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# Karl Douglas and pure carpe diem for the day

"I try not to take life too seriously. You're not going to get out of it alive anyway"—Karl Douglas

Now who in the hell is Karl Douglas? Just forget the name, it really doesn't matter. It also doesn't matter that Karl Douglas is the first black rookie quarterback ever to direct the Baltimore Colts to an exhibition loss.

What counts is that Douglas said what he did when he did. It was just after the Colts, with Douglas as the starting quarterback, had been hung out to dry, 33-3, by the Washington Redskins earlier this month.

Picture the scene. There's this black guy Douglas, coolly sipping a coke in the corner of the locker room while a bunch of sweating reporters wait for him to go to pieces. He's just a kid in his early twenties who's just been destroyed in his first NFL start. He's supposed to curse himself, stare blankly at the floor and just hope the coach gives him one more shot.

But Douglas is different. He has done his very best, he didn't stop trying, at

least, and he knows he'll be back. He also knows the score, and it's not 33-3.

Karl Douglas alienated and infuriated a few people by what he said, but the fact remains that too many people take sports too seriously. Not everybody has to or needs to.

The players have to. The pros are paid fabulous salaries in return for professional results, so maybe Douglas should have taken the game more seriously. A little levity goes a long way in the NFL.

But Carolina athletics is not the NFL, and sports at UNC is what we're concerned with. The games you watch, the players and coaches that you see and hear are there strictly for your viewing pleasure. Big time college football and basketball got that way because people like you will lay down good money for whatever it is you get out of watching young men play games with balls.

And you won't pay up unless the programs that the Athletic Department and the coaches are selling is a productive one. People like nothing better than paying to see a winning team win, but they'll do everything possible to avoid

watching a loser lose again.

Thus the coaches can be excused if they fail to take the game with a grain of salt. They are paid to do one thing—and that's to win. So think before you condemn a coach for doing everything within his power to win. Instead, blame the money-motivated entertainment conglomerate of the college game that gives him no other choice.

And what about the players? Do they want to win because the coach tells them they do or because busting their guts alongside a close-knit group of human beings in a successful cause, any cause, is an unforgettable experience? Or maybe it's all for the grant-in-aid, the exposure, pressure from the folks back home or maybe, just maybe, because they like what they're doing.

Regardless of the motivation, players are entitled to a few pleasures and rewards along the way. At game time, though, they play for keeps. That's the way it is.

Now about you, the fans. For you, it's purely *carpe diem*—seize the moment. Sports offer an exciting, stimulating

alternative, an outlet into a vicarious world of cheering, cursing and second-guessing. Unlike the coaches and players, you can take the game or leave it. You're the game's master, not vice versa.

This is the essence of spectator sports. It means you automatically share in the tension, the drama, the hilarity and even the excruciating dullness that only an athletic event can produce.

You can seize the moment by reading inane press brochures while the game is being played. By pulling for the old school colors because Uncle Harvey from State gives you a six-point spread no matter who the opposition is and then says "You need all the help you can get."

Or by spending a long afternoon on the top row at Kenan Stadium because the crowd across the field changes color in the sunlight when you're stoned.

And if seizing the moment means vomiting Kentucky Fried Chicken and Seagram's Seven over the rail because Duke scores in six plays from its own 38, well, do that too.

As for us, the sportswriters, we have a choice, too. We can take sports seriously

when a sober, straightforward report is essential, but we won't forget that sports are played for the fans. We'll take the world of sport for what it is—a powerful diversion, but not a matter of life and death.

We'll provide the facts, along with the usual opinions and the sometimes unavoidable biases. You can swallow it whole, ignore it all, or take from it only what you want to.

For readers who dislike leads, quotes,

predictions and analogies, we'll use as many line scores and box scores as possible on our pages. We'll have plenty of pictures, too, but no cheesecakes, and mug shots only when necessary.

Most importantly, we'll keep in mind what an old sportswriter once told me. "Son," he said, "you'll keep everything in its proper perspective if you just remember this: Athletics is sports and sports are just games."

And games are fun.

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