

## OUR VIEW

## Poor Sports

Though it usually celebrates the best that is within us—faith, devotion, perseverance, reliance upon the human spirit—there's no escaping the fact that sports are also a microcosm of society. That is why we shouldn't be shocked when Jon Rocker, a fireball pitcher with a hot-head, launches into a racist screed. Or when Maurice Claret gets nabbed for armed robbery. Or that Pete Rose bet on baseball. Or that English soccer fans often turn into thugs. Or that the Miami and Florida International University football teams engaged in a sideline-clearing brawl that resulted in 31 players getting sanctioned.

Now understand: Not being shocked by aberrant behavior isn't the same as condoning it. The scandals that we hear about, particularly in college sports, probably pale in comparison to what truly goes on. It's not unreasonable to think that by taking teenagers, putting them (in many cases) thousands of miles away from home and giving them adult responsibility (some have never been on their own; others are products of unstable environs—either crushing rural boredom, insidious urban neighborhoods or dysfunctional middle- and upper-class families) that mistakes are bound to happen.

As is often the case in collegiate sports, the punishment for violating rules is swift. According to ESPN.com, the National Collegiate Athletic Association is considering helping schools develop policies to curb on-field violence. "We're going to take a look at all of that and, hopefully, work with the conferences to manage the regular season," Ron Stratten, the NCAA's vice president of education service, told the *Associated Press*. Stratten is also a liaison to the NCAA's committee on sportsmanship and ethical conduct. "The committee is going to take a look at whether the NCAA can take action to assist them."

According to the *Associated Press*, a total of 31 players from both teams received some sort of punishment. FIU kicked Chris Smith and Marshall McDuffie Jr. off the team; 16 others will serve indefinite suspensions. Twelve other hurricanes will serve a one-game suspension—this Saturday's contest at Duke—and must perform community service. Miami safety Anthony Reddick, caught on tape swinging his helmet at FIU players, had his one-game suspension upgraded to an indefinite one. The fight also included players stomping on rivals, including one player kicked in the head.

While no one should dispute that these players should be punished and that the NCAA should send a message that on-field violence is intolerable, the catcalls to press for criminal charges are way off base. And racist even. If the combatants were Notre Dame and Brigham Young, would folks call the players thugs? Would the NCAA be racing to implement rules changes? Would the National Basketball Association have levied such harsh penalties, in terms of fines and game suspensions, and would the authorities have pressed charges if last year's fracas between the Indiana Pacers and Detroit Pistons took place 40 years ago among predominantly White teams?

And what about hockey? Is there a no more violent sport trafficking in non-sports-related violence? Many people have heard the adage about going to a fight and seeing a hockey game break out. It's to the point where hockey isn't real hockey unless two highly paid bruisers are swinging for the fences, trying to knock each other's heads off. If the Stanley Cup is the most prized and photographed of the sport's prizes, it seems that getting your teeth knocked out comes in second. This wanton violence is not only cheered, but condoned. Referees don't step in until the combatants have gone a few rounds or someone is getting beat to a pulp. Yet there's no call to criminalize hockey fights? Why.

To reiterate, on-field violence that's peripheral to the violence already intrinsic in contact sports is unfortunate and, in many cases, deplorable.

If the players in the Miami-FIU brawl are going to be demonized, then fans would be poor sports not to call out the hypocrisy of not condemning the culture of peripheral violence in hockey, the hooliganism of English soccer fans, rowdy Oakland Raider and Pittsburgh Steelers denizens or other examples of poor sportsmanship.



## Penetrating strife hurts Haiti

By George E. Curry  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - The first sentence of the U.S. Department of State's Consular Information Sheet quickly sums up a widely-held perception of Haiti. It begins, "Haiti is one of the least developed and least stable countries in the Western Hemisphere."

Even though Haiti is awash in poverty, that terse description does not begin to explain the role of Spain, France and the United States in destabilizing the small country to the South of us or its valiant struggle to gain independence. And we certainly can't expect to read about it in our textbooks. So, I offer you an abbreviated version, with the hope that you'll be inspired to do additional reading on your own.

Before his non-discovery of America, Christopher Columbus stopped in 1492 on the island of Hispaniola. Like America, it was already populated by indigenous people. In the early 17th century, the French established a presence on the island. In 1697, the countries struck a deal whereby France would control the western third of the island, now known as Haiti, and Spain would retain the eastern section, now the Dominican Republic.

With its thick forests and



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sugar industry, Haiti became one of France's wealthiest colonies. But that wealth came at a high price, necessitating the importation of 500,000 African slaves. There were scattered and uncoordinated slave revolts. Francois Macandal led one of the best-known early rebellions. His rebellion from 1751-1757 was said to have left 6,000 dead. Macandal used voodoo and African traditions to motivate his followers. When the French burned him at the stake in what is now Cap-Haitien, it was reported that the stake snapped, which only added to his mystique and reputation.

But the mother of all slave revolutions was led by Toussaint L'Ouverture. Under his leadership, a half-million slaves defeated French colonists. But instead of being able to celebrate the victory, Napoleon pretended to be interested in signing a peace accord with L'Ouverture and in 1802

tricked him into surrendering. But L'Ouverture was betrayed and died in a French prison.

But the yearning to be free was not limited to one person, as the French would soon learn.

L'Ouverture's capture only inspired Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, leaders of different military factions, to continue the struggle. Dessalines's troops defeated the French Nov. 18, 1803, at the Battle of Vertieres. On Jan. 1, 1803, Haiti declared its independence, the second independent country in the New World, behind the 13 colonies.

Dessalines became Haiti's first ruler.

In a move that would cripple the new nation's economy, France refused to recognize Haiti until it paid the former colonial ruler

reparations in 1833 to compensate for the losses of French planters.

For different reasons, the U.S. also sought to isolate Haiti. Correspondence during that era shows that presidents and other government officials feared that the Haitian Revolution might inspire other slave uprisings, threatening its source of free labor.

Like others nations — including Spain and France — the U.S. occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934. U.S. officials, wary of growing German influence, were said to be upset by a mob lynching of President Guillaume Sam.

The exit of the U.S. after 19 years was followed by a series of coups and the corrupt leadership of Francois Duvalier (Papa Doc) and his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier (Baby Doc). Papa Doc was known for the Tonton

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