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Sports in America

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Sports in America

Abstract

A speech written and delivered by Dean John Feerick on April 17, 2009 at the Fordham Law School Sports Law Symposium gives us an insightful look into what sports mean to the world around them. Dean Feerick has been involved first hand in a number of influential sports law decisions in his time as a practitioner and this speech serves as a reminder as to the meaningful role that sports play in each one of our lives. Feerick draws from life experiences of his own as well as that of colleagues and family members to observe the timeless and universal nature of Sports.

Keywords

sports law

Cover Page Footnote

John D. Feerick is a Norris Professor of Law at Fordham Law School. He previously served as Dean of Fordham Law School from 1982-2002. Prior to entering academia, Professor Feerick was a labor and employment attorney in the law firm of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom. He graduated from Fordham University and received his law degree from Fordham Law School.

“SPORTS IN AMERICA”John D. Feerick¹**Transcribed Keynote Address****Delivered on April 17, 2009 at the Fordham Law School Sports Law Symposium**

When Pat asked me to give the keynote remarks today, I hesitated accepting. I noted that, unlike me, past keynote speakers such as John Mara, David Howard, Pamela Lester, Stephanie Vardavas, Timothy Brosnan, James Quinn, and Edward Tighe, to name a few, were fully engaged in the world of sports and therefore had much to offer. My active involvement over the past fifteen years has been limited, serving as the inaugural NFL salary cap special master, then as grievance arbitrator in the NBA, and then as a non-injury grievance panel arbitrator in the NFL. I also served as an arbitrator of a women's tennis arbitration issue and as mediator of the NCAA/NIT controversy, which led to the joinder of the two associations. I was pleased to accept this invitation, however, when Pat assured me that I had room to roam in my remarks since they were not part of the CLE program.

Today's Program, like earlier programs of this distinguished Sports Society, focuses on connections between the law and sports in particular contexts such as pharmaceutical liability, sports journalism, and gambling. Past programs have dealt with the financing and structuring of acquisitions of sports teams and stadiums, sports merchandising and memorabilia, the amateur status of student athletes, medical issues in sports, liability for athletes' conduct during the course of games, the regulation and control of athlete conduct outside the game, labor relations

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and collective bargaining, media ownership of sports franchises, women's sports, athletes and discipline, international player transfer systems and immigration issues, and current legal issues in amateur sports. Each of these programs, as I know will be true of today's, has made significant contributions. Many fine articles for publications have resulted, enabling others to benefit from the richness of the discussions associated with these programs. I salute you, Pat, and all your colleagues and predecessors for the dedication reflected in these programs.

A basic assumption underlies these annual programs, and similar programs at other law schools and in the bar, and that is that sports matter a great deal in the world at large. And we know they do. Perhaps some future program of this Society might explore, from different perspectives, the meaning of sports in the life of our nation and their relationship to the fabric of society. With your encouragement, Pat, and indulgence, I would like to start that discussion today at a time when so many issues involving sports surround us.

In his beautifully written book, *The Joy of Sports*, Martin Novack speaks of sports as a natural religion, the chief communal ritual of citizens. He applauds their contributions to our sanity and their nourishment of our spirit which, in turn, infuse our work life and the other areas of our lives. A book published last month, called "*Play*" by Dr. Stuart Brown, makes the point that play, as in sports, is the "single most significant factor in determining our success and happiness." It energizes us, enlivens us, and eases our burdens, he concludes in this most enjoyable book.

But even greater claims have been made about the benefits of sports. The Duke of Wellington, the victor at Waterloo, is said to have remarked of that victory that "it was won on the playing fields of Eton." Douglas MacArthur, in words inscribed on a monument at West Point, said that "upon the field of friendly strife are sown the seeds that on other fields on other

days will bear the fruits of victory.” The centrality of sports in America can be gleaned from the statistical evidence, and from experiences in our own lives and the lives of our families.

