

Bottom feeding in the world of sports

by Nick Canepa

The 10 worst things in sports:

1. The Designated Hitter

If nothing else, the stupidest. Growing up, I found that baseball was a game to be played by baseball players. In other words, one did more than swing the bat. The game involved defending - and even running. It rewarded those who at least attempted to do everything. Not everyone was Willie Mays, of course, but flaws also were part of the beauty of a sport basically founded on failure. Now, in the American League, we have these lummoxes brought up without bothering to learn how to play baseball (because they don't have to). The DH is a pox on the sport that will not be erased. At least the National League didn't cave.

2. The NBA Draft Lottery

If nothing else, the stupidest 1-a. Drafts supposedly were established to make the bad teams better, but then the always innovative NBA - after determining that playing basketball the proper way was taboo - came along with this lottery thing. Now, it's possible for a team with the 14th-worst record to pick first. Not likely, maybe, but possible, and it shouldn't be. If it weren't for collective bargaining, drafts would be illegal, anyway. This lottery should be, on the grounds of idiocy.

3. Barry Bonds

The first human being to make the list. Bonds is a boil the size of a baseball on his sport's neck. The game and a large part of America is out to get him, because, well, as he approaches Henry Aaron's cherished career home run record, he is thought to be doing so through chemistry and, on top of it all, he's been a jerk. Commissioner Bud Selig, who ignored the steroids issue and now suffers in its ugly muck, would like The Barry to just go away, but of course he won't. Can't say that I blame him. Selig & Co. created Barry Bonds. I'm not smart enough to say who - if anybody - is going to eventually get this guy, but it won't be baseball.

4. David Stern

The second human being to make the list. The NBA commissioner loves to take credit for saving his sport, but what, exactly, has he saved? His league is one littered with undisciplined, unschooled, rich, spoiled players, many of them unable to extricate themselves from the world of thugdom. Stern just allowed his

playoffs to be ruined by the ridiculous suspension of the Suns' Amare Stoudamire and Boris Diaw, players who did nothing but leave their feet. It's a stupid rule. Looking forward to the rest of the playoffs? By the way, the sport was saved by Magic Johnson, Larry Bird and Michael Jordan, not the overrated marketing wizard.

5. The New York Yankees

The Bronx Bombers, who recently gave 90-year-old Roger Clemens millions to pitch whenever he feels like it, represent everything that's wrong with sports in one pinstriped package. Often not thinking clearly and certainly not worrying about the game of baseball in the least, they do whatever they please, because they can afford to. The problem with baseball is not steroids or performance-enhancing drugs, it's out-of-control salaries given out by the haves. At least there's now one consolation: The Yankees stink.

6. Collegiate conference basketball tournaments

Really stupid. Not the tournaments, per se, but what they stand for. A conference tournament winner gets an automatic bid to the NCAAs. So, in many cases, the regular seasons teams have gone through are completely ignored. Why should a school be rewarded for what it did over three days rather than three months? You can include college conference baseball tournaments in this, too. Same thing. Regular-season winners should be automatics. Then take it from there.

7. Polls and the BCS (tie)

Polls are worthless. Who votes for them? Sportswriters and coaches. How many sportswriters covering collegiate athletics get a chance to watch every team play? Coaches? They're coaching. They can't see every team. Polls are a fraud. So is the elitist BCS, which stomps on the small fry and every year manages to foul something up.

8. The NHL

Does anybody in the United States care that the Stanley Cup is going on? It is, don't you know. Hockey is a great game - if you're a dentist.

9. Equipment

We're power crazy. Technology has done terrible things to tennis and golf. How I'd love to see tennis players go back to swinging wooden Jack Kramer rackets. Oh, to see the men actually rally. And the explosives they've put into golf balls and clubs. Oh, to actually see shotmaking from more than three or four players. One thing they can't make is better wood. Baseball bats break like Popsicle sticks. Jerry Coleman once told me he played an entire season with the same bat. Have to assume he hit the ball sometime.

10. Tiger Woods

Maybe the greatest of all golfers. But how can we really like somebody who makes it so hard on everyone else?

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