethics and the consequences for going against them? Athletes should not be excused from their actions, but forced to take responsibility for them. Society cannot afford to set standards and then bend them for select individuals. If anything, athletes should take it upon themselves to surpass these standards of morality in order to positively influence their young admirers.



Parsons graphic

Professional athletes clamor for more millions

By Warren Kuhn
Staff Writer

In the past, when workers went on strike for higher pay and better conditions, others sympathized with them. But today, strikes have become cliché as athletes around the world boycott for pay increases.

On August 12, 1994, baseball players initiated what would become the longest and costliest strike in the history of professional sports. In the wake of the 234-day work stoppage baseball lost more than \$800 million dollars and cancelled the World Series for the first time since 1904. In addition, a total of 921 games were lost for the 1994 and 1995 seasons. Following the strike, fan attendance dropped more than 12 percent from pre-strike days in 1994. Effects were most clearly perceived as fans began to see "the Big Leagues as a home for selfish, spoiled players and greedy owners."

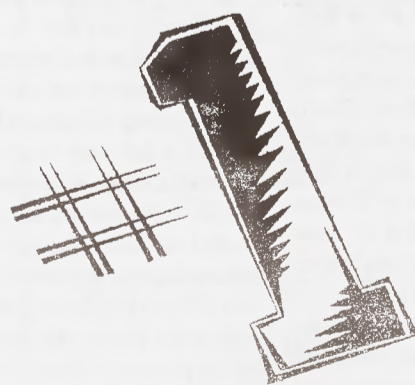
"Perhaps it is time we stopped indulging the every whim of athletes."

Strikes are not limited to just the United States alone. Early in 1998, Paraguay's chances at the World Cup were blown when the players went on strike for free transfers when their contracts ran out. In response to the situation Andres Colman, vice-president of the Paraguayan Football (Soccer) League said,

"This crisis will not do Paraguayan football any good."

When athletes strike for more money, they make no significant gains. Instead, the industry, fans, and sport itself are hurt. These athletes will eventually become their own downfall. As their salaries increase, so do ticket prices. The only thing that extended strikes and inflated merchandise bring is disinterest. Perhaps it is time we stop indulging the every whim of athletes. The amount of money being paid to athletes and to market athletics is out of hand. Indeed, how can we continue to preach education as the key to success when many wealthy athletes have scarcely finished high school? One must only look at the way professional sports are run to see that money fuels both players and owners alike. Much unlike Hollywood perceptions, athletes are no longer driven "for the love of the game."

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