One of the things we can say about Sports is that they are timeless and universal. If you were a time traveler, and traveled back to the time of the cave man, you could well be involved in wrestling and other game activity. If you lived in the seventh century BC, you may have been able to see the Greek Olympic Games, or even participate in them

If you visited the second century B.C. and were a soldier in the reign of the Han Dynasty, you might play in an organized activity resembling football. During the time of the Greeks and Romans you would find a version of soccer.

Sports even then had attendance records. If you attended the chariot races at the Circus Maximus in Rome, you would see a stadium that was a third of a mile around and 150 yards wide. You would also have a lot of company. The stadium held up to 250,000 people. People came from all over the empire to watch these races.

Organized sports as we have come to know them today are tied to the history of the industrial revolution and the creation of schools, which sought to incorporate physical activity into the curriculum. This apparently allowed for the codification of various games such as baseball, basketball and football, which were very much shaped on college campuses in the United States in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s at least.

What if you stopped on your time travels and visited the State of New York, Borough of the Bronx, in 1945. World War II had just ended. What sports would you see? Well, that is my world so let me give you a view from there.

I grew up on 161st street in the Bronx a few blocks from Yankee Stadium. As a kid, I would see baseball players walk across 161st street after a game. They would talk to us, sign

autographs, and answer questions we might have about a particular player or game. I remember one occasion speaking to Tommy Henrich, “Old Reliable”, about a new player who was striking out a lot – a player by the name of Mickey Mantle. Heinrich said that he would be a great one in time, and he was.

We had no organized sports for our play on 161st street. Nor did we have any at the grammar school we attended around the corner on Morris Avenue. We therefore organized our own games in the streets, parks, parking lots and backyards of the area. Stickball, our most popular game, was played with a Spaldeen ball, broom stick and piece of chalk. That’s all you needed plus some manhole covers to measure distances for home runs and the like. We discussed where bases should be located, what constituted a foul ball and who would be on each team. All of this allowed for leadership, negotiation, problem solving and most of all fun. We played these stickball games without coaches, umpires, parents, or cheering sections. There was no grandstanding or trying to please anyone, as all was in the game itself. We also played stoopball, using the side of concrete steps or building foundation blocks as starting points for that game and a wall on the other side of the street as the outer boundary for a home run. We also played pick up basketball, football, and baseball in the parks on and off Grand Concourse near Yankee Stadium, and in McCombs Dam Park immediately west of the Stadium. Next to that park I watched my father, an immigrant from Ireland, play handball. He also played Gaelic Football a few miles north of there at Gaelic Park in Riverdale. I never understood why he played for the Irish County Sligo New York team, instead of County Mayo where he was born, but recently I was told that it was because Sligo did not have a good team and therefore there were more opportunities to play.

For our sporting games on and around 161st street, we sought out other neighborhood kids against whom to compete or simply challenged those who were already playing in these fields of glory. I fancied myself as pretty good at basketball until a near seven footer showed up, making the point to us that size could make a difference. He later became a star, I believe, at St. John's University. I called a friend the other day and asked him if he remembered a person called Davis, a name I wasn't sure of from sixty years ago. He said yes, that was a red headed guy from Highbridge, who was 6'8" or so, and he played basketball. Isn't that something how that name has stayed with me all of these years? He made an impression, obviously, in a game we played with great intensity at McCombs Dam Park. I suspect each of you has similar memories of people in your past sports life, but I hope with better results than I had against Davis. My brother-in-law sent me an e-mail the other day recalling a favorite memory of his father playing baseball with him at age sixty-three and managing to hit the ball. My brother-in-law said that it "suddenly put some semblance of credence into the 'I used to be excellent at baseball' stories my Dad had told me".

The presence of Yankee Stadium in the neighborhood of 161st street certainly fueled my personal interest in organized sports, as did the radio since none of us owned a television until sometime in the 1950s. Where we lived there were no polo fields, golf courses, tennis courts, or town houses. But, we had Yankee Stadium, the House Ruth built 86 years ago tomorrow. It dominated the landscape. I recall at times peering into it from the elevated subway platform on 161st street.

