

Debate over turning pro colored by class

By C. Jemal Horton
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Before the young homies in the suburbs accuse me of hating, let me make things abundantly clear: I don't have a problem with golfer Michelle Wie getting paid South Carolina lottery type money before she had her 16th birthday party. Really, I don't.

The way I see it, if you possess a talent for which people are willing to pay you millions of dollars, then you should be able to receive a W-2 and do it for however long as you wish — almost irrespective of age. All that matters to me is that it's a legal occupation.

Here's what bothers me about the Wie situation, though: Our nation's ever-passionate, always-critical sports fans essentially shrugged their shoulders recently as Wie became one of the richest 11th-graders in the whole wide world.

Why does that annoy me?

Well, because many of those same American sports fans were ready to march in protest a few years ago, when Maurice Claret wanted to go the NFL as a 20-year-old who hadn't been in college three years.

It was mere coincidence that Wie announced she had become a multi-endorsement-bearing professional sports star around

the same time NBA camps opened with the last collection of players allowed to enter the league before turning 19, thanks to a new and unfair collective bargaining agreement.

Still, the contrasts in public reaction make things look bad.

People felt leagues such as the NBA were in dire need of an age requirement since all those ill-prepared high school kids were risking and missing so much in the professional ranks, but a golf prodigy just a few weeks removed from *Sponge Bob Square Pants* movies is somehow more equipped.

Please.

And, no, I'm not hinting at racial bias. After all, as a Hawaiian with Korean-born parents, Wie isn't White or Black.

This is all about socio-economics — and how being poor still usually defers your sports dreams, no matter how industrious and talented you might be.

It's malarkey.

Kids who grow up participating in sports traditionally played by the wealthy and socially respected aren't questioned when they pursue professional careers. But kids in sports dominated by the broke and disenfranchised usually are told they must wait before finally getting financially stable.

Sometimes, it seems as if this country is

determined to find reasons to keep poor people in the same miserable existence for as long as possible.

Now, I am going to mention race here for a moment, folks, but only to illustrate a statistical point:

The professional football and basketball leagues in the United States are inherently Black. Last season, while all of golf was 84 percent White, according to the Associated Press, 69 percent of the players in the NFL were Black. In the NBA, Blacks accounted for 76 percent of the players.

And, according to the National Poverty Center, the poverty rate for African-Americans is higher than any other race in the U.S. (24.7 percent, compared with 8.6 percent for Whites). Hence, poor people dominate sports such as football and basketball, while rich people lead the way in "country club sports," such as golf and tennis.

Again, the emphasis here is on socio-economics; not race. And I have yet to understand why sports dominated by poor Americans have such silly rules about age restrictions.

OK, I do understand it. And, ironically, that, too, relates to economics — the adults in college and professional sports who stand to profit the most financially from "farm sys-

tems" claim it's in the best interests of the kids to stay in school longer. Whatever.

At the same time, in other professional sports, multi-millionaire wunderkinds are allowed, if not encouraged, to take on the world.

Eighteen-year-old Sidney Crosby, considered the best hockey prospect in two decades, is being asked to revitalize the NHL; 16-year-old African-American Donald Young, who turned pro at 14, is being touted as the next great male tennis player; and Wie takes the mantle for the LPGA and, perhaps, the PGA.

I know: What about baseball?

While many young and historically poor people (see: Latinos) play Major League Baseball, the Institute for Ethics and Diversity in Sport reports African-Americans (see: America's poorest people) make for just 9 percent of big-leaguers.

But, despite that, at least you're allowed to be a poor American teen-ager and pursue baseball millions without being perceived as someone trying to cheat the system. And, hey, if you're really lucky, you might land a car commercial with the great Michelle Wie — whenever she finally does get her driver license.

C. Jemal Horton writes for the *Charlotte Post* in Charlotte, N.C.

U.N. condemns alleged burning of Taliban fighters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

KABUL, Afghanistan — Any abuses by U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan are "totally unacceptable," the United Nations said Monday after allegations emerged that American troops had burned the remains of Taliban fighters, then used the scene for propaganda purposes. Asked at a press conference about the alleged desecration, U.N. spokesman Adrian Edwards read a statement issued by the world body in May amid claims at the time that U.S. troops had abused Afghans in detention.

"Such abuses are totally unacceptable," he said. "They are an affront to the work of the international community in Afghanistan."

He said that at a later stage he would comment in more detail about television footage purportedly showing American troops burning the bodies of two suspected Taliban fighters earlier this month.

His comments came after Afghan President Hamid Karzai condemned the alleged

burning of the bodies and ordered an immediate inquiry. The U.S. military has also ordered its own investigation and U.S. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has called for the probe to be expedited.

Annan

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dor Adamantios Vassilakis said he plans to circulate a draft resolution calling for Eritrea to lift its ban on helicopter flights and vehicle movements and both countries to start discussions on their disputed border.

"We will start discussions, and we need to see how members react," he said in an interview Tuesday. "I don't see any action this week."

Annan said in a letter to the council, circulated Tuesday, that he was ready to work with the council and key parties "to bring this dangerous crisis to an end, to conclude the peace process expeditiously, and to re-establish vital humanitarian activities in Eritrea."

Students

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from Loyola of New Orleans who is at Santa Clara and says she has been warmly welcomed — and enjoyed discovering Mexican food. One of 19 displaced undergraduates at Washington & Lee, in tiny Lexington, Va., Tulane sophomore Jennifer

Comarda says she has enjoyed some aspects of small-town life, like getting to know the man who works at a local ice cream shop.

And being at Loyola of Chicago has allowed Zac Markey, who had expected to start at Loyola of New Orleans this fall, the chance to

sample some bands on the local music scene.

But make no mistake: Small and unexpected pleasures aside, being displaced is tough, for all sorts of reasons.

"I think all of us here are getting a little bit of cabin fever," said Comarda, who had

never spent more than a few days outside her home state of Louisiana. "We're so used to going to the movies and having so many opportunities in a big city, going to the mall. There's no mall here. There's a Wal-Mart." Markey says he's never quite felt comfortable at Loyola of Chicago. "I'm not getting used to anything here," he said. "I kind of just see it as getting a few credits out of the way."

People have been friendly, but he hasn't made close friends: "There's definitely a division between the Chicago students and the (New Orleans) students. They're

from two different cultures." Some, like Josh Solowiejczyk, a Tulane student relocated to the University of Pennsylvania, have done New Orleans-related charity work to keep up their connection to the city.

He has raised over \$15,000 for a children's charity by selling bracelets. Others are showing up at recruiting events for their New Orleans colleges.

But most students said they hadn't become involved with campus extracurricular activities; catching up on coursework was a higher priority.

In some respects, the up-

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Clingman

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"What, me worry?" Alfred P. Newman caricature look, George Bush is our leader. It just has to be the fulfillment of prophecy.

To give you some hope, I close with another quote: "If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them

both are others still."

Also, as the passage from Ecclesiastes 5:8 suggests, beware of the "hidden hand." In this case, that hand is firmly implanted in George Bush's back as he sits on the knee of the puppet-master.

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