

Why do I watch sports?

Why do we watch sports?

I was visiting a friend of mine, noted Miramichi Leader reporter Kris McDavid, over the weekend. When studying journalism together at St. Thomas University, we hosted a sports radio show called *Unfiltered Sports* every Sunday night from 11 p.m. until 1 a.m. Often times we had the UNB Varsity Reds hockey game lead into us, though we're still not sure if anyone really listened. Former Bugle-Observer reporter Bryan Tait joined us as well on most weeks.

Whenever I visit Kris, we inevitably talk sports. It becomes the crux of our conversations. Most of my closest friends are either one-sport people (usually hockey) or no-sport people. Rarely do I get that outlet to talk deeply, or even just on the surface, about professional sports with another human being.

I brought up the Miami Dolphins, a team I have been a fan of since I was 10 years old. I watched Ace Ventura and my fandom was sealed for better and mostly worse. I said how I had been conflicted with the cheering of this team because of the insanity behind the scenes of the organization, the bullying and hazing in the locker room, and general scumminess.

He said it's when sports intersects too much with real life that he loses interest. This makes a lot of sense to me, but I still get twinges of discomfort when I think about the whole mess.

It got me thinking, though, about what draws me to sports. Sports are my escape. When I watch a game on television, like I did between the Dolphins and Patriots on Sunday, the world around me disappears for a couple hours and I'm entrenched in the intensity of what is playing out before me. It offers me no commentary on the meaning of life, and it doesn't strive to be any more than it is. Play by play is usually nothing more than white noise to fill in the blanks. As long as it doesn't fall into sheer inanity, I can usually block it out.



Jason Wilson
Sporting Life

Most people, I think, watch movies for the same reason. That's not me. I watch films as a method to enhance my connection to and understanding of the human condition. I can't just fly to Japan on a whim, so why not watch one of the movies by one of the country's pre-eminent filmmakers? Films can give us a broader perspective as long as we're not just digesting garbage like the latest Adam Sandler movie (every once in a while he gets a good one. Kris and I caught 2002's *Punch Drunk Love* on IFC the other night).

A great game is always different from the last great game. It's instant and then it's over. I don't see any point in rewatching a great game. If I know the result, I don't need to see anything other than the highlights. The thrill of the unknown is gone. If I had recorded the Pats-Dolphins game and accidentally spoiled myself of the 24-20 final, in favour of Miami, the last minute would not have carried nearly as much nerve-wrecking impact as it did. Tom Brady, who had helped orchestrate three consecutive comebacks, had the ball in the red zone on first down with under a minute left. I was ready for them to win because they're the Patriots and the Dolphins are the Dolphins. Each pass that just barely slipped out of a receiver's grasp and every time a referee kept the yellow flag in his pocket, I fist-pumped a little bit more. When newly signed Michael Thomas intercepted Brady's fourth-down pass, I was elated and relieved.

I didn't get any answers. My global perspective wasn't enhanced or grown by it. It was simple entertainment that brightened my day, and any time we can get

something like that in our lives it's worth it. Sure, the Richie Incognito garbage and hazing that follows in likely more than one locker room is horrendous, and it shouldn't be excused. But that isn't the fault of the game itself. There is a difference between sport and sport culture.

That might be a difficult concept to swallow, and maybe not everyone will agree, but we have to separate the final product from those who produce it. Some people may say we shouldn't support it if the people producing it are reprehensible or have done bad things or have a negative public image. I love the films of Roman Polanski (specifically *Rosemary's Baby*, *Repulsion*, and *Chinatown*) but that doesn't mean I think he's a great man. I'm not going to stop watching Woody Allen movies because I find his behaviour repulsive. Likewise, I'm not going to stop watching football and I'm not going to stop cheering the Dolphins because of the recent controversies.

This is an incredibly slippery slope to be on, and I am certainly conflicted with the notion. Is it even fair to equate the world of cinema and the world of sport in the analogy when I seek completely different things from them? To this, I am not certain. Where I currently stand is that those who are committing heinous acts against others should be called out and punished regardless of their position in the world. They may still, however, be capable of doing impressive things on the field of play. Neither should be attempted to be whitewashed.

The point is, every form of entertainment has its share of people who muddy the waters of perception. I don't think it's fair to censor their involvement, or claim their art or production was worse based on who they are as individuals.

Jason Wilson

Freelance reporter, school teacher and Woodstock native who writes a regular sports column dealing with fantasy drafts and other sports topics of interest.

Bulls drop Saint John, Kennebecasis Valley

Netminder Melanson earns two wins, shutout in weekend sweep

BUGLE-OBSERVER

The North West Bantam AAA Bulls swept this weekend's action in southern New Brunswick.

The Bulls edged the Kennebecasis Valley Rangers 3-1 on Saturday afternoon before blanking the Saint John Sea Dogs 4-0 the following day.

Adam McCormick, Mika Cy and Zachary Levesque scored for the Bulls in the win over the Rangers. Pierre Bourgoin, Alex Lavoie and Danick Bossé added

assists. Frédéric Melanson was the winning goalie.

Cyr, Bourgoin, Joe Coté, Samuel LeBlanc scored North West on Sunday morning in Saint John, with the Melanson earning the shutout win.

Levesque, Cyr, Bossé, LeBlanc and Hunter Fournier recorded assists.

The Bulls sit second in the New Brunswick Bantam AAA Hockey League standings with a 13-3-0 record.

North West travels to Fredericton next Saturday to play the Canadiens.

Huskies fall to Canterbury

BUGLE-OBSERVER

The Hartland Community School Huskies girls basketball team dropped a 65-47 decision to Canterbury High School this weekend.

Top scorers for Canterbury were Kolby Edwards with 19 points and

Samantha Taylor chipped in 17.

For the Huskies, the top scorer was Frannie Branswell with 13 points and Rachel Culberson added 12.

The Huskies are off to a tournament in Campbellton next weekend and will host a holiday tournament in the new year on Jan. 3-4.

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