

A VIEW OF OUR GAMES



***STEVEN B.
WILLIAMSON***

A View of Our Games

Copyright © 2019, 2021 by Steven B. Williamson

All Rights Reserved

First Edition, May 2019

(Originally published as *From A View of Our Games*)

Second Edition, June 2021

ISBN-13: 9798514142347

A View of Our Games

Steven B. Williamson

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter I: The Land and the Air.....	5
Chapter II: Margin of Error.....	12
Chapter III: Fortune and Fate.....	23
Chapter IV: Cross Examination.....	29
Chapter V: The International Game.....	52
Chapter VI: Ballpark Figures.....	68
Chapter VII: Field of Dreams.....	86
Chapter VIII: Sports Watch.....	100
Chapter IX: Poker Vortex.....	112
Chapter X: The Politics of Poker.....	120
Chapter XI: Horseshoe Sense.....	127
Chapter XII: Chip Shots.....	138
Chapter XIII: Extra Innings.....	152
Appendix A: Photo Credits.....	155
Appendix B: Endnotes.....	156

This book was written by the author in his personal capacity. The opinions expressed in this publication are the author's own and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of the individuals, businesses, agencies, or any other groups mentioned within these pages, or anyone affiliated in any way with the author. No endorsement of the author's opinions by any other person or group is implied. The names and/or personal details of some individuals have been changed to protect their privacy.

“The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will.” – Vince Lombardi

Introduction

“Learn to write the same way you learn to play golf. You do it and keep doing it until you get it right.” – Tom Clancy

Since I was about seven or eight years of age, I've been a sports fan. Since then, a large number of things have happened that I would like to write about.

While working on my first three books, I kept on jotting down sports notes and even devoted many pages to sports subjects. However, there was just too much material overall. Since many of the sports stories took those books in very different directions from the one I had intended, I edited out most of the sports-related text.

I did save all that extra material in its own separate file, intending someday to write an entire book about sports. However, my other literary projects kept me too busy to complete it, so the sports manuscript stayed on the back burner. Briefly, I even thought about putting the best sports chapters in their own section of a previous book that I was working on, but I (wisely) reconsidered that idea.

Then, while recently reading through all the material which had accumulated in that file, I realized that an entire sports book was nearly complete. I also discovered that some pages seemed like the rambling opinions of an average fan talking on a sports radio show (a blue collar caller?) So I scrolled completely through and edited out the most tedious and lackluster parts, only keeping the best sections in there.

In addition, while reviewing all those previously-written sections, I noticed that some of the information was already

out-of-date. To me, that meant it was high time to publish the rest. So with most of the manuscript seemingly already done, I decided to just go ahead and finish it up, moving this book up a couple of spots in my projected publishing order.

That was over four months ago. The manuscript needed a lot more polish than I thought. Also, I came up with a few more interesting topics to write about along the way.

Next, how did I choose the name for this book, *A View of Our Games*? Picking a good title is always a challenge. This time, it was very difficult to come up with the right one as I considered numerous candidates. This book is all about my involvement in watching, participating, and thinking about sports (games). I am also a fan of the James Bond books (and films) by Ian Fleming as well as other espionage novels such as the masterful works by former British intelligence insider John le Carré. Putting all these things together, I thought over a few spy-style title variations, and finally decided that *A View of Our Games* was the best choice.

An element that I did introduce for the first time is the use of endnotes at the back of this book. Various style guides differ widely on the purposes of endnotes and footnotes. I don't want you to get distracted or frustrated turning pages back and forth to look things up, so I always include new definitions in the text itself and additional information in parentheses (or in a new paragraph). I think adding a bunch of extra material in the footnotes is both unnecessary and bad writing form, so my endnotes are only used for attribution – to cite the sources of my information – and so you don't need to look anything up as you go along. Please feel free to keep on reading. I just didn't want you to think that I'm making all this stuff up. (To that

end, there are going to be *lots* more endnotes in my next book, which is extremely issue-oriented.)

If you enjoy this book, I think you will find that many of the webpages which I used as sources are quite interesting, so when you're done here, you might enjoy looking up a number of those articles on the Internet. Just wait until you finish reading this book first.

Although I cannot go out and play sports anymore, I still enjoy seeing them. I just can't sit on the couch and watch games on television (TV) for many hours in the way that I used to do. Yet despite the many changes in our country since I was young, major sports events such as championship boxing matches, the Super Bowl, the World Series, and the NCAA basketball tournament still have an air of prestige and great importance, and I like that feeling.

Apparently Paul Allen felt much the same way. As the co-founder of Microsoft, he became a billionaire, later he owned two professional sports teams: the NFL Seattle Seahawks and the NBA Portland Trail Blazers. He must have been a big sports fan. Allen said, "You've got to enjoy time with your family and friends, and if you're involved in sports franchises, those peak moments in playoff games. You have to enjoy life."

This book addresses two different, yet somewhat related, subjects: the first few chapters are about traditional sports topics followed by three chapters dedicated to poker.

For years, a few fans have questioned why the World Series of Poker is broadcast prominently by a sports network, ESPN. There are two good reasons for this: first, while sports are athletic competitions, at their core they are merely games just like poker. Second, the popularity of poker, which

mushroomed during the “poker boom” of the mid-2000s, has a lot to do with the continuing coverage. Note that the “E” in ESPN stands for “Entertainment.”

For those who still want to whine about poker being shown on ESPN, here is something to keep in mind: two buttons on your TV's remote control are usually larger than the others: one changes the channel, and the other one turns it off.

I realize that certain parts of this text might read like someone's personal *blog* (weblog). I'm fine with that. We all can write however we choose. It's my book, so there are a few pages about me and my personal involvement in sports, although I did decide to put most of them back in chapters VI and VII, just before the poker section.

But in a larger sense, I have tried to follow the advice of noted author Franz Kafka, who told writers, “Don't bend; don't water it down; don't try to make it logical; don't edit your own soul according to the fashion. Rather, follow your most intense obsessions mercilessly.”

Sounds good to me. I'm going with that.

Chapter I: The Land and the Air

“Offense sells tickets. Defense wins championships.” – Paul “Bear” Bryant

Sports aren't just a bunch of people running around and chasing a ball. The games mean a lot to their players, who are competing for their jobs and livelihoods. The chance of severe injury is always present, often there are millions of dollars at stake, and we never know who will win. The contests are not merely scripted movies or staged “reality TV” shows. They're real life.

When you get to know who the best players are and a few things about them, even a sedate game like golf gets more interesting. I feel that way about all sports. The story behind the athletes is what makes the result meaningful. This is how you can explain the appeal of sports to someone who is not a fan, such as a wife or girlfriend.

Then there are the rivalries. Although the names on the backs of the jerseys will change, most true fans stick with their favorite teams through the years, and despise their rivals. We need the chance of losing (and a real villain) to enjoy victory – but we don't want our opponents to be *too* good.

Legacy of the Empire

How long have sports existed? We don't really know for certain, but there is prehistoric evidence in places such as France, Mongolia, Libya, and Japan that primitive man did certain types of activities resembling sports, such as wrestling,

archery, running, and swimming. There are also indications that similar contests were held later by the Sumerians and ancient Egyptians.¹ Eventually, organized competitions were held by the ancient Greeks. Those were the forerunners to our modern Olympic Games.²

Our contemporary team sports trace their beginnings to the era of the British Empire. The English took games such as cricket and soccer around the world.³ Although the exact dates of the Empire's reign are open to interpretation, historians generally regard the period from 1815 to 1914 as "Britain's imperial century."⁴

Why didn't we have team sports before then? The industrial revolution (which lasted roughly from 1760 to 1840) gave leisure time to average working-class citizens so that they could enjoy sports and other pastimes.⁵ This eventually led to some games becoming spectator sports.

Soccer (officially called association football) was split from rugby in 19th century England. Modern American gridiron football is a descendant of that sport.⁶ There is some dispute about the origins of baseball, but many historians believe that it is derived from an old English game known as "rounders."⁷ Field hockey became a favorite of English royalty as early as the 14th century and was adopted by British public schools in the 19th century.⁸ Ice hockey eventually developed from that game. Basketball was an American invention, created by Dr. James Naismith in 1891. His idea was to give the athletes in his YMCA class a new game that they could play indoors during the winter when it was too cold outside for other, already established sports.⁹

So in summary, much of today's American culture is sports-

crazed because of those energetic Englishmen of long ago, with their competitive nature and zest for exploration of the world. Our games are the legacy of the Empire.

Dishing it Out

As the availability of cable TV spread during the late 1970s and through the 1980s, specialized cable networks began to appear, filling insufficiently served programming niches. This was called “narrowcasting.”¹⁰ The world of sports was a major benefactor of this trend as channels such as ESPN were created. The demand for these specialized networks caused cable to grow at a faster rate, which in turn caused the number of new programming options to multiply even more rapidly.¹¹

In rural areas where cable TV did not exist, many homeowners bought large *Television Receive-Only* (TVRO) satellite dishes and put them up in their yards.¹² Also called “big dish systems” because of their six- to twelve-foot dishes, these functioned by intercepting the raw signals transmitted by networks on the C Band. This process worked for free until many of those unedited transmissions were scrambled in 1986, and networks began charging monthly fees to C Band dish owners.¹³ A black market then developed for pirate descramblers, so a new system, Videocipher II Plus (RS), was phased in during 1993.¹⁴

Direct broadcast satellite TV (DBS) providers came along next (in 1994) and offered a new alternative to cable TV and big dish systems. These companies combined all the edited network signals into one compressed transmission on the K_u band that could be received with a small dish.¹⁵ Their relatively

compact size made them a viable option in both rural and urban areas.

C Band satellite TV still exists in 2019 but now is mainly for hobbyists looking for “wild” (unscrambled) transmissions of live events.¹⁶ When TV broadcasts went digital about a decade ago, most paid subscription options disappeared for big dish owners. However, the days of DBS systems are probably numbered too. Now on the horizon, streaming services that provide programming through the Internet will likely make all forms of home satellite TV obsolete within a few years.

A Way with Words

Football is a Thanksgiving tradition, fortunately for fans at home. Many thanks go to the Detroit Lions' owners for volunteering to give up part of their players' holiday time each year in exchange for a guaranteed national broadcast for their typically noncompetitive team. On one recent Thanksgiving Day, the early game featured the Packers and their ad-friendly quarterback, Aaron Rodgers, as they hosted the Chicago Bears in frigid Green Bay, Wisconsin.

One of the best things about sports is that they are on live TV, so occasionally the audio can be candid and off-color. While Green Bay was on offense, the Packers' center apparently got a case of cold hands. He then snapped the football low and it rocketed past Rodgers. As the ball tumbled backwards across the frozen tundra of Lambeau Field, Rodgers yelled, “Aw, f**k!” loudly enough for the field microphones to clearly hear. That was easily my favorite moment of the day.

For many years in the 1970s and 1980s, listening to late

baseball announcer Harry Carey on WGN-TV was a lot of fun. He wasn't really a strategist but Carey was colorful and enthusiastic. He made a lot of bad Chicago Cubs day games much more entertaining.

Coming back from commercial breaks, producer Arne Harris would pan the crowd looking for attractive female fans. Carey would often blurt out something like, "Hey Arne, get a load of the one in the hat!"

One legendary sportscasting tale involved an injured player. Carey said, "Marshall is going back to L.A. to get cocaine for his injured foot!" Carey's broadcast partner, former pitcher Steve Stone, replied, "That's Novocaine, Harry."

The verbose Howard Cosell was a pioneer member of the original ABC *Monday Night Football* announcing team. Cosell was much smarter than most of the jocks whom he reported on. They resented him for that and unfairly criticized him for not being a former player. Cosell once retorted, "I don't have to stick my hand in a blender to know what will happen if I do."

I have to give a big thumbs up to Tony Romo for his terrific color announcing work in the recent Patriots-Chiefs AFC title game. Romo's enthusiasm made the final minutes and overtime of a great football contest sound much more exciting than most other sportscasters could.

This all despite Romo's playing reputation from his days as a talented star quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys, when his disappointing fourth quarters became a recurring scene. Watching the Cowboys play on TV, it seemed inevitable that Romo would make a key mistake or throw a bad interception during crunch time and give the game away. Not anymore. This new Tony Romo is a whole different cat. It kind of makes

you wonder how a quarterback who is that smart could consistently make such bad decisions in the clutch.

By contrast, there's ESPN's Chris Berman. He was a big factor in the early success of his network, but his shtick with cheesy player nicknames and bad impressions has gotten old and tired. It just doesn't work anymore. A few years ago, ESPN expanded their Sunday NFL pregame show. After a promo commercial for the revised program, I told my girlfriend, "Just what we needed: another hour of Chris Berman."

There are far more bad sportscasters than good ones. I'm not going to make a list of them here but I do have a few of the worst offenders in mind. Every weekend, I listen as idiot sports announcers spout off stupid opinions about the action taking place on the field. Frequently, these hacks are so far off that all the fans watching at home can clearly see on repeated instant replays that the announcers are wrong, over and over. It's frustrating to hear those overconfident morons screw up so badly and so often.

The more I watch TV sports, the more I think that most announcers don't know s**t.

From Time to Halftime

Super Bowl halftime shows used to feature a wholesome but boring group of singers and dancers called "Up with People." Watching this awful performance on a cartoon TV, animated wiseass Bart Simpson said, "C'mon snipers, where are you?" During many of those big games, college marching bands were another regular but uninspiring part of the halftime break.

In 1992, the relatively-young Fox network tried to upstage the NFL (National Football League) with a special live broadcast at halftime of the Super Bowl, using their controversial cutting-edge comedy series *In Living Color*. The goal: steal viewers from what is annually the most watched TV program in America. It was a smash success.¹⁷

The NFL fought back the following year, spending big bucks to keep its viewers by hiring Michael Jackson to perform at the Super Bowl in Los Angeles. He delivered, doing what I still think was the best halftime show ever. After dancing and moonwalking through his set, Jackson finished by singing “Heal the World” while a giant planet Earth inflated behind him on the field. Around the stage, hundreds of kids were singing along, hand-in-hand. It was an unprecedented spectacle. Watch it on YouTube if you haven't seen it. That was a “feel good” moment for the ages.

Unfortunately, for a few years after that, some of the NFL's big budget halftime extravaganzas were embarrassingly bad – such as oddly contrived creations involving Indiana Jones in 1995 and the Blues Brothers in 1997. But at least the league had raised the profile of their halftime shows.

During the 2000s, many of the Super Bowl halftime acts were merely washed-up old pop music stars. They didn't have much left in the tank but still had name value that could attract older viewers. Thankfully, that trend finally appears to be changing as younger, more dynamic performers have taken the big stage more recently.

This brings to mind the words of movie star Burt Reynolds, who said, “There are three stages of an actor's career. Young, old, and 'You look good'.”

Chapter II: Margin of Error

“I was not successful as a ball player, as it was a game of skill.” – Casey Stengel

Before cable TV sports ballooned in the 1980s, it was a big deal to see some legends in their rare appearances on the tube. Today, great players are featured in televised games several times a year.

Comparing old time players to today's greats is impossible. The task is merely a mental exercise of poring over statistics and looking at a meager amount of ancient black and white highlights captured on grainy film. For example, other than a few local diehard fans and the players themselves, how many people actually got to see enough games during the 1950s to know how good Willie Mays really was? And how many of those folks are still around today?

In the Draftnik of Time

The annual NFL Draft has a small but dedicated following of “draftniks,” football fanatics who closely study the eligible player pool and every pro franchise's needs, in an attempt to predict which college players each team will draft. Catering to this fan base, sports websites now start to fill up with “mock drafts” soon after the Super Bowl. Few of these sportswriter fictions ever resemble the final result but they keep fans thinking about football from February through April.