I went by the old Yankee Stadium, and also by the Giants' Polo Grounds, every day on a bus as I traveled to and from high school in the years 1950-54. The School, Bishop Dubois, was located on 152nd street and Amsterdam Avenue. How I enjoyed watching that school's

basketball and baseball teams play other, bigger schools, and give them a run for the money.

Unfortunately, the school closed many years ago but my memory of it and its sports and other programs, not to overlook its students and teachers, remains vivid. My brother, Donald, played football for All Hollows High School and it was a thrill to see him play on a few occasions.

I also remember as a kid the noise of the crowd after some athletic accomplishment at Yankee Stadium, whether it be baseball, football, or boxing. The noise gave me a chill, causing me to hurry to find a radio or someone nearby to learn what had happened. But there was nothing like going to a sports event at Yankee Stadium. I remember with gratitude being able to secure free tickets to baseball games if I stood outside the Stadium long enough. There was always some generous person who came along with an extra ticket for a young kid who couldn't afford the price of admission. My late brother, Donald, was particularly skillful at this, even securing tickets to some of the greatest football games ever to occur at the Stadium. The memory of our shared experience attending the greatest NFL game ever played, between the Giants and Colts in December 1958, is etched forever in my consciousness. Our seats weren't great but we found a place on a mezzanine rafter to get a better view of the play on the field, and what a view we had. We were broken hearted, of course, to see the Giants lose in the first NFL championship overtime.

Another free ticket to the Stadium, this time from a friend, made it possible for me to see Reggie Jackson hit three home runs in the sixth game of the World Series against the Dodgers in 1977. The majesty of that moment remains with me, as does the ultimate act of good sportsmanship by an opposing player, the Dodgers' Steve Garvey, who emerged from the Dodgers dugout to join the rest of the crowd in applauding Jackson's achievement that October day.

I thought about the blessings of these free tickets recently, at the last two Super Bowls, to both of which I was provided a ticket to attend because of my service as an NFL arbitrator. I took to one of these games my seven-year-old grandson, Roddy, and to the other my brother, Kevin, neither of whom had ever seen to a Super Bowl in person. Both games were extraordinary, especially the one won by the Giants, the team I grew up with as a kid and saw play many a time at Yankee Stadium. With two minutes left in that Super Bowl, my grandson, as avid a Giants fan as you will ever see, hysterically asked me to take him out of the stadium because of the nervousness he felt when Tom Brady and the Patriots went ahead. He physically shook. I told him we couldn't leave, stating that life was filled with such moments of pressure and that we had to learn how to deal with them. I said that if Brady could do it in two minutes, so could Manning and his teammates. Can you imagine the joy he experienced when that happened? It was captured in a picture taken of him by an NFL arbitrator friend of mine. I don't believe Roddy and I ever will have another experience together like that one, the greatest game in the history of the New York Giants according to John Mara.

My interest in organized school sports, and sports in general, grew when I was a student at Fordham College. How I enjoyed rooting for Fordham in all of its sports, including track and field. It was a particular joy for me to watch Tom Courtney run around the Fordham campus as he prepared for the 1956 Olympics, where he won two gold medals for the United States. Fordham also gave me the opportunity to play touch football and softball, and I have so many wonderful memories of those games on the Edwards Parade Grounds where we played our hearts out in trying to defeat another part of the University. My classmate, Tom Giordano was the fastest and most accurate softball pitcher I ever saw. I was his backup but I never played. Like all of Fordham, I am proud of the role the School has played in the development of collegiate

sports and the impact many of its graduates have had on sports, including the incomparable Vince Lombardi, Frankie Frisch, and the late Wellington Mara. Many of its graduates play or have played leadership roles in covering sports such as Vin Scully, a Baseball Hall of Fame and Radio Hall of Fame broadcaster, Arthur Daley, a Pulitzer Prize winning sportswriter for the New York Times, Sal Marchiano, two-time Emmy Award-winning sports anchor for WPIX-TV in New York, Michael Kay, Yankees announcer, Jack Curry, New York Times sportswriter, Malcolm Moran, USA Today sportswriter, Mike Breen, Knicks announcer and "The NBA on ABC" sportscaster, and Bob Papa, New York Giants announcer.

