

Dangerous Dibble, mysterious Monica overshadow Jordan's example, wreck fan's summer

Back in June, when Michael Jordan headed for Disney World, I felt as if all walked off the basketball court and was good in the world of sports. A

genuine American Hero had reached the pinnacle of his profession with dignity and integrity. Tears of joy ran down my cheeks.

Well, it's now August and tears of shame sting my eyes as I reflect on the summer of discontent in professional sports. The positive example set by Jordan has been overshadowed by the nauseating behavior of stars in numerous sports.

Baseball fans, for example, must be asking, "Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?" as they watch Cincinnati Reds reliever Rob Dibble do his Terminator impression on the baseball field.

Eric David
Staff Writer

He began the summer by firing a fastball behind Houston Astro Eric Yelding's head. Not much later, he flung a ball into the stands after a game and hitting a fan in the arm.

The next day Dibble apologized, saying that he didn't mean to hit anyone. Come on, Rob. You throw a ball 350 feet into stands filled with 25,000 fans and claim that you didn't mean to hit anyone? I guess he was aiming for an empty seat.

Dibble followed that up by playing dodgeball with Chicago Cub Doug Dascenzo. The only problem was that

Dascenzo was "it" and didn't know it. Dibble, after giving up consecutive doubles, was in no mood to field a bunt by Dascenzo. So the Reds pitcher picked the ball up and tossed it directly at the Cub outfielder.

Again, Dibble claimed innocence. This time he said that if he really wanted to hit Dascenzo he would have hit him in the head. Good one, Rob. That'll end the controversy.

Its unfortunate that the accomplishments of classy players like Cal Ripken and Cecil Fielder are being pushed to the rear by the childish antics of a headcase like Dibble. He's now seeking professional help, but I think a Nolan Ryan fastball to the forehead would be more effective and much cheaper.

Women's tennis wasn't immune to the "brat syndrome" either. Tennis offi-

cialists thought they had another Chris Evert when 17-year-old Monica Seles swept the Australian and French Opens to begin the year. Not only was Seles a dominating player, but she had the charisma that Steffi Graf and Martina Navratilova lacked.

Then, days before Wimbledon, Seles withdrew from the tournament without comment. Was she hurt, tired, allergic to grass? No one knew because she refused to say. London tabloids decided that she had to be pregnant.

All Seles had to do was make a 30-second statement explaining her absence and end the speculation. This would have been too easy, though, and more importantly, it would have kept her out of the headlines.

The rumors continued until July, when Seles showed up at an exhibition tournament in Mahwah, N.J. As she collected the \$250,000 paycheck, Seles explained that a stress fracture had been bothering her all summer.

She evidently reinjured the leg taking the check to the bank because she decided to skip the Federation Cup tournament. Her absence made her ineligible to compete in the 1992 Olympics. Seles' childish insistence on secrecy could be blamed on immaturity. But skipping the Federation Cup can only be explained as greed or stupidity.

It's time for spoiled stars like Dibble and Seles to follow the example of Jordan who is a role model on and off the court. Not only are Dibble and Seles hurting themselves, they are hurting their sports as well. Baseball and tennis officials need to show star athletes that obligations to a sport extend beyond the field of play.

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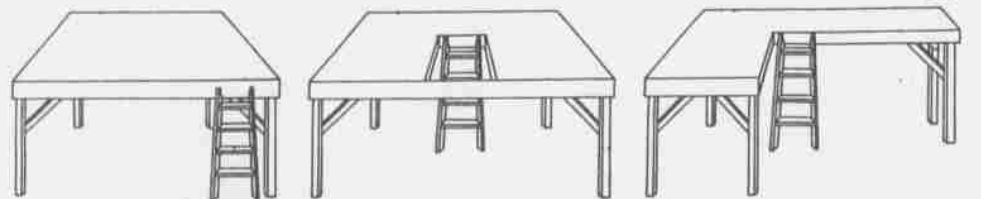
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