The event itself has become a big party held in a large auditorium each spring. Hundreds of fans attend to loudly

count down the time as each team's turn expires, cheer their favorite selections, and jeer all unpopular and seemingly-unwise decisions by unwitting NFL general managers (GMs).

ESPN's draft expert Mel Kiper always appears on the hours-long telecast to analyze each team's selections and reveal his research about little-known prospects to the viewers at home. The draftnik hobby has gotten large enough that ESPN hired Todd McShay a few years ago to join Kiper as a fellow NFL Draft analyst.

While every collegian seemingly has a rosy future as Kiper and McShay tout the player's strong points and potential, history suggests otherwise. Most Hall-of-Famers only come from the top half-dozen or so selections. Players picked in the first round are busts as often as hits. The majority of second and third round choices will only have a moderate long term effect on their teams. Franchises become winners by dodging these traps and choosing impact players, especially after the first round's top prospects are "off the board."

The profession of "draft expert" (whether in a pro team's front office or on TV) is as much an art as a science. The TV commentators make their share of errors in predicting the players' futures. For his part, Kiper isn't shy about ripping teams that make what he feels are big mistakes. That outspoken confidence in his own analysis has landed him a prized annual gig on ESPN's draft telecast. In turn, as an outsider, Kiper has often received harsh criticism from those in the league's "good old boy" network. But it all makes for good theater.

My favorite zinger by Kiper, after the Jets spent a first round pick on a player he had rated as a third-round talent (or

about 50 spots too early) one year: “The New York Jets do not seem to understand the purpose of the draft.”

A Legend in His Own Mind

Director George Lucas once said, “A lot of people like to do certain things, but they're not that good at it. Keep going through the things that you like to do, until you find something that you actually seem to be extremely good at. It can be anything.”

Following up on the section above about the NFL Draft, I believe that there are many intelligent fans who could do a better job at building a team than most pro sports GMs. A talking dog could do a better job than many of the “suits” and the fans know it.

There are two differences between studious sports fans and many of the team executives/college athletic directors: (1) the expensive suits that the execs wear, and (2) lack of sports knowledge by the execs. Because a large number of team owners and GMs are just businessmen who did not achieve their career successes by running sports franchises, often they are not as knowledgeable about the home teams or even sports in general as many of the local fans. It is likely that most pro sports GMs (just as with top executives in other types of companies) got their jobs because of their names and/or *who* they knew, not *what* they knew. Good luck going in and applying for one of those stuffed shirt executive positions if you don't have an “in” at the team office.

Yet if you owned a team, of course you wouldn't want to hire just anyone for the job. Sports talk radio is full of average

Joes calling in with all the answers, but who somehow can't understand why other teams won't trade their biggest stars to the local squad for mediocre players from the end of the bench.

In a previous book, I mentioned a research report titled, “Why the Unskilled Are Unaware: Further Explorations of (Absent) Self-Insight Among the Incompetent.” This study concluded that people tend to greatly overestimate their own abilities and also found that stupid people “grossly overestimate” their own skills the most.¹⁸

Yet experience in pro sports management is no guarantee of success. Each year, numerous teams fire losing coaches and managers, then frequently hire retreads who have previously failed in other organizations instead of giving someone new a well-deserved opportunity. In most cases, these underachievers fail a second (or even third) time (although college coaches seem to have a bit better luck in this situation).

Bill Belichick is the rare head coach who improved in his second job. There, with the New England Patriots, he did not have to put up with Art Modell (one of the NFL's most infamous owners of all time), as he did at his first coaching position in Cleveland. Since leaving that franchise, where he was fired over the phone by Modell, Belichick has won six Super Bowls. Reportedly, Modell told the Patriots owner that hiring Belichick would be the “worst mistake” he ever made. (Is this section of the book starting to ring true yet?)

Philosopher Bertrand Russell observed, “One of the painful things about our time is that those who feel certainty are stupid, and those with any imagination and understanding are filled with doubt and indecision.” Unsuccessful sports bosses rarely resign on their own, especially pro coaches, because

there are very few of those highly-paid positions. But being a sports executive or coach isn't for everyone.

Although Vince Lombardi once said, “Winners never quit and quitters never win,” that concept might not be an absolute truism. Best-selling marketing author Seth Godin stated, “It’s time to quit when you secretly realize you’ve been settling for mediocrity all along. It’s time to quit when the things you’re measuring aren’t improving, and you can’t find anything better to measure.”

Official Protest

There is far too much attention paid to the officials in sports today. The situation in baseball, where many umpires have adopted a confrontational, belligerent attitude toward the players¹⁹, is not an enjoyable one for fans to see.

Referees seem to enjoy being on TV too much, particularly in football, where on-field discussions last forever and their penalty announcements seem to be drawn out in order to provide themselves with more camera time. No one ever went to the stadium to see the referees. The officials have performed well if, after all the fans go home, no one remembers that the refs were even there.

Of course, there have been plenty of occasions in past seasons when the officials have been much too conspicuous. In an infamous 1986 *Monday Night Football* contest, Washington defeated San Francisco 14-6 as 18 penalties were called, 15 of them on the visiting 49ers. It was a sloppily-played game, six turnovers occurred that night too. (Although passing for 441 yards, Joe Montana also threw three interceptions.)²⁰

The game lasted 3 hours and 53 minutes – the longest game ever on *Monday Night Football* up to that point.

Video replay has slowed down our games greatly. It was supposed to fix officiating errors, but instead, when the replays are examined, it often seems like almost *any* outcome could be the final verdict. There isn't enough consistency in the review process. In the NFL particularly, “incontrovertible evidence” is supposed to be required for video replay to overturn any call made on the field. Whatever happened to that concept?

If we are going to use video replay in sports, judgment calls should also be subject to potential challenge and review, under the otherwise standard rules for replay – incontrovertible evidence should still be required to change any call made on the field. By allowing officials to correct the infamous missed pass interference call (a judgment decision) near the end of regulation in the recent Los Angeles-New Orleans NFC title game, this rule change would have probably given the Saints a trip to Super Bowl LIII in Atlanta, instead of the Rams.²¹

As examples in this section, I have mentioned shaky officiating that penalized the 49ers and Saints – two franchises that I dislike greatly and which have histories of flagrantly breaking the rules.^{22 23} But there is one advantage in using these two cases to support my arguments: readers will not be able to accuse me of favoritism.

Committee Decisions

“March Madness” is the common name for the wildly successful college basketball championship tournament conducted by the NCAA (the governing body for college sports

here in the U.S.) each spring. After all the individual conferences have completed their own tournaments, the league winners and numerous at-large teams are paired up by the NCAA's tournament selection committee, which reveals the matchups during an hour-long Sunday afternoon CBS show. By Monday morning, office pools and Internet contests abound as both college hoops fans and non-fans try to fill out their "brackets" (blank tournament sheets), pick the most winners from the 68-team field, and win cash or prizes.

However, after releasing its complete set of pairings annually, it always looks like the NCAA's tournament selection committee has completely screwed up the event. This annual epic fail leaves diehard followers of the sport scratching their heads as schools with a winning track record are scheduled to meet each other on the first weekend, while overrated, unproven teams are given high seeds and easy matchups.

When I write about overrated, unproven teams, I mainly mean the ones with a history of going home early in the tournament each year and that don't meet the "eye test" (explained simply, by *watching* a team play, do they *look* like they are actually as good as their rating? Numbers can lie.)

At the opposite end of the spectrum (and just as baffling), is that a substantial number of mediocre "power conference" schools are often granted questionable passes to the "big dance" while a few talented small conference teams don't make the cut and get left at home (usually ones with sterling records that unluckily finished second in their conference tournament). At first glance, this objection might sound contradictory to the point I made a few paragraphs above, but I'm not suggesting giving a high seed to a second chance small

school team, just letting them have a shot somewhere down in the field instead of putting in an underachieving large school. (There's more on this issue to follow, a bit down below.)

Each time all this nonsense happens, it looks more and more like the committee members complete their pairings on Thursday afternoon, long before the major conference tournament finals are played on Saturday and Sunday. Presumably, the fellows then have a great time partying at their hotel for the rest of the weekend. This is the best conclusion that I can draw when the tournament pairings annually appear to have little relationship to the results from the last week of the season. You have to wonder what those old guys are doing all weekend. They can't really be watching the same games as everyone else, unless they are totally incompetent.

Why all this debate about the brackets, and how are the teams selected for the field? Veteran players of March Madness contests know that about 25 leagues mostly full of smaller schools each receive one automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament, same as the 10 or so major conferences do. The remaining spots in the 68-team field are filled by at-large teams: the ones rated by computers and the selection committee as the best of the non-qualifiers. (Strength of schedule, quality wins against top opponents, and your last 10 regular season games all supposedly play big roles in the selection decisions.) The aforementioned small schools get very few opportunities to play their larger cousins and, in any event, they seldom beat the national powerhouses.

The upshot of all this is that most of the small school automatic qualifiers receive the lowest seeds (also sometimes

called “lines”) in each region, #12 through #16. Spots for the typically-mediocre at-large teams from power conferences end at #11. To escape rock bottom and get a high seed, a small school must usually have multiple deep runs through the NCAA Tournament and thereby establish a strong national reputation. By doing so, teams like Gonzaga and Butler can become more attractive to larger schools for scheduling purposes and improve their all-important strength of schedule rating. Easier said than done.

Often there is controversy over the squads that are left out of the tournament field, especially when mediocre power conference teams are selected over small school teams with outstanding records. But when you're debating the merits of at-large candidates for tourney spots #41 through #50, I don't think this is truly a major concern. So I ask, why not just give more quality small conference schools a second chance?

For example, let's say that Western Delaware Wesleyan goes 22-4 in the regular season, finishes first in the small school Aaron Burr Conference, but gets upset 70-69 by D.C. A&M (a respectable 17-9 squad) in the ABC tournament final. The underdog A&M Aggies would get the league's automatic bid to the big dance, while the top-rated Wesleyan Wildcats would usually miss out on an at-large bid. If you're on the NCAA tournament selection committee, and you're choosing the last 12 or so at-large teams in the field, should you give a second chance to a 24-5 WDWU squad, or choose a middling big conference school like Florida, Minnesota, or Seton Hall (often with records like 17-13) mainly on their strength of schedule?

The selection committee is improving in regard to

evaluating small conference schools: longshots Belmont and St. Mary's made the cut this year while Buffalo, Wofford, and Nevada actually received decent spots on the big board. Gonzaga was even given a #1 seed, although the Bulldogs have been steadily working their way up the basketball hierarchy for a couple of decades. Note however, that many smaller leagues end their own conference tournaments up to a week before the major conferences, giving the committee ample time to make these choices before the final Saturday and Sunday arrive.

In an attempt to fix the myriad list of miscues made this March by the tournament committee, I sat down and tried to put the field together myself, but by the time I had finished, I had moved two-thirds of the 68 teams to new spots on the board – and I had printed out the original brackets and completely marked them up with a red pen three times. Here are the highlights:

I did not believe that three ACC teams (Duke, Virginia, and North Carolina) should have received #1 seeds (out of the four total regions) this year. I thought that Big Ten Conference champion Michigan State was deserving of a top seed and should have received one. Although Virginia did ultimately win the tournament, State did knock out Duke (the overall #1 team) and thereby went on to the Final Four. The third ACC team, North Carolina, lost in the round of 16 to Auburn.

The tournament selection committee also showed massive disrespect for the Pac-12 Conference, only selecting three teams from the league and giving all of them relatively low seeds. Nevertheless, all three teams did win their first game and conference champion Oregon even won twice.

Finally, the committee used to have a policy of not putting

teams from the same conference on the same side (eight teams) of a regional bracket, but that rule seems to have vanished. Michigan State found league foe Minnesota as their second round opponent, with Maryland also placed on their side of the East (!) Regional bracket, making it a total of three Big Ten schools that were placed there. This particular situation was poorly-planned and didn't seem to fit either of the important goals in planning the tournament fairly: proximity or balance. At a minimum, swapping #10 seed Minnesota with New Jersey's Seton Hall (#10 in the Midwest) would have helped a lot and been one easy upgrade.

To be completely fair, spacing teams out fairly in the brackets has gotten more difficult than ever. *Conference realignment* is the term used for the movement of many schools to larger leagues during the last decade. With some of today's mega-conferences having 14 schools or more, and up to eight teams being selected for the NCAA Tournament from those leagues, it has become difficult to know whether a school is in the Big East, ACC, or AAC, for example. You can't tell the players without a scorecard anymore.

Chapter III: Fortune and Fate

“Providence has its appointed hour for everything. We cannot command results, we can only strive.” – Mahatma Gandhi

Fans who talk about the “luck of the Irish” are often speaking about Notre Dame, the most polarizing school in college sports. There is a mistaken belief by many football fans living in Indiana that because the institution is physically located in South Bend, it must be a state public college, so they cheer for the Fighting Irish. In fact, Notre Dame is a private Catholic university.²⁴

Not only that, Notre Dame's two most prominent sports programs don't even recruit very many athletes from in-state. Of an astounding 107 players listed on the school's 2018 football roster, only seven were from Indiana. That's just 6.5 percent.²⁵

OK, you might say, but Indiana is known as a basketball state. Yet the amount of homegrown hoops talent attending Notre Dame was even lower: *zero* out of 12 team members were from in-state.²⁶

Routine Maintenance

Athletes and fans are very superstitious. Many have a lucky shirt to wear on game day. I try to avoid things like eating after kickoff or getting up in the middle of a play. But it can be difficult to keep casual viewers from walking in front of the TV during the action or prevent other distractions. Napoleon

Bonaparte once said, “The torment of precautions often exceeds the dangers to be avoided. It is sometimes better to abandon one's self to destiny.”

Many fans also firmly believe in the “announcer jinx.” If a sportscaster tells you that the shooter has made 20 straight free throws, he misses the next one every time. Maybe it's real.

I've noticed other similar oddities in sports. If a basketball referee misses an obvious foul or violation by the offense, the result is inevitably a three-point basket. Always. And if you leave the room during a game, something big always seems to happen right away and you miss seeing it. A hockey goal or football touchdown is usually the result. Here are a few prime examples:

While I was watching the NFL playoffs one afternoon, the Carolina Panthers were comfortably leading Seattle in the second half, 31-0. I clicked over to another channel showing a college basketball game just to check the score and missed only one play. Naturally, it was a touchdown for the Seahawks, their first points of the entire game. That particular instance might not have been an epic fail but there have been a few of those.

In 2012, Indiana University (IU) trailed top-ranked Kentucky by two points with just seconds left. As the teams talked during their final timeout, my girlfriend's daughter rushed into the living room and the HDMI cable popped off the back of the TV set. By the time I had it plugged back in, Christian Watford had made a game-winning three-pointer at the buzzer and an Indiana legend was born. I missed it.

As Green Bay was on the verge of blowing the lead in their Super Bowl game against Pittsburgh, I had to go to the restroom. Fortunately, the Steelers immediately fumbled the

ball away and eventually lost the game. That was one of the best plays I ever missed.

Uniform Consistency

Red has always been my favorite color, probably because when I first became a sports fan as a youngster, my favorite teams wore red: in baseball, the Cincinnati Reds, and in basketball, the IU Hoosiers. So it should be no surprise that I think the best-looking uniforms in sports today are the all-red variations used by the Arizona Cardinals and Kansas City Chiefs. They only occasionally bring out the monochrome outfits but I wouldn't mind if they wore them for every home game.

Most lists of the “best sports uniforms ever” include many never-changing classics, and for good reason: typically, they feature clean, timeless designs. I agree with that approach.

Also, continuity and familiarity in design promotes awareness of your brand, a valuable concept in business. Yet a recent trend in sports, especially among college football teams, is to wear a wide variety of different uniform combinations. This is a big mistake. Teams that change their look weekly, such as college football's Oregon Ducks, get a failing grade in public recognition.

