

OP-ED

Sports without officials borders on anarchy

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Capital Times Staff

Imagine, if you will, a sport or game without the referee, umpire, or official. A referee, defined in the dictionary as "one to whom any matter, point, or question is referred for a decision." They are found on the basketball court, or in the boxing ring, football field or volleyball court.

The official is defined as someone holding "a position of authority. Someone true or genuine." This species can be spotted mediating a hockey or football game or tennis match. While the umpire is "someone designated to settle a dispute or whose decision a controversy or question between parties is referred. These individuals are primarily found on baseball diamonds or in the background of footballs authority of do's and don'ts.

Since its inception, competitive sport is carried on by traditional rules of conduct. Those who compete learn young that these rules are made to be broken. The informal neighborhood pick-up games invites its participants to stretch the rules as much as possible without fear of enforcement.

Cries such as "no fair," "foul," and "do-over" were echoed in backyard and schoolyard "stadiums." Some bear the scars of the cheap-shot inflicted during

this youthful warfare throughout their lives. The sad reality is that many of the athletes and fans alike carry this schoolyard mentality to the professional arena today.

Officials, umpires, and referees in many cases either over or under-police the activities on the field. The "fan," which is short for "fanatic" is not policed but encouraged by professional sport to resume the unorthodox mannerisms of childhood sports. Slogans such as "c-mon ump" or "the umpire cost the game" are echoed repeatedly before, during and after an event. The umpire, official, or referee has become the scapegoat of sport. So let's imagine sport without them.

One slow pitch softball league experiments each year without umpires. Pitchers throw to a mat behind home plate. If the ball hits the mat a strike is called and sportsmanship is left to the discretion of its "Christian" participants. Injury is prevalent and profanity frequent. Hardly a prototypically Christian behavior.

The unofficial area beneath the basket at most community basketball leagues has become a warzone from which few depart unscathed. Touch and Flag football leagues rise to the forefront of competitive sport when it realizes that muscles and bones break and tear easily once adulthood sets in without the benefit of protective gear.

On the amateur level the umpire, referee and official are an unwelcomed guest. But imagine the unenforced 90 m.p. h. beanball or the physical pain inflicted by the "high slide" without sanction. Imagine an uninhibited "low blow" in boxing or intentional "slash" of hockey.

Today, the speed clock may simply be the ancestor of a mechanized ball and strike indicator, which would eliminate the use of an umpire. The instant replay "official" is at the mercy of film. It takes away the individual human element (the official) to satisfy another human element (the spectator).

More recently, an umpire was chastised for ejecting a multi-million dollar pitcher from a league championship series. A college football official was verbally leveled for allowing a fifth down which eventually led to the recipient's winning a national championship.

A boxing referee was cited for prematurely ending a championship fight because he saw the challenger unfit to continue. Basketball referee's are constantly scrutinized for favoring the home court. Hockey officials are constantly jeered for risking their own lives to step between a couple of goons during an altercation.

But remove the official from each of these events and its participants, and fans become representative of a "roller

ball" mentality.

The pitcher and batter will be praised and rewarded for the number of fatalities they cause. Franchises will profit with its fans supporting "low blows" and "late hits."

The athlete will truly earn the million dollar paycheck by becoming the "target" of opposing player and fan alike. Survival will dominate again as it did during those days on the neighborhood field. The rules and regulations will be taken from the game, out of the hands of the official and placed in the hands of the machine.

The instant replay will soon dictate the outcome of the game. The human element will remain only in front of a television set and in the stands. Fan violence may be applauded. Suspension and ejection will be things of the past. Professional athletes may be rewarded during contract negotiations for spitting on a fan.

Imagine an on-the-court confrontation with notable church mice such as Mc Enroe, Berkeley, Clemens, or Bozworth without fear of ejection or fine. A winner-take-all event. No umpire, official, or referee to worry about. An event unheard of in professional sport. Unseen since the days of the Christians vs. the Lions. Sport revolves exclusively around profit and fan appeal. Coming to an arena or stadium near you. Play ball!

Who cuts Don King's hair?

Trivial items in life antagonize the brain

Jeff Berrigan
Capital Times Staff

Well, it's almost the end of the semester here and before you know it finals will be just around the corner. It seems like this semester just flew by and left me behind, just like every other semester.

Over the course of the last few months there have been a bunch of things that have me saying "Hmmm?" Being the thoughtful type of guy that I am I thought I'd share these ideas with you. So heeere we go...

Why is the word "abbreviation" so long? Hmmm. You would think that of all words that would be short, this one would. Another thing that gets me about abbreviations is why certain words are abbreviated. Take the word "July" for instance. Its abbreviation is "Jul." Come on now, this has to be a joke. You HAVE to be in a hurry to do this. I wonder what the abbreviation for May is? Hmmm...

Does anybody know how old George Burns really is? Hmmm. I cannot believe that this man is still alive. He has violated every health tip there is, it seems. Every time I see him on television he has the biggest and fattest cigar, or whatever it is - it looks like a brown baseball bat hanging from

his lower lip, in his mouth puffing away like there is no tomorrow. The man is simply amazing. Anyway...

Who cuts Don King's hair? Hmmm. Or who doesn't cut his hair, maybe that should be the question. How can Mike Tyson possibly take this guy seriously. I mean King has that "Mr. Heatmizer" (remember that old Christmas special) deluxe style haircut. It looks like he's been electrocuted eight times. I bet he scares himself every time he looks in the mirror. Mirror, mirror on the wall...

What idiot came up with the idea of

servicing nachos at the movie theatre? Hmmm. It is bad enough trying to scoot around those skinny isles with popcorn and soda - in the dark. Now we have to fear getting nacho sauce spilled on our heads as some klutz stumbles around in the row behind us. And is it me or are those nachos the crunchiest things ever. The last time I was in a theatre I missed half of the movie because I couldn't hear it. I guess I'll get over it...

Why aren't certain animals "wild?" Hmmm. Cows - I've never seen a "wild mountain cow." I guess cows just aren't

nimble enough to jump around on those cliffs. They might sprain a hoof or something. Come to think of it I've never seen a cow run either! Imagine that, a herd of wild mountain cows stampeding towards you. That'd be a sight! I don't know what would be worse, a herd of wild cows or a pack of barking tree spiders.

Well I guess that's all for now, the Masters dart tournament just came on television and you know I wouldn't want to miss that. I'll check everybody out in the next issue... A - B - C - ya!



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