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Case Study Write-Up

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Soc280

After looking through a couple articles in the Journal of Sport and Social Issues, one stood out to me in particular, an article dating back to February of 2006. Although it is from about five years ago, I found it very interesting. Football and a White Man's Burden, written by CL Cole put a new idea in my head. He writes about the Author John Carlin, claiming that football, also known as soccer in America, has become a "global religion." He discusses the way the sport, and its main superstars are idolized so much that they are almost worshiped, in a religion-like way. Carlin writes that players, such as Beckham, "offer inspiration, they offer joy, they offer...consultation for one's sorrow" (Carlin). Where I became most interested in the article is when it discusses the comparison of a sport and athlete, to a deadly disease and a doctor working for a cure. The AIDS plague is a great deal, especially in Africa, where Carlin is writing about, but it has almost been overlooked because the people are more interested in the sport of football. People that are affected or know someone affected by this horrible disease would rather worship an athlete getting paid to compete, rather than a doctor that is working towards saving people's lives. A doctor, working on the crisis, that Carlin was going to meet with, was known as an "African hero." Carlin had to make a decision of whether to write his book about this "African hero," or the sport loved by so many. The Doctor influenced him to take the great opportunity to write about football. He chose to write about a "sport that 'consoles' instead of the drugs that save lives" (Cole).

The reason I find this so interesting, is because I see it so often in American sports. Many fans of sports do not think of it as "just a sport," they think of it as a way of life. People take time

out of their jobs, and busy schedule, and spend extreme amounts of money on going to watch these sporting events. People even take off work to watch a football game on television. I am not one to blame people for doing this. I myself take sport beyond simple entertainment. I sometimes find myself judging people because they are a fan of my team's biggest rivals. When I think about it, it is foolish, but it is natural to me. Growing up surrounded by a sports family, seeing my parents and older siblings disliking the other team during an event, I naturally am trained to not like them. It is very common for the average person to be both entertained by the sport, and get wrapped up in the competitiveness of it. This article proves that it is almost too extreme as to recognize a great athlete over a man that works to save lives. I think this is something that everyone should read or at least be aware of, so they do not overlook the good deeds of the average person, because they are wrapped up in the awe of an athlete with a lot of talent.

Cole's article seems to reflect the integrationist theory. This theory focuses on social relationships between people, and people making conscious decisions on how to respond and act toward the outside world. The book, Social Issues in Sport, written by Ronald B. Woods, describes the major concerns of the integrationist theory as "People choose to participate in sport in various ways, and the quality of the experience for the athlete is important. Sport organizations should be open and democratic. Youth sport should fit the needs and desires of kids"(Woods). People choose to participate in sport either as a participant or a spectator for their own reasons. No matter the reason, whether it is the competition, the fun, or the entertainment, the people are choosing to be involved with it. Many children are brought up wanting to be a part of sport even if they are not good at any they are spectators, or fans. As discussed in class, youth sport is much more than just getting the kids on a team. It reflects the rest of their lives. For instance, a young boy is on a peewee football team. He could be the worst on his team and have

no hope, but he watches a professional football player and he is his hero. This pro football player is truly looked at as a super hero by this kid, and the kid wants to be everything like him. This begins in youth sport, because the kids are told those professional players started out just where they were. Even if that little boy's football career was cut short, he still watches the sport throughout his life, and grows up looking up to his favorite players. Again, referring back to the book written by Woods, he says, "Watching sport has become a part of the American way of life. Since the 1920s, commercial sports have steadily attracted more and more sport spectators..." (Woods).

It is clear that "Sport in American Society" is shown in this article, even though the article does not speak directly of the United States. It illustrates the affect that Sport has on our society. Many people make sport a big part of their life. They skip work, miss days of school, and spend ridiculous amounts of money simply for these sports. Sport has become a way of life in the American culture. Talented athletes become celebrities and heroes to people because they are idolized so much. Because I believe that this is what sport has come to in our world, and I am guilty of it myself, I find this article so interesting. I agree completely with what Cole is trying to speak to his readers. Using Caarlin's experience of having to choose between writing about a medical hero, or a sports hero, he shows his readers how much more sport sells than medicine. It kind of puts our awe of sports and athletes into perspective for us. We are more interested in a person that competes using their physical talents and abilities, rather than a person that is willing to devote their lives to helping find a cure to a disease such as AIDs. This is understandable, we think of athletes as celebrities because they are so famous. We tend to not hear of all the doctors names on the news that saved someone's life. These doctors jobs are important, and they sure do not get the credit that they deserve. The reason they are not getting the credit is because they are

not “famous.” The desire to know athletes is because so many people know of them, and you want to be that person that they also know. I agree with Cole in his thoughts that sports are almost a religion in our world. Sport does more than just entertain people, it teaches life lessons, which is why to me, I think that sport should be present in everyone’s live. Maybe not to the extreme of what this article makes it out to be, but to the point that people are learning life lessons and have a healthy competition between fellow sports fanatics.

Works Cited

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