Like the Ducks, some professional teams have made really bad choices for their uniforms. During the 1970s, a number of major league baseball franchises wore colorful, garish jerseys that looked like they had been stolen from industrial softball league teams. In the 1990s, several NBA clubs experimented with wild avant-garde jersey designs and logos.

The NFL has not been exempt from fashion faux pas. After

the introduction of *Thursday Night Football*, the NFL created the concept of “color rush” uniforms in 2015 with each team wearing a single color – with some odd results, such as the Titans in baby blue against the Jaguars in all gold. (Most monocolored uniforms don't look nearly as good as the all red ones that the Cardinals and Chiefs have.)

In 2016, the Arizona Diamondbacks introduced dark gray road uniforms. In doing so, the franchise set a new standard for unsightliness on the field. Their players now look like the surly janitor on TV's *Scrubs*, not like professional athletes. (*Note: in 2020, the Diamondbacks dumped the ugly dark gray janitor suits for a more traditional light gray.*)

And black hats at home? Good luck selling those to fans living here in our sunny state. Anyway, black is traditionally a secondary road color, not for use in home games. The uniforms are so repulsive that I can barely stand to look at them on TV, so mostly I have stopped watching the D-backs' road games.

The Diamondbacks' color scheme is truly awful, but as far as style goes, at least their uniforms don't sport any outlandish design characteristics. The worst uniform fashion concept in recent years, hands down, belongs to the Pittsburgh Steelers' bizarre bumblebee-striped throwback football jerseys. (Fortunately, I think they have retired them now.)

The ugliest sports uniforms ever? Those have to be the Houston Astros' appalling 1970s jerseys with multicolored stripes in red, orange, and yellow, which are a stark contrast to how good the team's current orange and navy alternate jerseys look.

I do like stripes but they have to be used carefully in any kind of fashion design. For example, I think the Cincinnati

Bengals should replace their outdated uniforms and take the old tiger stripes off their helmets. The tiger's head logo introduced in 1997 would look much better on the side of those orange helmets instead.

In 2004, the Bengals' outfits did receive a more modern update, but they still have some quirks that need to be fixed. The white side stripes on the black home jerseys and the orange shoulders on the white away jerseys are two design elements that both need to go away. By contrast, the “white tiger” color rush uniforms that debuted in 2016 are really sharp.

It seems that many Cincinnati fans would like to see the Bengals bring back the “jumping tiger” logo used on uniforms during the late 1990s, and I agree with them. I think the franchise could find a place for it such as on their jersey sleeves. However, the current striped letter “B” logo is absolutely characterless and it should vanish forever. It looks like something that an inept committee of pencil pushers came up with. I refuse to buy any merchandise with that awful striped letter “B.”

Color Code

There is a fashion rule of thumb that you don't wear white between Labor Day and Memorial Day. It's a color best donned when the sun is at its hottest and brightest, not during the snowy and cold months of winter. Yet here in Arizona, white clothes are OK year round for practical reasons. As I write this, it is early April and the NCAA basketball tournament just ended last night. Outside, it is sunny and 96 degrees. I am

wearing a white polo shirt and white shorts.

Things are a bit different back in Indiana, where summers are short and much of the rest of the year is cold and gray. During my days in college there, a member of our circle had a girlfriend with a puffy white ski jacket. She must have had a lot of second thoughts after buying it as her winter coat because she often said that it made her look like a snowman.

Among the more quirky recent design schemes of some college football teams is an occasional switch to white helmets and all-white uniforms. I don't think this is a good look for the dreary days of fall and winter. Every time I see a football team wearing all white on an overcast day, I think of that girl's white coat and Frosty the Snowman.

Chapter IV: Cross Examination

“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new.” – Socrates

Modern sports are facing a number of critical issues. In this chapter, I will examine some of those problems and propose a few possible rule changes that could make our games better – some of which might even be enacted in the future.

Game Changers

Although professional sports are bigger than ever in both revenue and franchise value,²⁷ in some ways each has reached a virtual crossroads. The games themselves are changing rapidly for several reasons.

Consider the possibility that many traditional fields and standard-size courts might be too small for modern players. Also, today's athletes are so physically gifted that they might have become inherently dangerous to others. For example, it could be that contemporary football players are simply able to hit each other harder now than is physically tolerable, perhaps their heads are unable to absorb the blows safely even inside today's advanced helmets. We don't yet know for certain.

In addition, modern sports equipment is so good that some of it can be unfair or downright dangerous. Those amazing football helmets can also deliver devastating hits to opponents. Companies can now make amazing metal baseball bats that are too good for batters to use and are therefore unsafe for fielders.²⁸ Racing teams can build cars that go too fast for the

track.²⁹ There are fantastic golf balls now that can travel great distances, making the game unfair for opponents.³⁰ In the world of sports, modern technology seems to have exceeded our human physical abilities.

On the plus side, sports medicine is better than ever today.³¹ Players can return from serious knee damage and other injuries that used to end most athletic careers. Experts are finally considering the effects of concussions and the *traumatic brain injuries* (TBI) that can result from contact during competition. Safer cars (and fewer casualties) have made modern racing fans more sensitive to severe injuries on the increasingly rare occasions when they do occur.³²

Money has had a largely negative impact on our sports, both college and professional. For example, greed has given us far too many franchises in all of our professional leagues today. Not every city needs or deserves a major league team. Many smaller cities cannot support the massive payrolls required by teams in top level leagues, therefore their clubs' owners cannot field competitive teams. On that basis alone, those locations should only have minor league sports franchises.

Modern sports have become all about selling entertainment and merchandise to as many consumers as possible, real sports fans be damned. The product on the field isn't as good as it should be. Having too many teams means that their rosters are hugely watered down with mediocre players.

This situation also means it is much too difficult for the average city's team to win a pro championship today. Franchises must overcome very long odds to become consistent title contenders, although a few, the richest of the rich, do exactly that. With so many opponents to overcome and

outlast in each sport, capturing a sports title in America today is almost as difficult as winning the lottery. Most fans now have to be happy with merely winning a division title or making the playoffs occasionally. But they aren't content with that, of course, and I don't see any way of putting the genie back in the bottle.

Purists typically resist change, so the end result in most situations is usually evolution, not revolution. But since many of today's sports have now reached crucial turning points in their existence, major changes might be necessary in order for those games to continue. In 20 years, some of our most popular sports might look very different than they do today.

Dangerous Game

While the concerns over concussions in sports did not begin only yesterday, the issue of head injuries has become a hot topic since the death of Pittsburgh lineman Mike Webster in 2002.³³ Both a Will Smith movie (*Concussion*) and a *Frontline* TV documentary have helped focus attention on the issue. Since learning about research showing brain damage in former players, the NFL has publicly questioned the findings and tried to downplay the risks of their sport.³⁴ Some experts now maintain that a cultural change is necessary in how we deal with sports concussions.³⁵

Researchers have determined that a single bad concussion is not always the cause of TBI, it also can be the result of hundreds (or even thousands) of blows to the head while playing sports. This has become known as *Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy* (CTE). According to the Boston University

Research CTE Center, “CTE is a progressive degenerative disease of the brain found in people with a history of repetitive brain trauma (often athletes)...”³⁶

A diagnosis of CTE cannot actually be confirmed until examination of brain tissue following a person's death, but the symptoms are often apparent in sufferers long before that happens. (It has even been suggested that the suicide of famed writer Ernest Hemingway was a result of CTE that was caused by several major head traumas that he had suffered.³⁷)

In one research study, 87 of 91 former players whose brains were examined showed signs of brain damage.³⁸ Another study of 42 retired NFL players found that those who had started tackle football before age 12 did about 20 percent worse on a battery of tests measuring brain function.³⁹

Yet most of these modern gladiators seem willing to continue playing football, even though they have learned that, by doing so, there is a real risk of permanent, irreversible brain damage. Athletes already know that other types of severe (and even crippling) injuries are common in football and its players acknowledge that they struggle in a violent, dangerous pursuit with great physical risks. Most take the chance anyway because the potential financial rewards for reaching the top level are so great. Even an average collegiate football player can reap the long-term monetary benefits of a free college education.

Will this grim issue bring an end to organized football? Surprisingly, that day might be closer than you would believe. Liability insurance is the huge, hidden chunk of the financial iceberg that could sink the whole ship. Ten years ago, many companies were lined up and willing to insure football leagues. As of January 2019, just one company was offering workers'

compensation coverage for NFL teams.⁴⁰ If there is no insurance, there will be no more football. Period.

The principals involved frequently compare football's potential CTE liability to the staggering cost of legal judgments resulting from the use of asbestos.⁴¹ Exposure to asbestos, a fireproof yet hazardous substance once widely utilized in home construction, has created a blizzard of lawsuits that have rocked the insurance industry in recent years at an estimated cost of \$100 billion.⁴²

Development of better helmets might be essential for football to continue onward. It is unknown if such advances alone will solve the problem, but that seems unlikely.⁴³

Today's players might have simply become too big and fast for football to be played as it used to be. Since the late 1970s, the modern game has evolved into a passing show with receivers and quarterbacks squarely in the crosshairs of hard-hitting defenders. Running backs, once the stars of the gridiron, are now mere supporting actors. Encouraging more rushing plays and less passing plays might reduce the danger to "defenseless" receivers. Widening the field (as in Canadian football) could be another part of the solution. By spacing the big guys out a bit more, smaller and faster players might become more attractive to teams and coaches.

Players in other sports also seem to be susceptible to TBI. I have often wondered why soccer players did not have head injuries from repeatedly "heading" the ball. In fact, it has been discovered in recent years that some of them actually do, so the soccer world has started to become concerned about this issue now too.⁴⁴ I would suggest that cycling is much more dangerous than most people probably realize. In 2009, head

injuries caused by cycling accidents actually resulted in a higher number of emergency room visits than those from football.⁴⁵ Not only that, but TBI can also affect participants in baseball, softball, water sports such as diving, hockey, rugby, lacrosse, and even basketball.

Skiing is not just an Olympic sport but it is a popular recreational activity too. Yet skiing also presents extreme risks of TBI to its participants. For example, the deaths of actress Natasha Richardson and singer Sonny Bono,⁴⁶ as well as the crippling brain damage suffered by Formula One racing champion Michael Schumacher⁴⁷ (who suffered his head injury only a couple months before my own brain hemorrhage) were all due to skiing accidents.

Logically, you would presume that those at risk for head injuries would also include participants in combat sports such as boxing, mixed martial arts (MMA), and pro wrestling. The damaging effects of boxing have been studied⁴⁸ and the consequences of TBI have been clearly seen in that sport for decades.⁴⁹ (In boxing, TBI is often referred to as *dementia pugilistica*.) However, with all the recent publicity about CTE in sports, will young athletes stop fighting? And if so, will the decline of football follow?

Overtime and Overtime Again

A less critical, but increasingly important, issue for the NFL is its unfair and outdated set of overtime rules. Three times in playoff games, the New England Patriots have received the opening kickoff in overtime and then scored on their first possession to end the contest, including in their amazing

comeback victory against the Atlanta Falcons in Super Bowl LI. This was also the outcome of their January 2019 AFC championship game in Kansas City: the top-seeded Chiefs never even got the chance to touch the football in overtime.

Typically, offenses seem to have a big advantage against tired defenses in the fourth quarter. That edge continues on through the extra period when one is required. So the NFL overtime rules are heavily slanted in favor of the team that wins the coin toss and gets the ball first – a purely random outcome.

To be completely fair, each team should be guaranteed an equal number of possessions in overtime. This is one really good aspect of the rules in college football, although the way that the NCAA (the governing body for college sports here in the U.S.) approaches the mechanics of playing that extra period is much different than the NFL does. I'm not saying that the NFL should do overtime exactly the way that the NCAA does, in fact, I don't think they should. Just change the rules a little bit to insure an equal number of possessions for each team, just like taking turns at bat in baseball, until an "inning" ends with one team ahead. Easy fix.

Brady's Patriots were trailing 28-3 in the Super Bowl against the Falcons but then he and his team got it together late in the third quarter. They had just enough time to stage an unprecedented comeback, miraculously tie the game, and force a historic overtime in which they won. But champions never give up easily. Legendary football coach Vince Lombardi once said, "We didn't lose the game, we just ran out of time."

One final suggestion for the NFL: let the teams with the better records host *all* the playoff games. Stop giving division

winners with mediocre 8-8 records home games against outstanding wild card teams that are 12-4. It is a really dumb rule and I'm tired of seeing this happen. Get rid of it.

Space Race

On the hardwood in 2019, space is at a premium. Today's bigger, taller professional basketball players take up far more room on their currently-congested courts than in the past. For example, if you watch a high school basketball game followed by a National Basketball Association (NBA) contest, you can tell immediately that they are really two completely different sports. The most obvious reason is the sheer physical size of the pros, who occupy a floor space that is the same width as in high school gyms and only ten feet longer.⁵⁰

The NBA has addressed this problem before. The lane to the basket (also called the “key” or the “paint”) is 12 feet across in both high school and college hoops. NBA courts do stretch the lane, but by a mere two feet on each side of the key (making it 16 feet wide in total).⁵¹ The “three-second rule” used at all levels of basketball is supposed to keep offensive players (and indirectly, their defenders) from camping out around the basket, clogging up the lane.⁵²

For many years, the NBA also completely prohibited *zone defenses* (in which defenders mainly patrol zones or areas around the basket). This rule was enacted in order to open up space in the paint and create a more wide-open game. This meant that, unlike colleges and high schools, professional teams were required to play *man-to-man defenses* (in which each defender guards an individual offensive player).⁵³

Eventually, NBA coaches learned to exploit this rule by running *isolation plays* that positioned a team's best scorer alone on one side of the floor to go one-on-one against a single defender.⁵⁴

Zone defenses were illegal but the NBA decided that alone wasn't enough help for offenses and added a four-foot semi-circle under the basket in 1997. Inside this *restricted area*, players cannot establish defensive position and draw a charge on offensive players driving to the basket.⁵⁵ In 2011, the NCAA added a similar restricted arc, three feet in size, and increased its width to four feet in 2015. This rule is completely silly because it substantially limits one of the fundamental components of the game: playing defense. It only exists to promote individual play and give an advantage to the offense.

After an influx of European players (who were used to playing zone defenses) entered the NBA during the 1990s, the league tinkered with the defensive rules in 2001 and made zone defenses technically legal, but also created a “defensive three-second rule” that was designed to keep teams from using traditional forms of zone defenses.⁵⁶ Coaches adjusted, and today, NBA teams often use hybrid “man-zone” defenses to prevent isolation plays.⁵⁷ By allowing a defender to leave his man and go to the *strong side* (where the ball is), the rule change and subsequent strategy shift achieved that goal, but paradoxically, zone defenses that once clogged up the key have also opened up the modern professional game.⁵⁸ As defenders began to spread out across the court more freely, athletic players found new openings to drive past them and get all the way to the basket.

When the upper levels of basketball mainly consisted of

slow but towering inside players who dominated play, these rules were a great idea. But in (1) moving tall defenders away from the basket, while (2) factoring in the 24-second shot clock, and then (3) mixing those rules with today's larger and faster players who can effortlessly drive to the hoop, the sum total of the effects is not so good. Pro basketball has been dramatically and completely transformed from a tall forest full of stationary trees to something resembling a track and field meet.

A fast, individual style of play is actually what the NBA head honchos intended to create. They promoted their individual stars instead of the teams because that was what they felt fans wanted to see. This approach also boosted the league financially. It was able to sell more merchandise like jerseys while helping its sponsors market shoes and soft drinks. This star-driven philosophy originated with 1980s icons such as Michael Jordan and Dominique Wilkins, and it continues today with players such as LeBron James and Kevin Durant. In fact, most pro basketball coaches no longer call the shots – the stars run the teams to a large extent.⁵⁹

What was once a team contest requiring a high level of strategy has become nothing but an exhibition of individual skills. Great athletes like James can drive down those wide open lanes to the basket for easy shots on nearly every possession. (It doesn't help that most modern basketball players don't want to play defense, or don't seem to know how.)