Later, as a young lawyer, I would finally have my moment of glory as a pitcher in the lawyers' softball league for the then very small firm of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher and Flom. When we won the League championship, defeating Ted Sorensen's Paul Weiss perennial championship team, I retired. You can imagine my surprise and disappointment, however, when I read his wonderful book, *The Counselor*, and saw no reference to any of these games of my youth.

I can't forget to mention another highlight of my youth involving a relationship I developed with a college and law school classmate, Joseph Carrieri. He was the batboy for the Yankees in their championship years from 1949 to 1954. I enjoyed enormously his baseball insights and stories. His book, "*Searching for Heroes*," one of three written by him, still remains my all-time favorite sports book, and whenever we see each other sports is likely to find itself dominant in our conversation.

Fast-forward, I have remained interested in the world of professional sports in my adult years through season tickets with the Jets and Giants, attendance at games of the New York Yankees, watching television and reading the sports pages, and as a sports arbitrator from time to

time, as I mentioned. Sometimes my decisions even merited discussion in programs of this Society. I have not discussed any of these decisions except in written opinions, and despite gentle prodding from Patrick, have chosen not to enter that thicket today. One of my decisions, involving the player Latrell Sprewell, drew considerable comment, as you well know. My late Uncle Pat, then aged ninety and the wisest man I knew, said at the time to me that it should not be a difficult case to decide because whatever I did would produce strong negative reactions. Just do what you think is right he said, and I did. You can imagine my disappointment, in the aftermath, when so few people read the decision because it was not publicly released, though, I admit, one hundred plus pages do not make for easy reading. In point of fact the parties chose not to release the decision and to move on, as did I.

The handling of sports arbitration as a judge is not dissimilar from the experience of a referee or umpire. There are differences, however, because the latter are trained to make a decision on the spot, and don't explain it, while a labor arbitrator deliberates and writes a decision, sometimes a very long decision. Ron Luciano, in his classic, *The Umpire Strikes Back*, commented that on close calls he received mixed, if not hostile, reactions from the participants and crowd. He recounted a story of a close play at home plate in spring training. He said, "the runner made such a beautiful slide, I figured anybody who can do that has to be safe, so that's the way I called it." He added, the catcher turned around and glared at me, "You don't need any more spring training," he snarled. You're bad enough for the regular season already." Arbitrators sometimes are greeted with that type of response. I know.

Discipline and other sports grievances are part of a justice system and arbitrators are asked to make decisions based on the evidence and the law of the shop. They don't dispense their own brand of industrial justice, or serve as criminal court judges. External considerations,

to use a metaphor, such as the noise of a crowd, do not make decision-making pleasant but the late Dan Collins put it well when he said that an arbitrator must treat every case as his (or her) last case. I remember being successful as an advocate in a non-sports arbitration before him and then learning that part of the industry in question would not be continuing with his services because of that decision. Like umpires, of course, arbitrators need to take the heat that goes with controversial decisions, and parties and participants need to move on and leave the last game in the locker room, so-to-speak, if for no other reason than to protect vulnerable justice systems.

The connections between law and sports are not only manifested in arbitrations but in the values each promotes. They educate, guide, and make life in a society of ordered liberty both possible and exciting. They provide a common language that enables people of all backgrounds to speak and connect with one another. The language of sports also has become part of our ordinary discourse. I can't tell you how often I quote my favorite philosopher, Yogi Berra, "It ain't over 'til it's over" and "You can learn a lot by observing". But he gave us many more pearls of wisdom as described in a New York Times article yesterday, not to speak of his memorable games as a catcher for the winningest team in the history of baseball.

