



MAYBE FORREST GUMP WAS RIGHT

By Kerry Schmidt 05-22-2005

One of the many great lines from the wonderful movie, "Forrest Gump," was "Stupid is as stupid does." I believe that means that you are stupid if you do stupid things. Now I know I wrote how dumb and dumber some were in the sports world a couple of weeks ago, but the amount and level of stupidity within this particular business arena never ceases to amaze me. I mean, it staggers the mind that the people who run the multi billion dollar businesses that are sports, appear to, A, have absolutely no functioning brain cells left what-so-ever, and/or B, have never heard the age-old cliché, "history repeats itself."

Exhibit A. The National Basketball Association.

It was announced last Wednesday that talks have broken off between management and the players union on a new collective bargaining agreement. Both sides say that "at the moment, a lockout (on July 1, the day after the current agreement expires) seems unavoidable."

More idiotic quotes from millionaire idiots later, but just look at the past history that these pillars of wisdom fail to heed.

In 1982, the NFL was rapidly becoming the most popular sport in America. Then, they went on a 57-day strike. Replacement players were used and bad blood was brewed between players, fans and management. The NFL is now unquestionably the No. 1 sport in America, but historians of such important nonsense say that strike "set the league back 11 years."

In 1994, just before the All-Star break, MLB went on strike. At that time, baseball was at its highest level of popularity in over 40 years. The Giants' Matt Williams had 39 home runs at the All-Star break and the buzz was would he break Roger Maris' record.

We'll never know, because the rest of the season and World Series was wiped out, something that had never happened in MLB before.

It was not until 1999, when Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa raced to break Maris' record that the sport returned to a modicum of its past glory. Even with that great year, and up to today, with the steroid stuff, baseball is still 13% behind in popularity from where it was in 1994. As Bud Selig and MLBPA chief Don Fehr said a short while back, "we must never let that happen again. It almost ruined our sport."

Then last year, the entire 2004-2005 NHL season was cancelled, due to strike/lockout. That was the first time an entire season of any major sport was cancelled.

But as I have said before, the NHL can hardly be called a major sport.

Their TV ratings were less than one half of one percent of viewers! ESPN substituted celebrity bowling (even featuring some hockey players), a sports adaptation of "The Newlywed Game and took an ESPN producer, Howie Schwab, put makeup on him and aired "Stump the Schwab," a sports trivia show. The ratings for these substitute programs more than doubled those for NHL telecasts.

ESPN has until June 1 to exercise their rights to continue to televise the NHL. No word yet, but is there a snowball to be found anywhere in hell?



The NHL just may have committed suicide.

Now I'm just a dumb old sportswriter, but my undergraduate degree was in history, so the above three "lessons" kinda tell me that the NBA just may be heading down a dead end street.

TV playoff ratings this season are off 11%, and some say only the Shaq-turned-Dwayne Wade-into-superstar, and the rise of Miami versus the fall of LA and Kobe is the only reason they are not lower.

Now some promised quotes from the brain surgeons that run the NBA. A couple weeks ago, both sides were "optimistic," but Wednesday, Deputy Commissioner Russ Granik downgraded the situation to "hopeful," then Thursday, he said they were "alarming." Granik added, "We've gone backwards the last few weeks. It's difficult to see how we can get where we need to be (by July 1)."

And at press time, there are no talks scheduled.

Back in April, union leaders and players' agents met and stated they did not want the guaranteed contracts to be shortened from seven years to five. So last week when the league management sounded the alarm, they referred to the union leader meeting with the agents.

Now, it gets nasty. Union chief, Billy Hunter, who is black, told ESPN that referring to the players' agents meeting was "a racist move by the league."

Referring to a similar situation seven years ago, Hunter said, (Then) David Flak and Arn Tellum were orchestrating (everything). "(Like then), I think it is repugnant and offensive, the fact the inference is that me, as a black man, cannot operate an institution such as the union without having some white man oversee and (legitimize) whatever it is I'm supposed to be doing."

So, sports fans, we have the four major sports, whose total dollar value combined would be about the same worth as the total economy of one of the top 25 nations, each, at best shooting itself in the foot, and perhaps at worst, committing hari-kari.

And, I remind you, all these big bucks businesses are run by very rich individuals who pay themselves exorbitant sums of money.

Obviously, these rich people choose to ignore past history. So, I guess Forrest was correct. When you act totally stupid, you are stupid.

Thus, the management types who make millions, plus the players who make many more millions, should be forced to watch "Forrest Gump."

One quick final, but funny "stupid is" note. Vikings running back Onterrio Smith was detained at Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport last month after finding white powder in his luggage.

Turns out the white powder was dried urine, part of a kit called "The Original Whizzinator"(GREAT NAME!), something created to foil tests for illegal drugs.

Police released Smith after confirming the powder wasn't illegal. Headline: "Dried pee not illegal." Film at 11:00.

Puck Technology of California makes the Wizzinator, and its web site lists testimonials on the success of beating drug tests. Costs \$150, not including dehydrated urine and heating pad. Ah, OK.

I wonder if the employees who make the dried pee will be locked out by management.