To counter the situation described above, one unexpected variation has arisen: the “small ball” strategy employed by the Golden State Warriors. Winners of three out of the last four

championships, the Warriors don't really utilize a true tall center in the middle. They play a quick, perimeter-oriented offense, shooting (and making) three point shots at a historic rate. Golden State can run fast breaks effectively or break down a defense in a halfcourt game with superb motion and passing. The Warriors apply classic textbook basketball skills to the radically-different game of today.⁶⁰

This is not a totally new approach. An early version of this strategy was successfully used by Phoenix Suns coach Mike D'Antoni beginning in 2004,⁶¹ but it is one that has never been widely employed by NBA teams before. Yet the Warriors' winning ways have made their strategy trendy and many other pro teams now want to copy it. However, few clubs will ever have the incredible shooters that the Warriors currently have.

Yet taking more three-point shots seems to be the only effective counter-strategy against the NBA's favored individual style of play and so teams have embraced that approach. The 2017-18 season was the sixth consecutive in which NBA squads broke the league's record for total number of three-point shots attempted,⁶² and teams are again launching record numbers of long-range jumpers this season (2018-19).⁶³

A variety of basketball people and media members have made it known that they want the NCAA to change its rules to make the college game more like the NBA. I think that would ruin the best thing that college basketball has going for it: more strategy and less individual play. But nevertheless, college rulesmakers have been attempting to copy the pro game. A couple of examples: decreasing the time on the shot clock and implementing the restricted area arc. By attempting to emulate the pro style of play, the college game is already part way to

achieving the same unappealing result. It is visually evident: less teamwork and more individual play.

Here are six suggestions that I would make for the NBA to counter the adverse developments which have turned modern basketball into a far different game than it was intended to be:

1. Get rid of the defensive three-second rule and the restricted area under the basket. This would make the original concept of zone defense completely legal. It would also encourage defenders to block the path to the basket and try to draw charging fouls.

College teams have known for years that when the tall guys pack the lane, you shoot three point shots and that outside scorers are zone busters. This rule change would offer coaches a true choice of how to defend opponents and give teams a chance to stop extremely athletic players from just individually driving to the basket at will for layups. If that strategy forces their teammates to make shots, well, basketball is supposed to be a *team* game, not a skills competition. I'm sorry if the NBA doesn't sell as many jerseys that way. Who cares? The fans don't get a piece of the action, but they do deserve a better-quality product.

2. Increase the shot clock to 30 seconds. When teams don't have enough time to run plays and use strategy, players tend to just dribble around, improvise, and play individually – especially when the shot clock is running out. That is not what basketball is supposed to be about.

But wait, say critics, given more time to get a good shot, modern professional players will score every single time. There is no evidence to suggest that assertion is true – shooters actually haven't gotten better. First, three-point shooting

percentages have been fairly consistent since 1996, even though the “trey” is emphasized much more in the contemporary NBA game. Second, two-point shooting percentages have actually fallen slightly since 1980. (Note that from 1997 to 2004, those rates dropped to extremely low numbers, but have managed to bounce back since then.)⁶⁴

So is the main objective of the 24-second clock to encourage teams to rush their offenses and take bad shots? Think about that for a moment. When you get right down to it, that appears to be the league's goal and it's a really bad one.

3. Widen the court by four feet. Another two feet on each side would help open up the corners for talented long-range shooters. That would add more strategy and passing as offenses try to get their scorers more open shots.

4. Get rid of the eight-second halfcourt violation. Players on other levels of basketball have ten seconds to get the ball across midcourt. But if you have a shot clock, this rule is totally unnecessary, it only makes the teams play even faster. Time to do away with this archaic and counterproductive rule altogether.

5. Eliminate foul-outs. You want your stars in the game? Then why force them to sit out after six fouls? That just discourages referees from calling fouls on star players. (Remember how Michael Jordan was allowed to play by a different set of rules? Of course, Jordan vehemently denied getting any type of special treatment from referees.⁶⁵) In reality, stars commit fouls just as often as the other guys – especially big hulks posting up down low near the basket (recall massive Shaquille O'Neal bowling over opponents like a bull in a china shop).

Let players stay in the game after their sixth foul. On their seventh foul (and each one thereafter), the free throw shooter would get one extra foul shot, just as if a technical foul had been called. Coaches would still have the option to avoid incurring bonus free throws by sitting their worst hackers down on the bench. No big deal, not a huge difference – but a good one that might help the league's bean counters feel more comfortable with the other rules changes that I've proposed.

6. Simplify the salary cap rule. There are so many arcane clauses and regulations in the financial pages of the NBA rulebook that general managers are usually unable to make very many practical moves to help their teams. Player signings can range from difficult to impossible, most trades that do get made look ridiculous from a talent standpoint because the salaries have to match up according to an inflexible, largely counterproductive, hard-to-comprehend section of the rules.

At first glance, it might appear that this change would not actually affect the style of play on the floor. However, given more freedom to shape their own rosters, I think that it would make a big difference for many NBA teams – especially for small market franchises that aren't able to sign expensive players and have to “work smarter” to counteract megastars like James and Durant who want to create their own “superteams.” Consider how beneficial parity and increased competition have been for the NFL. The NBA just doesn't have those qualities today, and really hasn't ever.

One last thing to contemplate: Raising the basket to 12 feet high has been suggested frequently over the years. It would be an earthshaking rule change that potentially could

improve the game by a tremendous amount. Typically, most basketball people simply dismiss this talk out of hand and regard it as nonsense, but there is good reason to seriously reconsider this proposal today.

The ten-foot basket height is standard around the world at all levels of competition. The most common reason given by opponents of change is that altering the basket height might completely throw off all the good outside shooters (who are especially important to the current style of play) – and then we'd be right back to a few tall guys shooting hook shots, tossing up three-foot floaters, and dunking on fast breaks after not running up the court on defense. That scenario wouldn't be the answer, they might add – basketball should progress, not regress.

Like the detractors, I used to believe that raising the basket would create the exact opposite effect of the intended one. But in my research, I discovered that a few experiments largely disproved that theory. Here are the surprising results from some of those test games:

Dunking would be harder but more spectacular – today, it is far too easy for pro and college players to slam dunk. With a higher basket, small and quick guards could drive to the hoop without as much fear of their shots being blocked at the rim. Skilled outside shooters would quickly adjust to the change and excel anyway, while the mid-range shot would return to basketball. Although scoring in the low post would be harder for big men (and boring tip-ins might disappear completely), most rebounds would tend to stay near the hoop for centers and forwards to collect and follow up on, therefore, the inside game would be both challenging and more interesting to

watch.⁶⁶

If basketball continues on its present course, raising the basket might be the biggest (as well as the most necessary) change in store for its future.

Three Dimensional Objects

As with basketball, size matters on the ice. In today's game of hockey, too many large players occupy a space that is too small for all of them. Eventually, use of the traditional five-player sides sent the National Hockey League (NHL) into a steep scoring decline.⁶⁷

In an attempt to open up the action, first the league adopted “four-on-four” overtime play several years ago, and then even switched to “three-on-three” sides for its overtime periods beginning in 2015.⁶⁸ Another intended effect of these rule changes was to end games with clear winners and avoid the league's last-ditch solution to break ties: the dreaded “shootout” which currently follows overtime. (In shootouts, the teams alternate taking penalty shots, in which skaters try to beat the goalies one-on-one. Each team gets three shots, with more “rounds” added if necessary until a winner is determined.)

Almost immediately, the three-on-three experiment was dramatically effective at ending games during overtime sessions⁶⁹ and the format created a lot of interesting new strategic angles and dilemmas for coaches to consider.⁷⁰ A few folks have even suggested that the NHL should try four-on-four regulation play but that's probably not going to happen any time soon. However, it might be a necessary solution at

some point – so let's not forget about that idea.

Some hockey experts believe that three-on-three overtime is such a great thing that further changes, in conjunction with three-on-three play, could also fix other weak areas in the pro game. Two additions to the rules have been suggested: (1) eliminate the shootout entirely and extend overtime beyond the current five minute limit, playing until a winner is determined; and (2) eliminate the guaranteed single “standings point” both teams are awarded for reaching overtime. (Regulation winners currently receive three standings points, while overtime winners earn two.)⁷¹

The NHL players union probably would not support rule proposal #1. Some games would go on far too long and disrupt the tiring, busy regular season schedule. Rule proposal #2 looks like a good idea and a smart solution, though.

Would these rule modifications discourage the boring, conservative styles of play that are primarily found late in games and during overtime periods? Quite possibly. In essence, some analysts are saying that making teams go for the win (or they'll get no points and like it) would stop tired players from skating around in circles for those five overtime minutes and just killing time, stalling for the shootout to finally arrive. That theory makes a lot of sense.

Experts also say that the art of goaltending is better than ever. (So does hockey need a bigger net?) Ideas about tinkering with the goalies have been suggested by a few people. Other theories on how to improve hockey include adjustments to the schedule in order to make it less grueling for the players, and changes to the standings and playoff formats.⁷²

“Snowbirds” (people who leave cold areas such as Canada

to spend their winters in warmer climates) are relatively common here in Arizona. Canadians are great neighbors but many are also extreme hockey fans. As they are our sports rivals, I tend to root against the Canadian NHL teams. But it is a terrific thing for players and fans alike that our two close, friendly nations can have such a cordial (if sometimes fierce) athletic rivalry.

Also, I think it is a big plus for the sport of hockey when the Canadian teams are doing well, just as it is good for other sports when traditional winners like the New York Yankees, Boston Celtics, and Dallas Cowboys are in the mix. Whether you are for those flagship teams or against them, either way their presence makes the postseason much more interesting.

Hope Diamond

Major League Baseball (MLB) might be the professional sport in the best current condition. The league has taken simple but effective measures to speed up play and shorten its games, sorely needed revisions.⁷³ Revenues from TV are at an all-time high.⁷⁴ Live attendance at ballparks has been in a slight decline for several years but remains in a period of unprecedented strength at around 70 million fans per season.⁷⁵ Revenue sharing has also helped smaller market teams become more successful on the field in recent seasons. The Kansas City Royals even won the 2015 World Series.

The deregulation of dietary supplements in 1994 by President Bill Clinton⁷⁶ and a desire by some players to increase their skills to unnatural levels,⁷⁷ resulted in the steroid scandals of the 1990s, inflated stats, and tainted records. Many

major leaguers who were already stars during that era were caught cheating by taking *performance enhancing drugs* (PEDs) which damaged their legacies.⁷⁸ It is possible that many of them will never be elected to the Hall of Fame now.

Steroids have a larger effect on baseball than on other sports.⁷⁹ I believe that MLB largely looked the other way for years (testing for PEDs did not begin until 2003) because all those home runs and the increased scoring made the “Steroids Era” a prosperous time for the sport.⁸⁰ Despite the scandals, baseball has survived its biggest mess and with better enforcement of its rules regarding PEDs, the sport is thriving today. Yet there are still a few problems to solve and improvements that could be made.

A big dilemma for MLB is caused by its long 162-game schedule. Games begin in late March when inclement weather in northern sections of the country annually forces the postponement of numerous games, while others are played in conditions completely unfit for a summer sport. Nobody wants to sit outside in 30-degree weather while watching baseball. My suggestion: play the games from the first couple of weeks in warm weather cities and domed stadiums.⁸¹ Then in mid-summer, when the south is extremely hot and oppressively humid, teams from southern cities would be able to play more games in northern locales. This common sense idea would improve attendance as well as reducing the number of postponed games. What reason would there be to not agree to this plan?

To give an additional club in each league a chance at the postseason (and generate more TV revenue), MLB devised a one-game playoff just a few years ago for its *wild card*

qualifiers (currently two teams in each league that did not actually finish first in their divisions). I am definitely not a fan of this idea. Because of the very real possibility that a dominant pitcher can decide a single game, it is quite unfair to bring an entire season down to one contest. Playoff teams need to meet in *at least* a three-game series, at a minimum.

MLB must be careful not to let too many mediocre teams into its playoffs in a pure grab for cash, as the NBA and NHL have already done. The first round playoff series in both pro basketball and hockey are worthless events and only exist as monuments to greed. As with our other professional sports leagues, there are far too many franchises in baseball. The result is not only overall mediocrity (watered-down rosters), but also that a great disparity is developing between the top level teams and a growing cluster of losers at the bottom.⁸² Revenue sharing was supposed to fix this problem but you can't sell fans on a bad product.

After all that talk about money, what about the game on the field? There are indeed a couple of things that need fixing:

Since the 1970s, the designated hitter (DH) rule has been hotly debated.⁸³ To improve offense, the American League (AL) allows a DH to bat for its pitchers, while in the National League (NL), weak-hitting pitchers themselves must take their own turns at the plate. With interleague play a reality for many years now, it is time for both leagues to settle on a single rule. It has been a century since Babe Ruth was the last hard-hitting pitcher. (Ruth stopped pitching after emerging as a home run hero and his slugging style changed the game forever.)

Like many baseball fans, I am a "purist," and so I've opposed the DH rule over the decades. However, numerous

recent World Series games have demonstrated why it is time for all of us to embrace the DH. The AL pitchers are useless at the plate and this makes the Fall Classic games less exciting.

Modern baseball has one very serious problem: over-reliance on relief pitching has turned many games into five-inning contests. After that point, in almost every turn at bat, hitters face a new hard-throwing hurler who emerges from the bullpen. In response, many batters go up to the plate and just swing for the fences against these fireballers. It's all or nothing for the hitters and, as a result, strikeouts are way up.⁸⁴ Strikeouts per team have skyrocketed since 1980 and are now almost even with hits, an unprecedented development.⁸⁵ There are more good pitchers than ever before, today's faster pitch speeds are dazzling, and so complete games by starting pitchers (once an important achievement for elite hurlers) have become almost nonexistent.

Although it is the unique hitter-versus-pitcher duel that makes baseball a great sport, no one wants to watch only that happen for two or three hours, fans like to see action. Batters must be able to put more balls in play. The scales have been tipped way too far in favor of the pitchers and now fairness in that matchup needs to be restored. Doing so would make the games both more competitive and more interesting. The best way to do this is by limiting the number of allowable pitching changes by managers. Here are some potential rule modifications that might help solve this problem:

- (1) Only one pitching change would be allowed in the first five innings, mostly helpful in case the starter struggles or gets hurt.
- (2) A maximum of two other pitching changes would be

allowed during innings six through nine. This would enable teams to use one setup man in relief, followed by a closer.

(3) If there are extra innings, then one additional pitching change would be permitted per inning.

(4) What if the last eligible pitcher hurts his arm and cannot continue throwing? An emergency substitution from the bullpen would be allowed, but it would also come with two stiff penalties against the defense (to discourage faking injuries): (A) that team would not be able to make another pitching change until the ninth inning or later; (B) the current batter would be allowed to take third base, causing all baserunners ahead of him to score (think of this as a “ground rule triple”).

In these four rule proposals, a pitching change would be defined as “having a new pitcher enter the game from the bullpen or bench” (so we're talking about real pitchers coming in, not fielders who are just switching places with the current pitcher). In a pinch, to avoid the penalty described in (4B), this means that a fielder could still switch positions with the pitcher until the end of an inning. Therefore, baseball clubs might consider teaching a regular how to pitch a little bit, just in case. In fact, many teams already have at least one non-pitcher in their lineups who is able to toss an inning or so in a blowout. (In his favor, most opposing hitters are ready to just get the game over with if the score is 15 to 2 in the ninth inning, so often they aren't exactly tough outs at that point.) Generally, teams only resort to this strategy in a couple of games per season and the odd scene usually makes the evening sports highlights on TV.