Consider the leadership given by sports in breaking down racial barriers separating black people from white people. Jackie Robinson's arrival in Brooklyn, sixty-two years ago this past Wednesday, was transformative in epic proportions, affording a significant moment in the history of the country. His success as the first black player in professional baseball set a revolutionary tone with effects that went far beyond the world of sports. Today, the President of the United States is of his background.

A white ball player with a Southern background, Pee Wee Reese, played a seminal role in that drama of the late 1940s. Silhouetted in the history of sports is the game in Cincinnati when,

in response to intense booing and heckling of Robinson, Reese walked over to him and put his hand on Robinson's shoulder, saying to the world by this action this is my teammate. The hecklers ceased their attack and, as we know, Robinson went on to stardom and hall of fame honors, as did Pee Wee Reese. My good friend, James Gill, described Robinson's arrival in baseball to Mrs. Robinson as historic in race relations. She said "No", "It was historic in human relations".

At the new Mets stadium, all fans will walk through the Jackie Robinson Rotunda before entering. Just two weeks ago I traveled to a wedding in Brooklyn using the Jackie Robinson Parkway. I am proud to have my name, along with the names of many other people, on a statue of Robinson and Reese dedicated to their memory in KeySpan Park, Coney Island, home of the Cyclones.

College basketball has had its transcendental moments in penetrating the world of segregation, none more so than the 1966 NCAA championship game between Kentucky and Texas Western. Said Nolan Richardson at the time, "until that moment, at the height of the civil rights era, no major-college team had ever started five blacks in an NCAA championship game... for the first time that night, on the edge of the Mason-Dixon line, a major sports championship would be contested by one team that was all white and another whose starters were entirely black. What a piece of history. If basketball ever took a turn, that was it."

As these and other moments like these furthered the integration of American sports, the law was keeping pace with its 1954 decision in Brown v. Board of Education followed by the Civil Rights Laws of the 1960's and then the passage of Title IX, which propelled the growth of women's sports in America.

Consider the role of sports in America in promoting our unity as a nation. Olympic performances and other world competitions in which American athletes participate have been inspiring, sometimes occurring at times when the nation's spirit needed lifting. In the year of my birth, 1936, as the clouds of World War II grew, an American athlete, Jesse Owens, won four track and field gold medals in the heart of Berlin, stunning the world. When he walked around the Berlin stadium with his victory medals, Adolph Hitler turned his back to him. Owens' success electrified the nation, as did the 1980 gold medal success, in the middle of the Cold War and in the midst of the Iran hostage crisis, of a United States Hockey Team competing against a seemingly unbeatable team from the Soviet Union which had beaten the US team in an exhibition match ten to one. One U.S. player wrapped himself in the American flag as the team responded to the thunderous ovation they received in Lake Placid, New York, on their victory.

Sports in our colleges, high schools, and grade schools also have had their share of uplifting moments in the different communities and regions of the country. I have seen a few involving my own grandchildren. I suspect each person in this room has memories of such moments that stand out for you, and so I won't even try to provide examples except to mention the glory moments of Fordham football involving the Seven Blocks of Granite. And I can't forget Fordham baseball, with the winningest record of any school in the country in Division I play.

The reach of sports in the US is truly staggering. At the college level, in the 2006-07 academic year, there were 17,700 teams and over 400,000 athletes participating in all sports, from baseball to wrestling. In 2005, 135 million people watched the Super Bowl. In 2007, baseball broke its attendance record for the fourth consecutive season when 79.5 million fans went through the turnstiles. One can gauge the impact of Title IX by the following statistic: the

number of high school girls participating in sports programs increased from 800,000 in 1972 to almost 2.9 million in 2004, an increase of 360%. The number of players under nineteen registered with the US Youth Soccer Federation has increased from 100,000 in 1974 to 3.8 million in 2008. The percentage of female student athletes has increased from 31% in 1991-92 to 44% in 2002-03. There has been enormous growth as well in the number of blind, visually impaired and disabled persons participating in sports, with an extraordinary increase in the number of disabled athletes being trained at the National Ability Center: from fifty in 1986 to 10,000.

