TALKING AROUND RACE: SPORTS MEDIA DIALOGUES AND THE MODERN COLLEGE ATHLETE

Dr. Andrew C. Billings
Clemson University
Chris Anderson’s “The Long Tail”

The New Marketplace

Popularity

Head

Long Tail

Products

Graph from http://www.longtail.com/about.html
The Standard Curve
WELCOME TO THE ECHOCAMBER

MEDIA DISTRIBUTIONS: KURTOSIS
THE RESULT: THE BIG GET BIGGER

- Water Cooler Programming
- Appealing Demographics
- Engaged Audience

1. Packers vs. Steelers (Super Bowl XLV)  
   Number of Viewers: 111 million
2. Saints vs. Colts (Super Bowl XLIV)
3. M*A*S*H Finale  
   Number of Viewers: 105 million
WELCOME TO THE ECHOCHAMBER

MEDIA BECOMES THE VENUE IN WHICH WE:

✓ DISCUSS RACE
✓ EXAMINE ITS ROLE IN COLLEGE ATHLETICS
✓ FORM OPINIONS THAT BECOME OUR DISCUSSIONS
Japanese and Asians are inventive: “They can turn a television into a watch.”
On Donovan McNabb: “The media has been very desirous that a black quarterback do well.”
THREE MAJOR THEMES DECADES AGO

1. BLACK ATHLETES AS “BORN” GIFTED

2. WHITE ATHLETE AS TEAM-ORIENTED/DETERMINED

3. WHITE ATHLETE SUPERIOR INTELLIGENCE ATHLETICALLY
TRANSFORMATION OF THE THREE MAJOR THEMES TODAY: THREE EXEMPLARS

1. APTITUDE AS MEASURED BY THE WONDERLIC TEST FOR DRAFTEES

2. THE “ONE-AND-DONE” COLLEGE BASKETBALL PLAYER

3. THE “OUT OF PLACE” COLLEGE PLAYER (ABOVE OR BELOW SKILL LEVEL)
THE WONDERLIC EXAM

- 50 QUESTIONS
- 12 MINUTES
- MILLIONS OF IMPLICATIONS
THE WONDERLIC EXAM

VINCE YOUNG:
SCORE = 6

RYAN FITZPATRICK:
SCORE = 48
THE WONDERLIC EXAM

MEDIA EXAMPLES

D. McNABB
SCORE: 14

A.J. GREEN
SCORE: 10

P. PETERSON
SCORE: 9
"That's someone hating, trying to make it look like I'm dumb, which I know I'm not," Young says. "But it was also disrespectful, just how it got out. For the first time in history, somebody's score gets out and gets talked about like that. Somebody wants to find something on me, which wasn't even true. It was horrible."

--Vince Young, who later scored a 16 on the test
“[He] plays like a low-test guy.”
“He has an instinct issue, and I think it’s tied to his mental [ability]. He can only handle so much.”

--Two unnamed agents, on Patrick Peterson’s draft prospects to Nawrocki, 2011
“The rebuilding Jets might not be ready to compete for a Super Bowl, but if they ever get invited to a Quiz Bowl, watch out.”

--Cimini & O’Keefe, 2006

On the Jets having the highest draftee Wonderlic scores
“ONE AND DONE” PLAYERS

“NOT THE COLLEGE TYPE”
"ONE AND DONE" PLAYERS

"THE COLLEGE TYPE"
“By rule, the best high school players in the country are supposed to pretend to go to college for a year...[if the Brandon Jennings choice became a trend], college basketball would end up being played completely by players who also go to college. It's crazy enough to work.”

--White, 2008
Dick Vitale

“Academically, you wonder what these kids are doing after their eligibility is all completed.”

Bob Knight

“You can have a kid come to school for a year and play basketball and he doesn't even have to go to class. He certainly doesn't have to go to class the second semester. I'm not exactly positive about the first semester.”
“A more academically oriented top player, [Brandon] Knight might still be around when the next one-and-done possibility makes it onto the UK campus in 2011.”

--Mathis, 2010
“OUT OF PLACE” PLAYERS

- POSITIONALLY “IN PLACE”
“OUT OF PLACE” PLAYERS

- POSITIONALLY “OUT OF PLACE”
Wall Street Journal Study: Black QB winning percentages 31% higher than White QB’s since 1970.

The Response:
“Where is the study that says white college quarterbacks have higher GPA's than black college quarterbacks? Oh, that’s right. We can’t publish that because it would be racist.”

--Orlando Sentinel
“On the field, Gerhart is indefatigable. He runs like a bull wearing ballet slippers. His strengths -- size, power, balance, toughness, competitiveness -- are hard to find in one player and harder to teach...But Gerhart also hits the books hard. The classes he's taking this quarter include investment science, integral calculus and prehistoric archaeology.”

--Crouse, 2011
"Everybody loves his motor. The guy never takes a play off. He's also like Kevin Love in that he's physically so strong. He can kind of will his way around the basketball. He's a smart player too. He's not just a brute. He's got a very high basketball I.Q."

--Chad Ford, on Tyler Hansbrough’s draft prospects
CONCLUSIONS: RACIAL STEREOTYPING 2.0

WE TALK AROUND RACE IN SPORT
CONCLUSIONS:
RACIAL STEREOTYPING 2.0

Thank You!