



Off the wall sports potpourri

By Kerry Schmidt July 2, 2006

'Tis the slow time in the world of sports.

Thus, you get a smorgasbord of "off the wall" nonsense.

The real world of sports does not start until the NFL kicks in.

Thus, MLB is the only real thing happening here in the good ole US of A, and we're not even to the All-Star break.

They could perhaps make it interesting if they would just quit talking about steroids so much, and on ESPN's highlights, we "must see" every home run hit that day.

Booooooring!

Ok, yes, the World Cup will be into its final four as you read this, and outside of here, millions will watch.

But it's likely that only the real diehards will tune in here.

Since I am still recovering from my near death experience, I have watched, or at least had the TV on, more games than I did in all other Cups combined.

And it's still booooooring.

Switzerland was ousted, the only team ever to lose and not have given up a goal.

'Course, they couldn't score any either. After 60 minutes of regulation and 30 minutes of overtime, the score was 1-1. So, in 120 minutes - two full NFL games, two points were scored.

You most certainly will not see that in the NFL.

Not a fair comparison, fans of soccer have told me. They said because it was a "totally different game." I said they were totally correct, which is exactly why it is so boring.

At least the referring was interesting.

There were so many bad calls that even I could tell. To prove it, FIFA has told several of the more incompetent ones that they will be sent home and not work any of the remaining games.

But by far my favorite part of the game is watching all the players go into their horrible acting jobs. I mean, if one guy gets the tiniest nick in the shins, he falls to the ground and rolls around like he's been shot. Then they bring the stretcher out, talk to him for a minute or two, after which he jumps up and continues to play.

Franz Beckenbauer, the former great German player said, "The players are faking so many injuries, they just fall over for no reason." No Oscar nominations forthcoming.

Exciting.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Speaking of acting, Joe Mikulik (no, he's not an Alaskan shoe), manager of Houston's Single A team, the Houston Tourists, went into an all-time tantrum last week, after the opposing team's Koby Clemens (yes, Roger's son) was ruled safe on a pick-off attempt at second base.

In order, he got thrown out by not one but two umps, then dived into second base, ripped the bag up and threw it into right field, ran to the mound, grabbed the resin bag and threw it into the bullpen, covered home plate with dirt, then washed it off and squatted behind home plate like a catcher. He also kicked dirt on two umpires.

After 11 minutes of Oscar-type stuff, he went to his dugout and immediately threw out several bats, almost nailing the bat boy.

And for his encore, he went into the locker room and pushed two water coolers, a chair and a batting practice screen in front of the umpires' locker room.

His initial comment? "I was in total control." Then he added, "I could get two mannequins from Sears' window and they would do a better job."

Great stuff. A real role model for the young kids he coaches.

Ok, I can't wait any longer to tell you about my favorite sports story of the week! MY MAN! The REV. himself, Jesse Jackson.

Seems the Jockey's Guild (horse racing, you idiot). fired its former manager for alleged mismanagement, leaving the Guild - which represents 1200 jockeys - a \$million in debt.

Well, sports fans, the good ole Rev Jesse said he should be co-chairman of the Guild. Hey, I'm not making this up.

I spent a few minutes researching, and the last black jockey I could find anything on was in 1912! Well at least he does remind me of a "horse's ass."

This reminded me of a few years ago when the Rev went to the Masters to help protest the lack of female members.

I commented at the time, "what the hell does Jackson have in common with a bunch of very wealthy white women?"

Get a job, you jerk!

Wimbledon has started, and Venus Williams is playing in it.

Venus and her sister, Serena, just a couple of years ago, were so far and away the most dominant players that no one else came close.

Then TV shows, movie bit parts, their own clothing line and celebrity partying took over. Had they kept their focus on tennis, they would have been the greatest ever. They may still get their act together and come back, but what a waste of talent.

Let me once again give you a trivia question. The same one I have used for 5 years.

Each year, the NCAA awards the U.S. Sports Academy Directors Cup' (formally the Sears trophy) to the Division I college that earns the most points in combined



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

men's and women's sports. Points are given for total wins, championships and excellence in their respective conferences and nation-wide.

So, which football or other powerhouse college won this year. And, it was the 13th consecutive time they have won it.

Texas? LSU? Notre Dame? Southern Cal?