Academic studies of sports participation have emphasized the beneficial societal effects that such participation has on civic and social engagement and in anchoring and binding communities. The dream of many an immigrant child, such as Joe and Dom DiMaggio, was fulfilled because of sports, as today when so many children in urban America achieve success because of their excellence in sports.

These studies support the anecdotal evidence I gleaned from a personal survey I took, in preparation for this talk, of my children, grandchildren, nephews, nieces and other family members about the effects of sports on them and their schools and communities. My family is quite large, living in eight states and ranging in age from eight to seventy-two. Here is a summary of what I found, publicly released for the first time today.

A niece, Mary Beth Benedetto [a graduate of the Law School] with two boys and two girls active in sports, said, “my children are focused on the sports they are playing. They have to learn to get along with their teammates. If there is a problem among some players they learn to work things out so the team can succeed. Sometimes this means learning how to compromise, give in or fight for your opinion. It also challenges them to be a leader when it is needed. Being

part of a team has instilled in my children a desire to work hard to win or complete the goal. They are forced to stay focused on the goal and to work together with players they might not have been friends with to achieve the victory. They also know that a game is a game, win, lose or draw. There is always another day and the game is not the end-all. It is fun to win but they know everyone loses and it is okay to lose.”

My wife’s niece in Oklahoma, Katie Hoar Jones, who is expert in team sports, especially soccer and fast pitch softball, said that “she loved sports as a means of entertainment, exercise, social networking, scholarships, ego boosting and ego demolishing.” She said that she learned from sports that no one likes a person with “poor sportsmanship ... not my parents, not my coaches, not my teammates, and not me.” She added that team sports “are a great way of building community...within the team parents sitting through practices and games together, siblings playing together passing the time away while their older siblings play sports, and townspeople coming together to cheer on the hometown team.”

For my oldest daughter, a Hockey Mom according to a sticker on her car, sports have played a central role in the lives of her four boys. She said, “since they have lots of energy and enjoy being active, playing sports has been a great way to channel their energy. It has also been a great way to build social skills...since they have to learn to work with their teammates and be respectful towards referees and coaches.” For some of them, she said, playing sports has helped build and maintain their self-esteem.” She added that, “when the kids play games, it gives us an opportunity to go out and cheer for the kids. When they do well, we’re proud of their accomplishments. And when they don’t do so well, we’re there to provide whatever moral support or encouragement might be needed.”

Another daughter, Jean, who lives in Massachusetts, said that, “sports have become a mini-gathering place...for us to slow down, stop, and connect with one another. It’s a place where we have made our strongest ties to the community, meeting parents with whom we share interests and values, and drawing us out of the often stifling boundaries of our own household.”

Watching and going to professional, collegiate, high school and elementary school sports events were identified as family activities that enabled parents and children to connect with each other and gave them something to talk about.

Some of my children noted, in my own case, going to baseball and football games has been a principal connector for me with their children, one noting that “it’s hard to find a lot for a seventy year old and a ten year old to do together that’s fun for both but watching sports and talking about teams and the various players is certainly something that can bring people of all ages together.” My grandson, Ryan, and I attended the third from last game at the old Yankee Stadium and we will see tomorrow the third game at the new Stadium.

Coaches received praise from my family survey for functioning as role models, reinforcing what is told at home about working hard, staying focused, respecting others and themselves and avoiding alcohol and drugs. Said one family member, “through a child’s interaction with coaches, refs and parents in the context of games that often challenge self-control and sportsmanship, children can learn the value of remaining calm in the face of imminent defeat or victory. To learn that defeat and victory are an everyday part of life is valuable in teaching kids how to accept failure but also the value of hard work as a routine part of life.”