Two more proposals to help hitters against today's

overpowering pitchers:

(5) Lower the pitching mound. The higher the mound, the more velocity that a hurler gets on his pitch, so we could just take a bit off the top. This has been done before, notably after fireballers like Bob Gibson began dominating the game during the late 1960s.⁸⁶

(6) Only allow two infielders to play on either side of second base. This would effectively ban the shift of three infielders to a hitter's strong side. Driven by modern *sabrmetrics* (data analysis), these extreme shifts make it extremely difficult for batters to pull ground balls through the infield for base hits (as good hitters could do with regularity just a few years ago).⁸⁷

That's enough radical changes to propose for one chapter. Hopefully, team owners and league administrators will consider similar proposals and perhaps try out some of these ideas. In the words of President Harry S. Truman, "Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better."

Chapter V: The International Game

“Football is a simple game. Twenty-two men chase a ball for 90 minutes, and at the end, the Germans always win.” – Gary Lineker, England's top World Cup scorer

The most widely-played game in the world is soccer.⁸⁸ While it doesn't have a big following in the U.S. yet, soccer has grown substantially in both participation and viewership during recent years. I began to take an interest in the sport, learning about the teams and players, when I started playing EA's FIFA 08 video game sometime around 2012.

Our local USLC (second division) squad, Phoenix Rising, draws capacity crowds at their small soccer facility. Their current grounds are conveniently located next to the 202 freeway and just a couple blocks north of ASU's Sun Devil Stadium. There's plenty of room there for a larger park. Their strong fan support, along with the city's prime geographic location and favorable demographics, have made Phoenix Rising a strong contender for a spot in the top-level MLS (Major League Soccer).⁸⁹ For these reasons, I have devoted a chapter in this book to soccer, and to suggest some ideas that I think would improve the sport.

Word Association

In most countries, the game is known as “football” and use of the word “soccer” is frowned upon or nonexistent. The term “soccer” is mainly used in the USA and Canada. However, the origin of the word actually comes from England. There, it

began as shortened slang that referred to “association football,” as opposed to soccer's cousin, rugby. In England, those two games were officially split in 1863, the term “soccer” then evolved,⁹⁰ but eventually “football” became the favored word in England.

Soccer has many reasons for its widespread popularity with athletes around the world: the basics of play are not complicated, it's inexpensive to get started (you really just need a round ball to kick around), and you can play it almost anywhere (a regulation field, known as a “pitch,” is not necessary for kids to start an informal pickup game). Also, soccer is a “players' game” more than a “coaches' game.”⁹¹ And unlike basketball or American football, individuals of all sizes can be successful at soccer.⁹² With all those things going for it, soccer has become the sport of choice in most countries for youngsters to play.

Sure, there are exceptions. It's well known how much Canada loves hockey, but it is also the national sport of Finland. In some parts of the Caribbean and Latin America, baseball is almost an obsession, as well as in Japan. Lithuania has been enthusiastic about basketball for a long time. Running is currently a craze in China. Throughout India, many people enjoy playing cricket. Then there's Australia, where things are a bit like here in the USA: the folks “down under” have their own type of football, sometimes called “footy,” and like Americans, Australians also enjoy a wide variety of other sports.⁹³

Quite a number of countries have developed a passion for a second game along with soccer and they often produce many of the world's best players in those sports. Ice hockey is big in

Scandinavia and Russia. Basketball has made large gains across Europe and in China. People enjoy playing volleyball in Brazil. Tennis is big in Europe's Slavic nations. Around South Africa and Ireland, many people are involved in rugby, but in those nations, soccer is still a major sport and it is often considered to be even more important than their other favorites (especially in soccer-mad Brazil).⁹⁴

Once people have participated in a sport while young, they typically remain fans of that game as adults. While I think that has helped build and maintain interest in soccer, I believe that its worldwide popularity is largely due to the culture and geographic rivalries that have developed over time between national sides and among local teams, in conjunction with the associated fan involvement.⁹⁵

Attending a match is something that individuals can do together as a part of a group. Wearing identically-colored clothing and cheering for the same team, the supporters start to feel like one big family. In most soccer stadiums of all sizes, great camaraderie develops among the fans as they join in together to sing their local favorite songs and loudly repeat their team spirit chants. No wonder that many soccer fans vigorously take exception to any suggestion that their sport has problems or isn't the best one!

The connection between soccer's international appeal and its various rivalries is no different than in America. Rivalries have helped make many sports immensely popular here, too. But unlike most other nations, America is large enough to have regional preferences: basketball is favored in the Midwest, hockey often dominates cold, wintry locations like New England and the Great Lakes states, while outdoor sports such

as football and baseball are popular from the South to the West – especially right in the middle (in Texas, football is king).

Too Much of Nothing

So I believe that most of the enjoyment of watching soccer comes from the fan experience, not necessarily from the game action itself. In the workings of its actual on-field play, the sport of soccer has a lot of serious flaws that limit its appeal to more casual spectators.

No sport should have its games end on a regular basis with scores of zero. This is the largest problem with soccer.⁹⁶ Using data compiled from English soccer leagues spanning a period of 126 years, in about 47 percent of games at least one of the teams failed to score a goal – and over 7 percent of the time, both teams finished tied at “nil-nil” (0-0).⁹⁷ Fans want to see results and this type of low-yield game is very dull to watch.

So, soccer could use some improvements, but the trick is to come up with solutions that don't fundamentally alter the way that the game is played. Proposed changes must be acceptable to the soccer world (fans, players, coaches, clubs, and leagues) or even the best plans will never get off the ground. I might not be an expert in this area but sometimes you can be too close to the forest to see the trees. As in most other sports, I think this might be the case with many soccer enthusiasts.

After the lack of scoring, which tops the list, the issues with soccer don't stop there. Other problematic areas also exist.⁹⁸

Here's a controversial occurrence that often affects low-scoring matches: if the referee calls a foul on the defense and awards a penalty kick, the resulting goal can easily decide the

outcome of the contest.

(A *penalty kick* is a one-on-one duel between an offensive player and the goalkeeper. The attacker kicks the ball from a designated spot in the *penalty area* around the goal itself, trying to put it past the keeper and score. Usually the attacker is successful, but if the keeper guesses the correct direction of the kick and times his jump just right, he can sometimes make a diving save.)

The negative effect of penalties on soccer games is all too prevalent. This is because the number of goals is relatively small, the margin of victory is often one point.⁹⁹

A few paragraphs ago, I described how easy it is to start playing soccer, which has contributed greatly to its worldwide popularity. Ironically, this lack of complexity actually puts soccer teams in a worse position than clubs in traditionally American sports, in respect to the effects of officiating. Here in the U.S., no single decision ever really determines the outcome of a game due to its continuous “cause and effect.” Each contest is increasingly intricate and constantly throughout all of them, referees must make a series of crucial “snap” judgments. Every call (or non-call) takes the game down a different path. In many cases, teams must adjust to the particular officiating style in a single game – or possibly lose.

All of this is true even when there's a really bad officiating mistake near the end of a game. (Recall the huge omission by football officials during the January 2019 Rams-Saints NFC title game. Replays confirmed the cause for the home fans' furor: blatant pass interference had occurred on a crucial play late in the game but the referees somehow missed the call. The error prevented the Saints from going to the Super Bowl.¹⁰⁰)

Too few goals being scored in soccer also means that a fluky occurrence or a lucky bounce can easily decide a game (and again, often does). A good team can totally control the action for most of the match, have every one of their shots saved by a hot goalkeeper or sail just wide of the goal, and then suddenly lose on a single bad break. Hockey is similar to soccer in this regard, although with a few more goals scored, the effects of bad luck are not always as devastating or extreme.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, a hard foul can result in the referee giving a “red card” to the guilty player as punishment. (Lesser fouls sometimes receive a “yellow card.”) In hockey, after a few minutes or after conceding a goal, the penalty ends and both sides are at even strength again. But in soccer, the team being penalized with a red card loses the offending player for the rest of the match and therefore has much less chance to score again. This all but eliminates the opportunity for a comeback if that team is behind. Game over.¹⁰²

No one wants a game to be decided by the referees but that is how soccer matches commonly turn out. The overwhelming influence of officiating is one of the sport's major shortcomings.¹⁰³ Fouls are often called inconsistently by soccer referees. Frequently, the punishment is too little or too much for the crime.¹⁰⁴

Then there is the issue of congestion on the soccer pitch. In order simply to reach the scoring area, an offensive must avoid large numbers of opposing players who are typically standing in the way. Passes are frequently broken up in midfield. More successful forward drives are usually stopped cold by defenders who merely kick the ball out of the attacking end, *clearing the offensive zone*. All this means that teams cannot maintain

possession of the ball long enough to mount an effective attack.

Those aren't the only obstacles for offenses in the modern game of soccer. Better athletes and improved defensive strategies have also resulted in reduced space for players to work in offensively, so scoring has declined.¹⁰⁵

Imagine the chaos in an American football game if possession changed following every incomplete pass and each time a player was tackled inbounds. That same lack of continuity is essentially what happens throughout each match in soccer. This disorder contributes greatly to the lack of spectator appeal.

Kicking Around Some Ideas

So are there too many players on the pitch in soccer? Yes, definitely. Would fewer players open up the game and create more scoring? Probably so.

The obvious, most painless solution is to reduce the number of players on each side, initially switching from 11 down to 10.¹⁰⁶ (Recall our discussion of a similar concept that has been successful in the NHL, but is only used for overtime periods there.) I would even suggest trying the game with just eight or nine players per side. Unfortunately, this idea might be too radical to win acceptance on an international basis. Perhaps a less-established league like MLS would be willing to experiment with this rule during “friendlies” (exhibitions) or in its preseason schedule.

In conjunction with this bold change, the number of substitutions available to each manager would need to be increased from three per game to five per half, since players

would tire even more quickly, while we would also allow players who are benched before the break to return in the second half. A regulation soccer match consists of two 45-minute halves. Some soccer players run seven or eight miles per game.¹⁰⁷ We would need to give them some assistance. Expanded substitutions would do that.

Short of reducing the number of players per side, here are 10 commonly suggested and less-radical changes that would probably make soccer more watchable (and perhaps even more playable):

1. Add a fourth available substitution in *extra time* (overtime). Having fewer tired players on the field does mean more chances to score goals. This first idea is already being tried out and it seems inevitable, since it's not really that much of a change.

In most soccer associations, regular season league games and *friendlies* (exhibitions) can end in ties. Extra time is only used in international tournaments and other competitions in which a winner must be determined. Normally, extra time consists of two separate 15-minute “halves” that are completely played out to the end, unless the *golden goal* format is used (the first team to score, wins – just like sudden death overtime in American football).

If the tie has not been broken at the end of extra time, usually penalty kicks come next. Five players from each team take turns. If things are still even after five “innings,” penalty kicks continue one “inning” at a time until one team or the other finishes an “inning” in front.

2. Adopt instant replay for reviewing close plays. Video review should be used for goal line judgments, tracking

the number of players on the pitch, and even for offside calls. While most smaller leagues around the world won't be able to afford this technology for a while, FIFA (the international soccer federation) could start using it for major competitions right away. The top leagues in Europe and the Americas should also be able to get replay into action fairly quickly. Again, this change is already in the works (at least for goal line decisions), and seems destined to occur eventually.

3. Modify the offside rule slightly. This can be a hard rule to understand and even harder to officiate correctly. Two defensive players (which can and usually does include the goalkeeper) must be between the goal and the attacker at the time when the ball is passed to him. Currently, the rule says a player is *not* offside when “*no* part of the attacking player (head, body, or feet) is closer to the opponent’s goal than the final defender (*note: not meaning or including the goalkeeper*).”¹⁰⁸ Let's change that slightly. If *any* part of the attacker is level or even with that final defender, then he should be considered onside.

This minor change would make officiating much easier and eliminate a lot of controversy over close judgment calls. It would also open up the action and increase scoring. I call this a win-win decision all the way around. Accurate enforcement of the offside rule would be helped by the use of video replay.¹⁰⁹

4. Issue only yellow cards for “last man” rule violations. When an attacker who is clear through on goal (much like a “breakaway” in basketball) gets fouled, he not only gets to take a huge penalty shot, but the defender often is given a *red card* (ejection from the game). Then his team must play the rest of the contest shorthanded. This is a grossly unfair

double whammy. (That's not all: a one-game suspension often follows later for a player who receives a red card.)

The penalty shot itself is more than enough punishment for the foul, so just give the offender a *yellow card* (more like a warning) instead.¹¹⁰ There seems to be a lot of editorial support among soccer experts for this common sense rule change. Count me in.

5. Designate a hockey-style penalty box for red card offenses. Players who do receive a red card would only be sent off the pitch to the penalty box for 10 or 15 minutes, instead of being disqualified for the entire game. You might also do the same thing with yellow cards, but using lesser penalty times, such as only five minutes. These changes might help alleviate the aforementioned problem of inappropriate and inconsistent calling of fouls. On the other hand, calling too many fouls might result in shorthanded teams stalling for long periods of time, which would result in the exact opposite of what we want to achieve: more offense. So referees would need to be careful in applying these new rules.

6. Allow minor fouls to be called in the penalty area. Some inconsistent officiating would be remedied by letting the referee award a free kick or a corner kick for some minor fouls occurring inside the penalty area. This would especially help prevent defenders from mugging their opponents on corner kicks. Currently, referees are hesitant to call minor fouls around the goal because they result in penalty kicks. If offenders receive a yellow card and five minute banishment for fouls on corner kicks (see rule proposal #5)

(A *free kick* is a set play used to put a stopped ball on the field back into action using a kick. It can occur anywhere, but

when taking a free kick from just outside the penalty area, an attacker with a good bend in his shot can even find the back of the net occasionally. England's David Beckham was especially noted for this skill.)

(A *corner kick* is another type of set play that involves a long kick taken from the corner of the playing field. Usually, corner kicks are looped high into the air in front of the goal itself, then offensive players try to out jump the surrounding defenders and head the ball into the net. Defenses are vulnerable to the uncertainty introduced by corners and so goals are sometimes the result.)

Another problem occurs when a penalty kick is occasionally awarded for a hard tackle in a borderline spot of the penalty area that a striker is never actually going to score from – a highly disproportionate punishment for the crime. Reducing the width of the penalty area would result in fewer of these game-changing calls.

7. Make the player who is fouled take the penalty kick. This would make penalty kicks like free throws in basketball, where the player who is fouled takes the shots himself. In soccer, the team's best player gets to take all the penalty kicks, turning them into almost certain goals. This rule doesn't make any sense.

8. Eliminate penalty kicks as tiebreakers and do away with the golden goal for extra time. Almost everyone seems to hate using penalty kicks to break ties in soccer.¹¹¹ They really are an awful way to decide a game, only slightly better than a coin flip. The golden goal has already fallen out of favor because it causes tired teams to play scared (to not lose) in extra time. So they stall, killing time, until the

subsequent penalty kick shootout arrives eventually (but we do want to get rid of that, too).

If you make that change, then you might also want to consider adding this next one too:

9. Play 9-on-9 during extra time. A less radical version of my original rule modification proposal, teams would have to remove two players from the field at the start of extra time and play 9-on-9. (Let's help those tired players by allowing the managers to make a fifth substitution.) Reminiscent of the NHL's successful 3-on-3 overtime experiment, this change would significantly open up play and increase the chance of getting a relatively quick result.

A variation on this rule would have another two attackers going off after either (A) an entire 30-minute extra time session, or (B) following the 15-minute "first half" of extra time. However, you couldn't play less than 7-on-7, since the laws of soccer do require 7 men per side.