The correct answer is Stanford. The same school known for its academic excellence - they were ranked 3rd among academic schools this year.

Hurts the "dumb jock" stories. Congrats.

The NBA draft took place last week. You could say it was more like the trading pit on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

Portland alone made six trades, and there were 27 in all.

Maybe I'm missing something, but each team had at least two months (from the end of March Madness) to decide on who they wanted. So why so many trades? Just good management, I guess.

Well, yesterday, the "First Tour de France sans Lance" began. The French are delighted. I mean, an "Ugly American" had come over there and won their national treasure race seven times. And they are still trying to make people believe he doped up, at least back in 1999, his first victor.

Lance won two lawsuits over this, and by all readings, they are just digging for gold.

What else do you expect from the French? The only reason one of theirs has not won it since the 70's is that their riders tend to ride backwards. Comes from their actions in the many war battles, wherein they retreated so fast and often that it became their benchmark behavior.

Sans Lance, the media pegged German riders Jans Ullrich and Ivan Basso as the top two likely favorites.

Enter baseball's pastime: Steroids. Both Ullrich and Basso were kicked out of the race Friday, allegedly being caught up the big doping scandal involving the Spanish team. They tried to include Lance, until someone reminded them that he was retired.

I watched the last couple of days of it the last 2-3 days, due to Lance. Since he's no longer competing, I don't really care who wins. As long as it is not a damn Frenchman. If it was not for us, they would be speaking German right now.

Screw 'em!

I will say this about the Tour de France. It is, without a doubt, the most physically demanding and draining sporting event in the world. No other contest even comes close.

Unfortunately, I will finish up with two sad stories.

The first, while sad, is the age-old Daryl Strawberry story. Drugs.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

I lived in Malibu, CA for 20 years, and opening day at the Dodger Stadium was a long-standing tradition with my two closest friends. Note: Many beers were involved. Sometimes, we even made it inside the stadium.

Steve Howe was a pitcher for them back in the 80's, and was rookie of the year. He was an outstanding pitcher, but, sadly, he was also an outstanding drug (mostly cocaine) consumer.

Baseball was so lax back then that Howe was caught eight times and still allowed back in. However, on his 9th transgression, he became the first and only MLB player to be banned from the league for life for drug abuse. Nine times before he is banned. Wow. Strict!

A couple of weeks ago, he ran his truck off the road in the high desert, about 150 miles east of L.A. The autopsy showed meth (speed) in his system.

Sad.

Another case involves someone I knew, Dexter Manley, an All-Pro defensive end with the Washington Redskins from '81-89 (he then played one more year with the Cardinals).

Manley was in the news this week due to his 10 hours of brain surgery to remove a cyst.

Manley was first diagnosed with the cyst in 1986, but "enough" doctors told him it was OK for him to keep playing, just have it checked every so often for growth. A good friend of mine, Mel Kauffman, was a linebacker at the same time - he willingly shows me his four Super Bowl rings, and introduced me to him.

Manley was one of his closest friends.

Manley had a substance abuse problem throughout much of his career. Mel would tell me more than once how he had to go "take care of him."

In 1986, Manley collapsed in a Georgetown shopping mall after a night of heavy drug binging.

By all accounts, he is clean now, and expected to fully recover fully from the surgery.

But here is the saddest part of his story.

Manley was a two-time All-American at Oklahoma State. Put in his five years. Mel told me the story of how one night he and his wife went to dinner with Dexter and his wife.

When it came time to order, he just laughed and told his wife, "Oh honey, you know what I like. Just order for me."

Mel was a bit surprised, but not until after a couple of incidents wherein Dexter ask Mel to read him to write-ups on him after a couple of good games. Said he did not have time.

Mel finally sat him down, and Dexter, in tears, admitted that despite his five years of college - he left as a senior, he could neither read nor write!

Mel told me, "I knew him as well as anybody, but I just did not see it."



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

His testimony before Congress about this rocked the collegiate sports world, leading to some tight rules on scholarship athletes and their academic work. I still boggles my mind that a Division I school, in a top football conference, could “simply push him through, to keep him playing,” even when he could not read or write.

No can do yet, but I’m thinking hard about my single malt.

Don’t miss next week’s column, on the newest “sport” that is sweeping the world.