One family member offered this interesting insight, “insofar as coaches and parents can model calm and tempered reaction to poor calls or frustrating losses, children can learn a more

effective approach to dealing with challenges and hardships in their lives – it's the value of not 'blowing one's top'. She added, "now, having said that, I've seen more than my fair share of cases where parents choose not to act this way – where they are fiery and unsportsmanlike. In this context, when I asked my son for his reaction, he indicated that such behavior only redounds to the detriment of the children in the form of the refs' taking it out on the kid of the fiery parents – so there's a sense on his part that these responses fail most profoundly so that even those moments have taught him the value of staying cool."

The mother of one grandson, who is shy, said that sports provides him with a good context for meeting friends, concluding that they erode barriers between kids in school contexts and give a stronger sense of self worth and confidence and broaden a sense of identity.

Some family members made such comments as, "playing sports has helped to keep my older boys busy and focused during the teen years when too much free time can lead to trouble. Between sports and homework, there's little time to get bored and look for trouble or get into mischief." And, "the most saving grace about sports today is that it is the only time the kids are off of their computers and cell phones."

A grandson (age eight), Dylan Snow, had an entirely different perspective. He said that through sports he has become strong and muscular and feels like a winner.

Said another member of the surveyed group, "sports help us to forget our worries for a while, they give us something to be enthusiastic about, and they give us a reason to call another person and go watch a game together on TV."

Dan Hoar, a nephew of my wife in Oklahoma, described the pride of the people of the state in the University of Oklahoma football team in a state until recently without a professional team. He said, "people have their own long standing traditions of how to enjoy the game, and my

particular routine is to put out the OUY flag, get my game garb on, and invite several people over to my house to watch and cheer... We have traditions of calling our friends with whom we graduated who have moved all over the country after each touchdown essentially forming a cross-country cheer.”

Said the youngest of my daughters, “sports attendance at professional football games allowed me to see a larger part of humanity and personal styles than were possible in the somewhat closed community in which I grew up. I saw people who sat and studied the game quietly while others were screaming all the time. I am glad my son has adopted the former approach, but he is still young and very passionate about the game.”

Finally, I must mention again and close with my late brother and dear friend, Donald, who was the father of six children and sixteen grandchildren. He went to almost every game of his children and grandchildren, prompting a grandchild who played in the AABC World Series for baseball in Oklahoma to ask his mother, “if Pop Pop were alive, would he be at these games?” To which she said yes but he would have flown rather than driving all the way, as they had done. That grandchild and all his other grandchildren know that if he were alive, he would be at all their games. They cherish his memory in part because he watched them play sports.

And so, as the time for my remarks has ended, what might we conclude from this history of sports and survey of an ordinary American family. I have seven observations:

First, sports are timeless and universal;

Second, sports educate about fairness and justice with their emphasis on rules, fair play and sportsmanship;

Third, sports remind us of the importance of play and light-heartedness in life – the value of re-invigorating one’s body and re-charging one’s spirits;

Fourth, for children, sports keep them active and focused and teach important lessons for life, including the importance of preparation and striving to achieve goals; for families, they help to bring them together; for communities, they build pride, promote cohesion, and provide a place for people to engage with each other; and for adults, they allow for socializing, exercise, tension relief and fun;

Fifth, sports open conversations for people with each other and unite people from very different backgrounds;

Sixth, sports provide rich memories of loved ones, personal glory moments, and inspiring athletic achievements by individuals and teams; and

Seventh, the limitless possibilities of human achievement are so beautifully expressed in sports.

I thank you for your patient listening and I wish you a very good day. I hope, Pat, that some future program might go beyond my own perspectives of sports in America. Policies and law need to be shaped by a full understanding of the activity to which they relate and those who participate as players and fans must never forget the far-reaching effects sports have on the fabric of America.