Note again that since most soccer leagues allow ties, this rule proposal would not affect them at all, but would only have an effect on major international competitions.

10. Keeping visible time on the scoreboard.

Currently, the referee keeps the official time himself down on the pitch, and he can add *stoppage time* for breaks in play like injuries, usually totaling only one to five minutes for each half. So, using visible scoreboard time would be a big change for the sport, a step forward into the 21st century.

As in other sports, the scoreboard clock would pause whenever play is halted. The game could end at 0:00, or on the final stoppage of play (which somehow seems like it's a bit more in keeping with the game's classic, traditional style).

Here's one issue with the latter: although the game cannot end with a penalty shot yet to be taken, what would keep a team with a lead from intentionally fouling an opposing player simply to stop play and end the game?

The only way this idea works is if the game ends at exactly 90 minutes on the scoreboard, unless the referee has signaled upstairs how much stoppage time that he has decided on, maybe doing this with around two minutes left to play. (How about adding a two minute warning to soccer?) So then the stoppage time could be added to the scoreboard clock.

Perhaps continuing to let the referee keep his own time on the pitch just to be certain, and then adding stoppage time as he deems necessary, is the way to go. Eventually this idea will inevitably become reality. It's an implementation of new technology and you can't stop progress.

11. Stop using away goals as a tiebreaker. I saved this one for last because it's the longest one and requires the most explanation.

Many international tournaments that have a two-game home-and-away series format use *aggregate goals* (the total goals scored by a team in both games) to determine the winner of the matchup. If the overall scores are still even after the second game has ended, rather than play extra time, soccer associations frequently just award the win to whichever team has scored the most goals on the road. (Their reasoning is that away goals are more difficult to score). Extra time only goes into effect if the away goals are also even after the second game – a complete deadlock, I guess you might call this situation.¹¹²

Because of the low amount of scoring in soccer, essentially this rule gives goals made away from home *double* the value

and can have a radical effect on how both teams play in the second game of a series.¹¹³ (If not for the gate receipts and TV money, you could just hold a single game and award ties to the visiting team, but that's an even worse idea.) A goal is a goal no matter where it is scored – or at least that's how it should be.

Here in the U.S., the two-game home-and-away series format has seldom been used. Our sporting playoffs virtually always give an advantage to the team with the *higher seed*, which usually is the one with the better record during the regular season (although as noted in the previous chapter, the NFL does make a strange exception for its eight division winners, even ones with mediocre records).

To paraphrase an old TV commercial, *home field advantage* is determined the old-fashioned way: you earn it. When there is only one playoff game (football), it is at the higher seed's home stadium. In a multiple game series (baseball, basketball, or hockey), the higher seed always hosts the odd-numbered final contest (often game number seven), should the series go the distance.

UEFA (the organization that oversees European soccer) does employ a numerical rating system for its clubs (known as the *coefficient*). But with wholly-separate leagues operating in every nation across the continent, UEFA has seemed hesitant to award home field advantage on that basis in its international competitions (although it certainly could). The coefficient must just be calculated for fun, something for the fans at home to argue about amongst themselves. Hence the home-and-home two-game series concept, carefully designed to avoid sparking any hint of controversy. Except that's exactly what it does.

In most soccer leagues around the world, there isn't even a

postseason playoff. The championship goes to the team with the best regular season record. During the season, a separate *cup* (tournament) is usually held, but it's not a postseason playoff, not in the way that we know one here in America. The concept of soccer clubs competing internationally in events such as Champions League and Europa League is a relatively new idea, probably devised to make more money. That part has been a big success, I think.

In late 2018, MLS announced that it was scrapping the two-legged format and replacing it with a single-elimination playoff similar to other U.S. sports leagues.¹¹⁴ In February 2019, it was reported that UEFA was considering ending the use of away goals as a tiebreaker for its major international competitions.¹¹⁵

This can only be a good thing. Let's get it done soon.

Some suggested changes that I think probably would **NOT** work include:

1. Widening the goal. This change might make it too difficult to save penalty shots, which is already a concern in women's soccer. Similarly, widening the field is not a good option. Like the goal itself, the pitch is large enough already. (Perhaps the field should actually be made smaller?)

2. Revise the scoring system. A few years ago, I came up with an alternate scoring system for soccer. Goals would be worth three points (like a field goal in American football) and corners would be worth one point each (corner kicks are often the result of attacking maneuvers and shots, in which the defense kicks or deflects the ball over the end line). This rule change would certainly encourage a more aggressive style of play and fewer teams would try to stall when they got a one goal lead. You've got to shoot to score, and good things happen

sometimes when you shoot the ball, even if you miss. Alternatively, using “total corners” (or even “shots on target”) to break ties might be other options to consider.

There's just one problem with this idea, but it's a big one: it might cause some teams to just play for corners instead of trying to actually score goals, so I don't think it would work very well. And because the game of soccer is so entrenched in the minds of players and fans, a fundamental scoring change would be a tougher sell than basketball's three-point shot.

3. Add a three-minute shot clock. It wouldn't work like it does in basketball, where each shot must hit the rim. Leading teams would periodically just blast a long kick from beyond midfield to avoid a violation, thereby also giving up possession of the ball. I don't think this would help solve the problem of low scoring, not at all.

4. Eliminate the back pass entirely. One really smart rule change in recent years prohibits goalkeepers from handling balls kicked back to them by teammates (*back passes*). Now, they must use their feet to play those passes. This rule helps reduce stalling tactics by teams trying to protect a lead. But making *all* passes to the goalkeeper illegal might create chaos for the defenders during heated attacks inside an offensive zone. I don't think you can take that option away.

If any soccer experts do read this chapter, I will not be surprised when they start picking away at everything that they think is just plain wrong. That's OK with me, there's always someone who will disagree with anything you say or write. I'm not applying for the job as manager of England's prestigious Manchester United football club. These comments are just my take on things as a fan sitting at home, and I believe in them.

Chapter VI: Ballpark Figures

“When should a college athlete turn pro? Not until he has earned all he can in college as an amateur.” – Will Rogers

In this chapter, I'll examine the meaning of some important sports statistics. Before starting my in-depth analysis, here's some amazing information for you to digest:

Football fans and sportswriters have long debated whether Peyton Manning or Tom Brady is the greatest quarterback of all time. While Manning has many of the passing records, Brady has won more championships. Manning probably had less talent surrounding him, Brady was on better teams but often he played his best in the clutch. Manning won two Super Bowl titles, Brady now has six, two of which came after Manning retired. (*Note: In 2001, Brady won his seventh title.*) Fans and announcers both wonder if Brady, already past age 40 and still going strong, will ever get old.

Northeastern sports writers like to perpetrate the myth that Tom Brady usually got the better of Peyton Manning. But that was not always the case in big games. Brady did have good success against Manning early in his career, but the two great quarterbacks met in five AFC playoff games, with Manning's Colts and Broncos teams winning the last three matchups. Also note that Peyton's brother Eli led the New York Giants to upset wins over Brady's New England Patriots in two Super Bowls. So Brady and the Manning brothers battled in football's playoffs seven times, with the Mannings prevailing 5-2. Among themselves, the three signal callers captured a half-dozen championships during those seven years.¹¹⁶

If you think ~~six~~ seven Super Bowl wins are a lot, what about eleven? Tom Brady could have ~~41~~ 12 rings if not for the Manning brothers. (He must have nightmares about them both.) Whichever side of the debate you take, that's one heck of a stat.

Numbers Game

It has often been said that the chances of becoming a top-earning professional athlete are not very good. So what do the numbers actually look like?

According the U.S. Census Bureau, there were about 327 million Americans in July 2018.¹¹⁷ Let's just use half that number, 163.5 million, to represent men only – no disrespect intended to women athletes but the big bucks are in men's professional sports. I would guess that only a handful of elite female players make genuinely large salaries, mostly in the WNBA.

I'm also not counting the many athletes who are just scraping by in various minor leagues and on overseas pro basketball teams. Auto racing is not included here either, but we should note that there are less than 150 top level NASCAR, IndyCar, and Formula One drivers. Finally, I've opted not to count international soccer players, although some of them do make really large salaries. I'm just focusing on the numbers for the U.S.

The NCAA has determined that, for most major team sports, the chance of a college athlete simply getting drafted by a pro league is only about one or two percent.¹¹⁸ Those ultra-low numbers mostly represent football, basketball, and hockey.

Next, keep in mind that although over six percent of collegiate hockey players and nearly ten percent of collegiate baseball players do get drafted by professional franchises, those sports also have extensive minor league “farm systems” that athletes must advance through to reach the top. As young minor leaguers first encounter other players with extensive skills, most of their careers reach their peak levels there (down in the “bushes”), and then the large majority of those players never get called up to the majors.

Our tennis and golf pro counts have a cutoff that was made at an estimated financial break-even point. This gives us the following numbers of athletes participating in the major U.S. professional sports:

1696 NFL (football)

1200 MLB (baseball)

450 NBA (basketball)

560 MLS (soccer)¹¹⁹

713 NHL (hockey)¹²⁰

164 ATP (tennis)¹²¹

235 PGA (golf)¹²²

5018 total top-level pro athletes

Let's fine tune our numbers a bit now. Each season, some new players arrive on the scene, while others retire. We can safely assume that most of those jobs will turn over within ten years (*unless you are Tom Brady*), so we can at least double our total available roster spots. A decade is also approximately the upper limit of any realistic time frame that you might have

to make it to the top in pro sports.

(The actual number of professional athletes over a 10-year period might be three or four times the above total. On the other hand, a decade is a generous amount of time to “hang on” to a pro sports career dream and the true length might only be two to five years. So we have to make some educated guesses in order to arrive at a rough estimate.)

In the end, our study has produced a figure of about 10,000 good job opportunities for aspiring professional athletes.

By my estimation, the odds of your son making it big in pro sports are roughly **one in 16,350** (or about .006 percent). And remember, that number only applies to our male population (about half of all Americans).

My methods are not scientific. Yes, you could calculate the variables differently by counting up all the players who actually appeared in uniform over a 10 to 12 year period, tripling the job estimate, or reducing the length of time for the potential of a sports career. Even if you don't agree with my methodology and want to slice and dice the numbers some other way, you're still going to end up with a really small final figure.

Perhaps those odds are still better than your chances of winning the Powerball lottery, which are one in 292 million,¹²³ and your chances of being struck by lightning this year are unfortunately a bit larger, at one in 1.2 million.¹²⁴ But you have a much better chance to get rich simply by using your mind. The average starting annual salary for new college graduates in the fall of 2018 was just over \$50,000.¹²⁵

A report by the Spectrem Group (a market research and consulting firm) stated that in 2017, there were close to 10 million households in the United States with assets of a million

dollars or more. There's no reason to believe that those statistics are significantly different here in 2019. So about **one of every 33** Americans (roughly around 3 percent) lives in a relatively wealthy household. Even if we subtract a child and spouse from every household on average, that still leaves us with 1 percent millionaires (presumably, most of them are working). It might take some time and hard work to get there, but joining that group seems realistically attainable. In addition, about 172,000 households were worth \$25 million or more (about 0.05 percent of the population, or one in 1901).¹²⁶

If only 10,000 guys made it big in pro sports, how did more than 3,300,000 other people get rich? They didn't all inherit their money or become rock stars, most of them went to college. Upon graduation, the scholarship that an athlete received has increased his or her chances of becoming a millionaire by an average factor of **330 times**.

A college degree is certainly no guarantee of attaining wealth, but it is a time-tested means to getting there – and it seems like a better bet than counting on a long-shot job in professional sports.

Going for Broke

Television provides professional sports franchises with the money for today's massive player contracts through both national network deals and local broadcast agreements.¹²⁷ (The NFL has no local TV contracts since all its games are broadcast by the major national networks.) This means that those huge salaries are paid indirectly by you, the viewer/consumer. The networks make their money by selling commercials. After you

watch the ads during those TV games, you go out and support the sponsors by purchasing beer, trucks, and food at inflated prices. And so it goes.

In addition, professional sports revenue comes from corporate sponsorship, merchandise, and ticketing.¹²⁸ These can be lucrative as well, but the TV broadcast rights fees are staggering.

Until the 1970s, most pro athletes had to have offseason jobs to make ends meet.¹²⁹ Today, even rookies and other young players receive big paychecks before they have yet established their careers. The minimum salary in MLB serves well as a barometer for the financial state of professional sports in America. Back in 1970 when Cincinnati opened Riverfront Stadium (with its modern artificial turf field), the lowest annual pay in MLB was just \$12,000. By 2000 (when my friends and I were just starting to enjoy rotisserie baseball), that figure had grown to \$200,000. In 2019 (the era of 24-hour sports on TV), the minimum MLB salary was \$555,000.¹³⁰

Over that same period, average baseball salaries also grew at an equally alarming rate. In 1970, an average major league player earned just \$29,000 per year. By 2000, that amount had climbed to nearly \$1,900,000. In 2015, MLB's average salary was over \$3,950,000.¹³¹

How could a pro athlete possibly handle this much money wisely without a business degree? (I know I would seek out and hire the best, most highly recommended financial planner whom I could find – and still stash a small part of my funds away on my own, just in case.) Pro athletes need assistance from people with advanced knowledge about money and investing – and not just business proposals from family

members and friends. (Rich people pay themselves first, then buy non-essentials if they have money left over. Otherwise, they don't stay rich for very long.)

Unfortunately, sports agents might not be doing enough to provide financial counseling to their clients – or maybe the athletes are just ignoring their advice. According to a *Sports Illustrated* story by Pablo S. Torre in 2009, 78 percent of former NFL players have severe financial problems within two years of retirement, and within five years, about 60 percent of former NBA players are out of money.¹³²

Former pro basketball player Adonal Foyle, who has earned a masters' degree in sports psychology, discussed lackluster financial management by professional athletes in his book, *Winning the Money Game*. During his playing career, he found many of his peers to be unconcerned about money matters.¹³³

Similarly, ESPN broadcast a program titled *Broke* as part of its excellent *30 for 30* sports documentary series. The short film told the stories of numerous players who had recklessly spent or otherwise lost all their money.¹³⁴

Many years ago, I had an interesting discussion one afternoon with a few friends who were sports fans. The topic was how athletes could lose their entire multimillion-dollar career earnings. For the sake of argument, we used the most extreme hypothetical case: a 20-year-old millionaire with bad judgment: a free-spending recreational drug user with a big entourage. Then we tried to figure out the cost of daily cocaine use, the expense of buying a mansion and a few exotic cars, and also purchasing new Cadillacs for his whole group of freeloading hangers-on. We still couldn't spend it all.

In retrospect, we might not have accounted for the high

cost of multiple child support payments and divorces. According to a 1998 *Sports Illustrated* article, former NBA player Shawn Kemp had fathered seven children by at least six different women.¹³⁵ I can only imagine what the total of his support payments must have been like. Yet there are plenty more examples of financial failures from pro basketball, such as Latrell Sprewell and Allen Iverson. In addition, note that Charles Barkley reportedly lost \$100 million by gambling.¹³⁶

Before professional athletes received the large salaries that they do now, numerous well-known players (including some otherwise highly-intelligent persons) went broke simply by making bad investments or by starting various types of businesses that were unfamiliar to them and which eventually failed.¹³⁷ Famed Greek philosopher Plato once said, “A good decision is based on knowledge and not on numbers.”

No Contest

The 2017 football season is partly remembered for the return of the sport to Los Angeles after 30 years. It seems ridiculous that the second largest city in the nation could not get a few millionaires together during that span to build a stadium and obtain a pro football team. I suppose that the tycoons were waiting for local government officials to make them an offer they couldn't refuse.

