

Editorial / Opinion

Violence

A fallen man lies crumpled on the turf. He is writhing in pain; bones may be broken. Seconds earlier, he was a victim of a vicious assault. Nevertheless, thousands of spectators are shouting and expressing their glee. Was this man really the victim of a violent crime? Or was he merely injured while performing his job -- that of a professional football player?

While injuries are increasing at an alarming rate in professional sports, the controversy continues: is there too much violence in sports, or are the athletes merely becoming more aggressive than they were in the past? Despite the efforts of the media to prove otherwise, the soaring injury rate is due to other circumstances.

Granted, the injury rate is steadily increasing, but the other reasons are often overlooked.

The most obvious reason for the surge of injuries during the past decade is the increase of professional sports franchises, and subsequently an increased number of athletes and events thereof. There are more athletic contests held today, and more athletes participating in them. Therefore, an increase of injuries is to be expected.

Another factor which leads to the increase in injuries is the greatly improved physical condition of the modern-day athletes. These stronger athletes have more stamina than athletes of the past, and will therefore play long past their point of exhaustion. When they become fatigued, they continue to play and are then much more susceptible to injuries. They also play despite injuries because they are shot full of pain-killers, thus leading to more serious injuries.

Another factor that contributes to the higher injury rate is the equipment now used by the players. Most of this equipment is meant to be protective, but it is only protective to the player who is wearing it. Studies conducted recently have shown that while football helmets certainly protect the wearer against concussions and other head injuries, these same helmets can also cause extensive injuries to others. A football helmet, for example, can serve as an efficient weapon when rammed into the spine of an adversary. This is exactly what occurred to the New England Patriots' Darryl Stingley when he was "speared" in the back by the helmet of the Oakland Raiders' Jack Tatum. It was a routine hit, which in the past would not have caused any serious or permanent damage. However, due to the improved quality of the helmet, Stingley was paralyzed for life. As this example serves to illustrate, it is not more violence that is causing most of the injuries--it is the improved quality of the equipment. Years ago, this same hit would probably have produced little or no damage; today, the effects are grave. Other newly developed factors have also helped to account for the injuries in sports, such as the increasing popularity of Astroturf (as opposed to natural grass) and the growing trend of manufacturing hockey sticks with harder varieties of wood pulp.

Many of the national sports magazines and television programs periodically come out and severely criticize the "excess" of violence in sports. And they all agree that measures should be taken against it: more stringent rules should be put into effect, the existing rules should be more strictly enforced, and other actions or restrictions should be instituted to insure safety. These same sources never cite the aforementioned points, but simply ignore them and give their own biased reasons for the "increased" violence.

This accident serves to illustrate how the media try to manipulate people's opinions.

Most people believe that there is too much violence in sports today, that there is much more now than in the past, that something should be done about it. These beliefs are all false.

Indeed, the media have done a convincing propaganda job of brainwashing the population while presenting only half of the issues... half of the story.

If it is true that half a loaf is better than none, it is time to go hungry.

Neil Williamson



Divine Comedy of Errors

By William J. Neil

I was taken aback the other day when, to my great surprise, I read the results of a nationwide survey of college students. The astonishing conclusion of the researchers was that almost half of the students surveyed exhibited definite problems with the language they speak and write every day, i.e. spelling, mispronunciation, grammatical errors, and a general misunderstanding of the definitions of many commonplace words. Finding this rather difficult to believe, I decided to conduct my own interview with a randomly selected student. I approached several students and explained my quandary concerning the problems of the English language; they said they would be glad to cooperate, but they didn't understand the question.

After approximately 20 minutes of futile attempts, a rather intelligent-looking student by the name of Mark Phillips happened along. I once again explained the survey and its results, and told him that I was interested in either refuting or confirming the report. Mr. Phillips agreed to the interview, and it went as follows:

"Do you agree with the findings of the survey?"

"No, I think that their conclusion is a falsityhood."

"'Falsityhood'? I don't think there's such a word."

"Sure there is--I just said it."

"Why do you disagree with the survey's findings?"

"I am certain that we ain't got such a problem, like this is a institute of higher learning."

"My, you surely seem adamant about this..."

"I am--I watch him every week!"

"What??"

"Atom Ant--I doesn't go anywhere until the show's over."

"What about your friends,..."

"Oh, they'se watch it every week, too."

"No, I meant, are they as adamant as you."

"I just telled you--they'se watch him every week, too."

"I'm sorry for repeating myself. Now, how do your friends feel about the alleged misuse of the English language?"

"They'se got the same opinion I does--ain't anybody's ain't got no bad grammar around here. Ain't you forgettin' that this here is Penn State?"

"Since your friends all seem to have the same opinion as you, can I assume that they are all as well-spoken as you?"

"Yeah, they're all as well-spoken as me... well... truthfully, two of them are a little bit better than me. One's a business major who reads Tarzan books all day. Since he's exposed to all that fine literature, naturally he's gonna have a more finer vocabulary than I does."

"What about your other friend?"

"What other friend?"

"You said there were two of them..."

"Oh yeah. He's a business major that..."

"...reads Tarzan books all day? That sounds familiar."

"What a coincidence! I guesses you know him too. Small world, ain't it?"

"Yes, it sure is. Now, what about your other friend?"

"He's an engineering major, but in his spare time he discovers words for Webster's."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Some of his recent discoveries is 'electronical,' 'alcoholical,' and even..."

"Why, that's outrageous! Those words aren't in the dictionary!"

"Of course not! I telled you--he just discovered them."

"Thank you for your time. I think I have reached my conclusion."

"You're welcome. I'm surprised that you even had to think about. I mean, does you really believe that there's a person that has a difficulty time with language?"

"I do now," I thought as I turned and walked away.

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