



## THE RECIPE FOR TODAY'S SPORTS?

By Kerry Schmidt 08-07-2005

The age old saying, “there’s no ‘I’ in team” is still often heard. But there is a “me” in there and they stand for money and ego. Using the wicked witch’s brew, mix in the “I” (of newt), toss in a huge helping of greed and you have the major ingredients for sports: Money, ego and idiocy. Yes, there are some good tasting tidbits in the sports world, but they do not get nearly as much media coverage as the above recipe. I will give the good guys their due later on in this column, but let’s look at the stew that is today’s staple for sports. ‘It’s all about the money.’ Virtually all players tell us, “It’s not about the money.” BS! If it wasn’t why do so many players with existing contracts hold out for a new one? And why do so many charge \$100 or more for an autograph? Terrell Owens, the Eagles star WR, is my main example. After forcing SF to trade him and spurning Baltimore, he got what his ego demanded, a contract with Philly. Now granted, the 7-year contract he signed last year was for a paltry \$49 million, but he huffed and he puffed to get his wish to play for the Eagles, and he now tells us how much he is underpaid and has made all sorts of threats about what he may do if his contract restructuring wishes aren’t met. There are so many stories about this type of juvenile behavior that they could fill a book, but TO is the poster boy for the recipe; money, ego, idiocy and greed. He even said (the 49 mil) was barely enough to take care of his family. I don’t know anything about his family, but give me 49 mil and then try and find me. Outta here, baby. Some pure idiocy. Raphael Palmeiro was the first super star to test positive for steroids. Remember in May when he so soundly told Congress “I have never taken steroids, period.” The drug he test positive for was stanozolol, and experts say it is one of the easiest to detect in a urinalysis. Idiocy! His comment was that he did not knowingly take an illegal substance. Right! This news broke last Monday, and the media treated it like it was the World War III. All the problems in the word today, and this story was on the front page of nearly every newspaper in the country and the top evening news story. Hey, even the media needs to get in on the idiocy part. Enough of the ugly. But since the topic is money, let’s look at some of the top 50 highest paid athletes. NOTE: American athletes only. Grand Prix champ, Michael Schumacher of Germany, if included, would top the money list at 90 mil. But it’s not just the amount, what’s interesting is part how it is earned. Then, instead of all the greed and egos, let’s see which athletes do something for others with their riches. Tiger Woods topped the list with \$ 86 million last year. But, showing what a great smile and media-friendly attitude can do, only 6 million came from golf earnings and 80 mil



## OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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came from endorsements. Thus, 93% of his earnings came from telling us which products he likes. He is truly the most sought after commodity.

A few others are likewise in the money from endorsements.

Andre Agassi only made a little over 1 mil playing tennis last year, but he took in nearly 45 million endorsing stuff. That's a 95 % ratio.

Same for Phil Mickelson – 6-plus mil from golf, 21 mil from ads. Also, LeBron James. A tad over 4 million for basketball, 24 mil pushing products.

NASCAR's Dale Earnhardt JR. may be having a tough year behind the wheel, but he took in 20 million last year to go along with 7 million in race earnings.

Serena Williams is another 90 percenter (91), with 2 mil from tennis and 20 from endorsing stuff.

Another NASCAR media darling is Jeff Gordon. 6.5 mil to drive, 15 mil to talk.

But Lance Armstrong is the percentage king, with 97% of his 18 mil coming from endorsements. And that was last year, before he won his 7<sup>th</sup> straight Tour de France.

At the bottom of the list, and thus obviously hardly able to care for his family, is St. Louis Rams' OT, Orlando Pace, with a welfare amount of only 14 million.

And a number of athletes actually give back to the community, in a big way.

Agassi, through his charitable foundation, gave over 11 million away last year. NOTE: These amounts were from their tax returns, and parts were raised by them, parts were donated themselves.

Armstrong last year generated over 5 mil from his foundation, but to date, just through his sales of those yellow cancer bracelets, has donated over 70 million to cancer research.

And he has said that now that he is retired, he will devote full time to his cancer work.

Tiger raised 1.5 mil, and Mario Lemieux, Derek Jeter, Alonzo Mourning, Gordon, Val Skinner, Doug Flutie and Mike Hampton have each raised a half million or more.

Now, talk about a sweet deal. Barry Bonds, the SF Giants home run king, will earn \$19 million for doing nothing! Where do I sign up for that gig?

Of interest also, is Shaquille O'Neal, the Miami Heat Center. He agreed to take a monster pay cut this year to help his team with the salary cap, so they can sign some free agents.

He was scheduled to earn 35 million this year, over 10 mill more than the next closest NBA'er, but he restructured his contract, five years at 20 mil per, or 100 million bucks.

Hey, I wonder if his family can adapt to only 20 mil this year.

Note on Shaq. He also does a large amount of charity work, but won't release details. It is estimated he raised/donated over 10 million.

So, there you have the good and the bad of sports.

Unfortunately, we hear much more of the ugly than the good. But having covered sports for several years, they deserve all the bad PR they get.

Money, ego and idiocy. Mix with greed and you get pro athletes.