Yet many cities in the state of California have deep financial problems that make the construction of new sports facilities a low priority.¹³⁸ Due to massive public expenditures and the thinly-stretched municipal budgets that must cover them, the leaders of some cities have discovered that their available tax

revenue is inadequate to completely pay for important items such as police protection, fire departments, hospitals, and public schools. These officials are choosing to allocate their money to essential services – not new stadiums.

With California's municipal governments playing hardball, it has become easier in a few other places for pro sports franchises to get public financing measures approved by local politicians. In most cases, this type of funding is essential to generate the enormous money required for today's massive stadium projects. A good current example of this situation is the case of the NFL's Oakland Raiders, scheduled to leave California and move to Las Vegas in 2020.¹³⁹

There always will be an outcry from a small base of loyal fans whenever a team relocates. Unfortunately for those people, they usually don't comprise a large enough group of paying customers, and therein lies their problem. The reality is that some smaller cities just can't sustain the necessary attendance or generate the required revenue to support pro sports franchises – especially in multiple sports, since all their teams must divide a finite amount of the area fans' dollars (*discretionary income*). This makes earning local revenue a *zero-sum game* for all the franchises in town (when somebody makes money, someone else must lose it). In effect, this situation is similar to a high-stakes poker game.

Without the extra revenue provided by a large, modern facility crammed full of expensive luxury boxes that can be marketed to big corporations, pro franchise owners claim that they cannot compete financially with wealthy teams that have them, such as the Dallas Cowboys.¹⁴⁰ So the answer for billionaire Stan Kroenke was to build a new Los Angeles

stadium mostly by himself, using his own mega-dollars¹⁴¹ along with some financing from both private banks and the NFL. The Rams are temporarily playing in the aging L.A. Coliseum until their massive stadium complex in the suburb of Inglewood is finished around 2020.

If you move a pro sports team to struggling California, it helps to start with lots of money. Despite lukewarm attendance in 2018, it only took two seasons for the Rams to reach the Super Bowl after returning to Los Angeles from St. Louis.

Just as in California, many other parts of the nation also have more pressing problems than sports. Today's critical urban crises commonly include overextended public safety units and health care facilities (police and fire departments, along with hospitals), overcrowded and poor quality educational systems (schools and teachers), as well as inadequate and crumbling infrastructures (water supplies, power, roads, and underground utilities).

Amazingly, these major issues are largely ignored by most “experts” writing on the topic. Usually they choose to focus on other subjects like affordable housing rates and job growth (which are largely economic concerns driven by business), as well as social issues such as racism and income inequality (which are mostly beyond the control of city politicians). I guess it's easier to write about those things, especially if you want to push a social or political agenda of your own. The government can't solve all of your problems for you so don't blindly hope that it will.

That list doesn't even include other major problems facing modern urban areas such as drug use, homelessness, population growth, traffic congestion, zoning conflicts,

shortages in employee pension funds, and public transit.¹⁴²

This is a bit like the situation that Anderson, Indiana had to deal with in 2009 (although on a much smaller scale). Although facing a massive budget shortfall, public pressure from the city's sports fans convinced the school board to keep its large (but aging and expensive) gymnasium open for the local high school's basketball games. To enable the old "Wigwam" to stay in use, massive cuts in Anderson High School's staff (including a number of teaching positions) were enacted.¹⁴³

But in 2009, things were changing in the Hoosier state. Attendance at games in most areas had already dropped dramatically within the previous few years and the crowds have not returned during the last decade. High school basketball was once an obsession in most cities and small towns throughout Indiana, but in the digital era, local sports are now a dying pastime there. The Internet, a proliferation of sports on cable TV, and even the popularity of video games all have eroded the fan base.¹⁴⁴ With so many other things to do, the local basketball gym is no longer the town meeting place that it once was on winter weekend nights (as accurately depicted in the classic sports movie *Hoosiers*).

Finally in 2011, the Anderson school board reconsidered its decision and shut down the old Wigwam. The school's head basketball coach resigned rather than coach his team in a smaller gym, and additional budget cuts were necessary nevertheless, but the closure is saving \$550,000 per year.¹⁴⁵

Today, the city is cooperating with private owners to redevelop the historic old gym rather than tear it down. Unfortunately, there aren't many good uses for an 8,000 seat

arena in a small Midwestern city that has already lost thousands of industrial jobs and residents.¹⁴⁶

Capital Ideas

My next book has three main parts, one of which is devoted to politics. In that section, I write at length about the perils of socialism. American sports leagues operate using centralized command structures that incorporate elements such as revenue sharing agreements, salary caps, player drafts and other restrictions on individual worker movement, etc. It has been suggested that these are socialist-type ideas.¹⁴⁷ Unlike in political socialism however, many of these sports rules were not unilaterally imposed by governing bodies, but have come about through long and difficult negotiations between the leagues' management officials and their player unions.

Strangely enough, this centralized command approach has made American sports leagues more successful (both financially and competitively) than their European soccer counterparts.¹⁴⁸ Overseas, using a more capitalist style of management, typically only a couple of the largest-spending teams dominate in each country. (This situation is similar to the status of American baseball during the 1990s, when small market teams were uncompetitive mainly due to wide income inequalities in the sport.)

It is important to note that this theory only pertains to the effect of socialist-type ideas in sports (which are merely a form of entertainment) and not in our daily lives, where those effects would have much greater and vastly different (negative) consequences. Scale is also a key factor. I suspect that this

paradigm works because sports leagues are small in scope and operate on a *microeconomic* basis, where the increased responsiveness of having greater control over issues seems to be more useful and effective in managing them. When dealing with issues on a national basis, they become *macroeconomic* in scale, when situations are too big to micromanage, the laissez-faire capitalist approach works much more successfully. Although these two proven models of economics operate hand-in-hand, they are very different.

Economist Paul Samuelson wrote about the “fallacy of composition.” This concept explains why things that are true of individuals or groups do not apply to the functioning of a larger economic system.¹⁴⁹

Newer is Always Better

How I Met Your Mother was a CBS TV comedy series that was a hit during the 2000s. Although featuring an ensemble of talented young actors, the scene-stealer was usually Barney Stinson. Played by Neil Patrick Harris, Barney was a shallow skirt-chaser known for his bold opinions and often-questionable maxims. He talked regularly about the “Bro Code,” a supposed guide for how guys should act with honor and respect to other men.

One of Barney's favorite sayings was, “Newer is always better.” At least in regard to buying televisions, that much is true. In the world of sports, some of the best stats for fans are modern TV prices. Sets have become significantly cheaper over the decades. At the same time, they have also gotten bigger and better. Let's look at their prices through the years, courtesy of

the TV History website.¹⁵⁰ For greater perspective, I've included their relative costs in 2019 dollars (determined using the online U.S. Inflation Rate Calculator) in parentheses.¹⁵¹ The adjusted prices are quite staggering.

First there was black-and-white television. In 1939, a 12" console TV set made by RCA cost \$600 (equal to \$10,865 in today's dollars). In 1955, a 24" console from Magnavox was just \$249 (\$2,339). In 1961, a 23" console set by Zenith was \$575. In 1978, the last year for black-and-white consoles, a 22" set from GE cost just \$230.¹⁵²

Color television came along in 1953 but the major networks did not broadcast all of their prime time programs in color until 1966.¹⁵³ The first sets were pricey, nevertheless. In 1954, a 15" console TV made by Westinghouse cost \$1,295 (\$12,118). As picture tubes increased in size, consumers got a lot more TV for their money. In 1977, a 25" console set from Sylvania cost only \$850 (\$3,531). In 1999, a 36" console sold by RCA cost \$1,400 (\$2,115).¹⁵⁴

Eventually, bulky consoles disappeared as thinner, lighter LED flatscreen TV sets literally changed the game. Sales were also driven by the switch to *high definition* (HD) broadcasting in 2009. A 20" flatscreen TV cost \$1,200 (\$1,813) in 1999, but the same size HDTV was just \$84 (\$94) in 2011.¹⁵⁵

Today, the latest generation of flatscreen sets uses a newer type of technology known as 4K or *Ultra High Definition* (UHD). A quick search of a "big box" retailer's website found these current sale prices: a "store brand" 40" HDTV was on sale for just \$139.99, a 55" Samsung 4K UHD set was priced at \$429.99, a 65" Samsung 4K UHD TV was only \$649.99, and a giant 85" Sony 4K UHD TV was \$2,999.99.¹⁵⁶

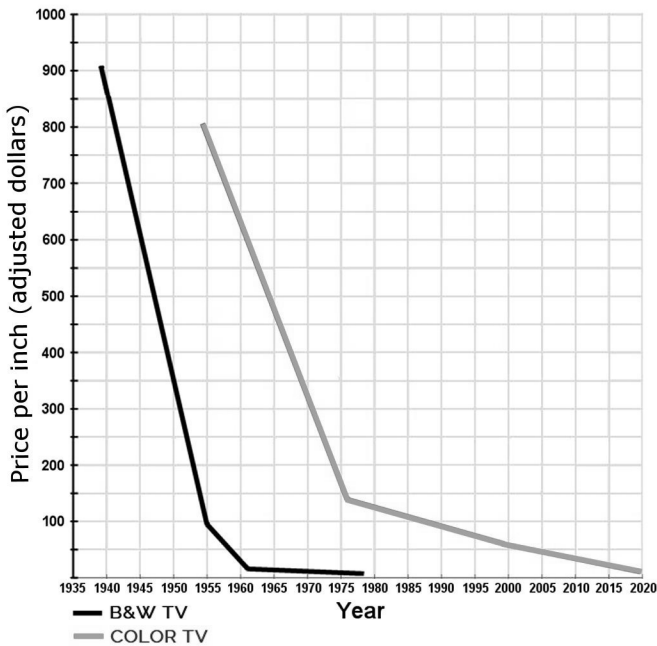


Figure 1. Chart illustrating how the cost per inch of TV screen size has fallen dramatically over time.

Some of my personal TV purchase data: in 1998, our unbelievably heavy Sony 32" tube TV cost about \$800 (\$1,235) at a Richmond appliance retailer. In 2010, I bought a Sharp 60" LED flatscreen at a Phoenix-area "big box" electronics retailer for \$1,250 (\$1,442). In 2015, my current model Vizio 65" set from "Sam's large blue store" cost just \$850 (\$903).

The best times to buy a new TV set are Black Friday (the big sale day after Thanksgiving) and the period between Christmas and the Super Bowl in early February.¹⁵⁷

Game Theory

It was one of the greatest upsets in American sports history, and it wasn't even televised. In May 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the federal Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA) was unconstitutional. PASPA prohibited states from regulating sports gambling, which effectively banned wagering on sports (outside of Nevada).

In the court's opinion, Justice Samuel Alito wrote, "Congress can regulate sports gambling directly, but if it elects not to do so, each state is free to act on its own."¹⁵⁸ The Court's stunning ruling struck down the federal government's longstanding policy that sports betting was illegal. It also left the door open for individual states to make their own laws and determine the legality of sports gambling for themselves.¹⁵⁹

Here in Arizona, state bill SB 1158 was introduced less than a year later. It would allow sports gambling through the state's Native American tribal casinos and area sports stadiums. Gambling itself is a big business. Arizona's casinos took in more than \$1.9 billion in 2018. The estimated annual revenues from sports betting in the state are projected to be between \$20 million and \$33 million.¹⁶⁰

One philosophical question has always bothered me about the world of sports and its relationship with the universe: why isn't sports betting an easy way to make money? A trained monkey pulling slips of paper out of a hat should be able to randomly draw out winners 50 percent of the time. The odds on a standard sports wager are typically 11 to 10, therefore a bettor only has to win 55 percent of the time to break even. So with advanced statistical analysis of past trends and

performances, why can't smart individuals consistently pick sports winners at a highly profitable rate? (Ditto for the stock market, where some people do succeed, but strong results there are far from effortless or guaranteed.)

To me, something has always smelled fishy about this phenomenon. Sports handicappers should do much better than 55 percent but mostly they seem unable to beat the bookies. Sometime betters have a good run of luck for a while but they almost always level off in the long run and eventually they falter. (For example, I hit about 85 percent of my “best bet” picks during one NFL season during the 1980s, but my forecasts were below 50 percent the following year – although that's still no worse than some TV weathermen.) With that statistical enigma in mind, it should come as no surprise that trying to predict the performances of 68 college basketball teams each spring is somewhat less certain than Murphy's Law and akin to practicing voodoo.

It's easy to understand why many March Madness contest winners (whether in a company office pool or a national online sweepstakes) aren't actually sports nuts. Thousands (or perhaps even millions) of nearly-identical bracket sheets are filled out and entered by fans in each contest. Why do their brackets look so similar? It makes sense that most of their selections are the odds-on favorites in those games, so predicting a series of major upsets is something you might expect from a non-fan without much knowledge about college basketball, not a dedicated follower of the sport. As a result, the contest winners are ultimately individuals who entered unique brackets and who have made a series of unlikely picks that (against long odds) somehow came true.

This works by using the same logic as in the old saying about unlimited simians: “If an infinite number of monkeys have an infinite number of typewriters to peck away at, they will eventually write all of Shakespeare's great plays.” If there are enough contest entries, one of them will probably hit the right combination and come close to being correct, even if only by accident. That's just how math works.

About 20 years ago, one man used the same set of brackets to enter a variety of different March Madness contests – and struck gold. By finishing first in several sweepstakes, he won a large number of valuable prizes such as a big screen TV, pizza for a year, and some big money too. Yet this type of sweepstakes used to be illegal in some states, even with no entry fee required. (Too much like gambling?) I don't know if that is still the case but I would not be surprised about that, if true. One year, I believe a March Madness contest winner living in Florida had to forfeit the top prize. Apparently he didn't read the fine print.

Chapter VII: Field of Dreams

“You wouldn't have won if we'd beaten you.” – Yogi Berra

Because it's my book, I'm going to include a chapter about my own participation in both organized and recreational athletics. So although I covered that subject extensively in *Keep Going*, I will briefly recap that chapter here and add a few new comments about my mixed success in playing sports.

After this chapter, I'll add a few pages about my own experiences with televised sports. If you can make it through my ego trip in the next two chapters, more interesting reading is in the cards as I write some stories about poker. So try to stay with it for a bit longer.

Court Reporter

I grew up on a farm in eastern Indiana, and at age 14, my family and I moved into the nearby city of Richmond. In my home state, most young people played basketball. Out in the country, as well as in both urban and suburban neighborhoods, basketball goals were commonplace. I played some indoor hoops at IU's massive HPER facility and competed in organized YMCA school leagues, but most of my experience was in playing “streetball” on outdoor concrete courts. I usually practiced by myself, simulating game situations and taking many decisive last-second shots. I spent countless hours shooting baskets in the summer heat. Many times, I shoveled snow off our driveway so I could go out in the winter cold and dribble around.

Not being very tall, I was usually at a big disadvantage in actual games. Although I hustled and played hard, my short arms made it tough for me on both offense and defense. I had little luck scoring inside so I had to develop an accurate long-range shot and focus my efforts on the outside game. On TV, I watched NBA star Rick Barry pull up from the right end of the free throw line time after time and score from that spot, so I practiced the same mid-range jumper until I successfully added it to my game too. I passed the ball well but due to my small hands, my dribbling was not all that great.

Opponents with little basketball background, but who were larger and even just slightly taller than me, were usually able to get into the *low post* (near the basket) and shoot over me without difficulty. Also, I didn't have very much jumping ability so I couldn't pull down many rebounds, even when I managed to get good inside position.

Growing up out on a farm, I didn't have any exposure to sports like tennis, golf, soccer, volleyball, or swimming. They all looked like fun but might as well have been played on the Moon. There, I would have had about the same chance of trying them. I did enjoy going outside and throwing the football around both on the farm and in our city backyard, even in frigid temperatures and blowing, drifting snow. At times in the winter, our lawn was like the "frozen tundra" of Green Bay, but I still went out there and had fun. Often I really wanted to play sports so I invented my own games if no one else was around. Upon moving into Richmond, I also joined in the occasional pickup touch football games held across the street behind my neighbor's house. We didn't have organized football leagues in school before I moved, so my only other

experience was in physical education (PE) classes and junior high school intermural contests.

