

# Did the national media slam Carl Lewis because he wouldn't grant interviews?

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One of the first things they teach you in journalism school is the importance of being fair. A reporter should always look at both sides of a story, and he should not report something -- or even suggest it -- unless there is plenty of evidence to support the claim.

Those rules were badly breached in Los Angeles during the recent Olympic Games. Carl Lewis, a gifted young black man who is the greatest track star since Jesse Owens, was all but slandered by a hostile press that repeatedly suggested that Lewis is a homosexual.

That was the nastiest thing the virtually all-white media had to say about Lewis, but there were other unpleasanties. The press, for instance, also wrote that Lewis appeared to be an

egotistical punk who is interested only in himself.

Perhaps some of those things are true, but most are mere assumptions. The fact of the matter is that Lewis angered the press by refusing to bow to every call for an interview.

Lewis decided he would control his access to the press and that he would say what he wanted and no more.

Well, the media got one big load of that and said to themselves, "We'll show this so-and-so. He can't treat us that way."

Soon afterwards, ugly rumors began surfacing about Lewis' personal life.

Let's take the homosexual rumor first.

From all I can tell, no one has ever spotted Lewis in an embrace with another man or seen him

entering a gay bar in San Francisco. No one even seems to know how the danged rumor even got started. In a lengthy feature story on Lewis, *Sports Illustrated* jumped on the issue, and Lewis emphatically denied in the article that he was gay.

Terrific. That, however, is what every reader would expect Lewis to say, so there are a bunch of people who came away from that article figuring that, by golly, Carl Lewis is gay.

This is the kind of rumor that is almost impossible to put to rest. Thanks to mostly-white media that suddenly appeared to turn racist, there will be whispers about Lewis' sex preferences for years to come.

One other thing comes to mind here: What difference would it make if Lewis were gay? The way I see it, a man's sex life is his own

business.

But, because Lewis wasn't Mr. Nice Guy, because he told more than one white sportswriter where to go, the collective press arose with all its might and started what essentially was a campaign fueled by a vendetta.

Shame on them. If an athlete chooses to be difficult with his fans and the press, then that should be reported. But the media should stick to just reporting the facts.

To get angry and then begin reporting innuendo after innuendo is senseless and childish. In Lewis' case, it is also racist.

What we have is a bunch of grown white men bellyaching because a young black superstar won't do things their way.

More power to Carl Lewis. May he continue giving the media a hard time.

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