My speed helped me as a receiver, and despite having those small hands, I found that I had a flair for catching tough passes. Yet in those PE football games, I discovered that I was better as a defensive back. I could read the plays, get in front of receivers using good timing, and then break up passes. Despite my quickness, I was never really big enough as a teen to actually consider going out for the school team, though.

By contrast, I played in organized baseball leagues for many years before I moved to Richmond. Baseball was my favorite sport. Each summer, on a variety of small town diamonds, our often-shorthanded Economy team played twice a week against the other tiny burgs located around the area. Economy must have been the smallest town in the county because we usually lost, even at home.

I was serious about doing my best on the field. With a lot of practice, I became a good hitter with a high batting average and surprising power. I didn't try to pull everything and so I drove a lot of outside pitches hard to right field for extra base hits – good advice for young hitters. Although I really wanted to play center field, my throwing arm was not very good so I usually ended up as our team's catcher. In the humid months of June and July, it got really hot wearing the equipment, and whenever I tossed the catcher's mask aside, the face pads would come back with mud on them (dirt plus sweat). I wore white cleats because “Broadway” Joe Namath wore white shoes and I wanted to stand out like he did too.

During the summers of my preteen years, my best friend and I got together at least once a week for backyard baseball,

mostly pitching and hitting duels or playing catch. When I visited his house for “away games” in congested, bustling downtown Economy, his cousins and other neighborhood kids often joined in too. So with two team practices, two league games, and a day full of backyard friendlies each week, I played a lot of baseball each summer. A few years later (while I was in high school), our east side Richmond neighborhood group played sandlot summer baseball games that were unofficially called “slouch league” (after the “tremendous slouch” line by Chevy Chase in the movie *Caddyshack*, a big hit at that time).

Playing baseball is a wonderful method for teaching youngsters how to deal with failure, an inevitable part of life. Ted Williams, one of the greatest hitters ever, was the last man to bat .400 for an entire season (1941) – an amazing achievement because .300 is the traditional benchmark for outstanding hitting. Williams once said, “Baseball is the only field of endeavor where a man can succeed three times out of ten and be considered a good performer.”

Fan Club

Just a bit of information about me, the sports fan:

While a young lad during the 1970s, all-star catcher Johnny Bench (#5) was my favorite baseball player and his Cincinnati Reds were my favorite team. (Cincinnati's “Big Red Machine” of that era was arguably the best baseball team ever, dominating the sport in 1975 and 1976.) I also faithfully followed the Cincinnati Bengals, listening to their football games on our car's AM radio while my father used to take us on long Sunday drives to Indianapolis or Dayton. And, as a native

of Indiana as well as being a basketball junkie, I have always backed the IU Hoosiers and the Indiana Pacers.

The Pacers were the ABA champions during the early 1970s. I used to stay up late at night watching them play on WTTV Channel 4, an independent station broadcasting from Indianapolis. Sharpshooting Billy Keller would often rally the team late in the fourth quarter with a flurry of clutch three-pointers. I liked the team's best player, George McGinnis (known as Big Mac), and even wore his number 30 on a t-shirt.

I guess it's somewhat amazing that we received a strong enough VHF signal to get a clear TV picture from a station located in far-off Indianapolis, even the border of Marion County was about 50 miles away from us. Actually, we got all three of the major network affiliates in Indy, as well as Channel 4. We had a large TV tower standing just outside our house, the kind that you used to see a lot before cable and satellite TV services took over. It had a motorized, amplified antenna on top. Inside our house, next to the big color console TV set in the living room, was a control box with a big dial that you turned to have the motor slowly rotate the antenna to get the best signal. If we were having bad weather, there was often a lot of static and/or ghosting on the TV screen.

While many people in our area tuned in to the more closely-positioned TV stations located to our east in Dayton, my father preferred the Indianapolis channels. He mostly watched WISH-TV, a CBS affiliate. Being a farmer, my father wanted to see what weather was heading our way from the west, and Stan Wood, the longtime weatherman from Channel 8, was the forecaster that he trusted.

On the Channel 8 evening news, sports segments often

featured detailed reports on the highly-successful IU basketball program. Long before I began attending college there, Bob Knight was winning championships and creating controversy as the Hoosiers' basketball coach. The "General" was probably the most well-known person living in our state at that time. While I was living on the Bloomington campus in the 1980s, IU social activities frequently revolved around the basketball team's schedule during the winter months.

Watching an IU basketball game coached by Knight was like seeing a ballet. All the players' motions were coordinated precisely like the movements of a symphony. Anyone playing the wrong notes got a seat on the bench next to Coach Knight. (This is one reason why the Golden State Warriors are so enjoyable to watch today and why they have been destroying the rest of their NBA opponents. The Warriors play smart basketball as it was intended to be played.)

Steve Alford of New Castle was Indiana's All-American basketball star who led the Hoosiers to the national championship in 1987. For a few minutes on one Saturday afternoon, I stood next to him on the plaza just outside Memorial Stadium during halftime of an IU football game. Despite it being a very windy autumn day, I don't think his perfectly-styled hair moved the entire time.

As a kid, our local sports stars seemed larger than life to me, fellows such as Bench, McGinnis, Knight, Ken Anderson, and Isaac Curtis. Later on, other players would join that list: legends-in-the-making such as Larry Bird, Reggie Miller, Peyton Manning, Barry Larkin, Ken Griffey Jr., Anthony Munoz, and Boomer Esiason.

The changing times of the 1960s and 1970s brought more

flamboyant characters to sports than it had previously known, fellows such as Joe Namath, Muhammad Ali, and Reggie Jackson. I liked their confident and colorful styles even if they played on the opposing side sometimes.

As we become older than the players whom we follow, eventually we stop idolizing them and turning them into heroes. They become youngsters relative to us. In addition, their shortcomings are now aired out publicly by reporters for all to see. In decades past, sportswriters often overlooked the off-field excesses of sports stars such as Babe Ruth and Mickey Mantle. Today, their squabbles over money, political demonstrations, drug use, and domestic violence charges are used by the news media as opportunities for financial gain, merely ways to attract more viewers and readers.

For me personally, the turning point in my view of athletes occurred in 2011. That was when star quarterback Carson Palmer walked out on the Bengals, hoping to force a trade to a team on the west coast. He might have had good reasons for his decision: unhappiness with the low-budget operation of the franchise, its coaching style, or the direction that the team was taking on the field. Perhaps behind closed doors, Palmer quietly asked owner Mike Brown for a trade, was refused, and felt he had no other option but to make his case public by “retiring” from the sport until he was traded elsewhere. In any case, Palmer no longer looked like a “team player” to many fans, including me, and I finally had to admit to myself that pro athletes are human just like everyone else.

I am fortunate that our local teams did very well and won numerous championships while I was young. It probably spoiled me and raised my expectations too high. Most fans are

not so lucky: in some places such as San Diego, they are still waiting for their first pro sports title.

Growing up, I was a football fan only of the Bengals, but today I also cheer for the Indianapolis Colts and the Arizona Cardinals (my current home team) to do well. While I worked at Sanyo Laser Products in Richmond from 1993 to 2009, there was always a split between the Colts and Bengals fans there. The Bengals backers were diehards who wore their striped jerseys every Friday, knew all the team's players and usually the opponent's lineup too. By contrast, the Colts fans only wore their blue jerseys once the NFL playoffs started and many knew few football players other than Peyton Manning.

When I moved out to Arizona in 2009, I often remarked on the state's sporting similarities with my home area. The local baseball team wears red, too. The Arizona teams' hated rivals are the Dodgers, 49ers, Lakers, and UCLA. If you are a long time follower of the Reds, Bengals, Larry Bird, and the IU Hoosiers like me, that all sounds pretty familiar. Being a transplanted sports fan in Arizona doesn't seem that much different to me, and that sensation makes me feel right at home. The sports scene here doesn't look alien to me.

I do like the Arizona Diamondbacks a lot. They have a great baseball park in Chase Field, it is very clean and fan friendly. Unfortunately, as I stated in a previous chapter, their dark gray road uniforms are really ugly.

Since moving to the southwest, Arizona State University (ASU) is now my college home team. I rooted for USC football as a teenager because I didn't like temperamental coach Woody Hayes, and the Trojans always beat his Ohio State Buckeyes in the Rose Bowl. Many people in Richmond cheered

for OSU, it was as if they thought that we lived in Ohio.

Many years later, after my divorce in the 2000s, I started to enjoy following USC football again. The Trojans were plenty of fun to watch with their energetic coach, Pete Carroll, roaming the sidelines, athletic Reggie Bush running wild with the football, and employing a wide-open style of play. Often I would order a pizza and tune in to their games on Saturday nights. Even in Richmond, we got plenty of PAC-10 games on cable TV with the Fox Sports Net Pacific regional channel.

But today is a different day. USC is an important annual opponent on the Sun Devils' football schedule, especially meaningful since ASU has a strong football program in Tempe. So, a bit reluctantly, I've let go of my fandom for the Trojans and made the transition to cheering for the Sun Devils.

ASU is a school that is really on the rise academically, it's also large and enjoyable to visit. Sparky (the ASU Sun Devil) is one of the greatest mascots ever, I like to see him on t-shirts, hats, everything. Sparky is still a better logo than the trident that ASU recently adopted (although it's not bad either).

The Arizona Coyotes try hard to be fan-friendly but they belong in Scottsdale, not Glendale. They would draw a lot more fans on the east side of the county. We have a big Canadian hockey fan base (snowbirds and transplants) living here in Arizona but most people don't want to drive all the way across town on school nights to attend a sporting event. Hopefully the Coyotes build a new arena in a more favorable area and stay here in the "Valley" (the Phoenix metro area).

Living in Phoenix, I do follow the Coyotes somewhat, but my longtime favorite hockey team is the Washington Capitals. In the next chapter, I will tell you about how I first learned

about hockey (once referred to as *hah-QUÉ* by my ex) and chose my favorite team.

When NASCAR became popular in the 1990s, my favorite racing driver became Jeff Gordon (who had moved to Indiana as a boy, wanting to learn how to race). He always seemed to be a very humble, nice guy and he always mentioned all his sponsors (very important in the uber-expensive sport of auto racing), so they seemed to like him too. Gordon was always quick to hold up a Pepsi bottle after each race, and even now during his retirement, he still appears in some of their TV commercials.

Not to mention the four championships and dozens of races that he won. Gordon was especially dominant at his home track, the world-famous Indianapolis Motor Speedway, winning an unparalleled five Brickyard 400 races there.

False Front

I reserve my greatest scorn for “front-runners”: people who are with you when times are good, but disappear when things aren't going so well. They usually root for whatever team is winning at the moment (or teams featured in too many TV appearances, such as the Pittsburgh Steelers, Boston Red Sox, and L.A. Lakers). When I attended elementary school during the 1970s, kids who wanted to look cool rooted for the Miami Dolphins for that reason. To me, that behavior shows a lack of character. I feel like I could never trust that kind of person.

It did occur to me once that I could have been accused of being a front-runner myself because I did have a Celtics warm-up shirt when Larry Bird played for Boston. But almost

everybody from Indiana cheered for Bird (except the occasional front-runner Lakers fan), and I haven't rooted for the Celtics since Bird retired, except in the handful of odd playoff series when they battled against the Lakers or LeBron James and his former team, the Cleveland Cavaliers. I did catch some grief about my Celtics shirt from a few obnoxious sports fans from the Chicago area who were attending IU (by 1986, they already idolized Michael Jordan) – and as the years have passed, I've found less and less that I like about Chicago.

My cousin always liked Pete Rose a lot. However, I feel that Rose diminished the great accomplishments of the 1970s Big Red Machine by gambling on games later (during the 1980s) while serving as the Reds' manager. One time Rose made an appearance at the Richmond Square Mall and refused to sign autographs for an incredibly long line of kids waiting there to see him. By all accounts, Rose was a real jerk, but as a Cincinnati native, the fans there loved him anyway. Apparently my own idol (Johnny Bench) was also frequently rude to kids but those stories weren't reported publicly back then. A few of those accounts came out years later on talk radio after the kids had grown up. Now both Rose and Bench are old men and seemingly nice to everybody.

Park Ranger

Going to the ballpark is supposed to be a fun experience but I can only do it once in a while. Watching sports is a lot more comfortable for me when I am relaxing on the couch at home.

I'm certain that a fair number of baseball season ticket holders are elderly retirees who did a better job of saving

money than I did. I don't know how they can sit there in the stands day after day. Seated in the outfield bleachers at Chase Field for a baseball game in 2015, my back got pretty sore. I was worn out and sleepy by the seventh inning.

While I was a young Reds fan, my family didn't go to very many baseball games. The long drive from rural Economy to Cincinnati's downtown Riverfront Stadium lasted two-and-a-half or three hours, so my father would only go (grudgingly) once a year on a Sunday afternoon. About halfway down to the ballpark on winding two-lane U.S. 27, we crossed the state line into Oxford, Ohio. By that time, my father was already hungry and usually had to stop for a bucket of chicken. By the eighth inning, he was always ready to leave the stadium. He just wanted to beat the traffic out of the parking lot for the long journey back to the farm.

The first Reds game that we went to was on the last day of the 1972 season. Our opponent was the hated Los Angeles Dodgers. Our seats were in the lower section of the right field bleachers. The teams' pitching aces, Don Gullett and Tommy John, were dominant that afternoon. The Reds got just two hits and the Dodgers only had three. The game sped by in about an hour and 45 minutes. Cincinnati won 1-0 by scoring without the benefit of a hit. Pete Rose walked, stole second base, took third on a sacrifice bunt by Joe Morgan, and scored on a ground out to the right side of the infield. The Reds would go on to play Oakland in the World Series. It was also Fan Appreciation Day. After the game, a man in our section won the big drawing for a new car.

In 1973, we went to Cincinnati during the opening week of April to see the Reds play the Atlanta Braves. We made the

early season trip because Hank Aaron was chasing Babe Ruth's historic career home run record of 714. Aaron had tied the mark on Friday night, then he sat out on Saturday, hoping to break the record at home. But Bowie Kuhn, baseball's meddlesome commissioner, ordered the Braves to play Aaron on Sunday. He wasn't in the starting lineup, but Aaron did pinch hit in the ninth inning, driving a pitch off the center field fence and narrowly missing a home run. The contest went to extra innings so my father said we had to leave. We listened to the game on the radio in the car as the Reds won in 13 innings.

The next evening, I got to stay up late to watch the "Hammer" play on TV's *Monday Night Baseball* against the Dodgers. Fortunately, I saw Aaron homer to break the record.

After that trip to the ballpark, the Reds always seemed to lose whenever I went to their games. For example, I got to see the great Tom Seaver pitch in 1978. The Braves lit him up and Seaver didn't last five innings. I have been to Chase Field here in Phoenix twice to watch the Reds and they lost both times.

In 1980, my best friend and I went on a bus trip with a group from the hospital where his mother worked to Cincinnati for a *twi-night doubleheader* (one afternoon and one evening game) featuring the Reds against the Giants. There wasn't much pitching as San Francisco won both games, 7-4 and 10-7. Jack Clark hit two home runs for the Giants while all-star slugger George Foster went deep twice for the Reds. Johnny Bench also hit two homers. Bench's second blast was historic, as it tied the all-time record for home runs by a catcher.

In game two, trailing by three runs, the Reds loaded the bases with two outs in the bottom of the ninth. Bench came to bat. A grand slam would not only win the game, it would set a

record. As the crowd stood and cheered, Bench got two strikes. Down to his last strike, Bench tenaciously fouled off pitch after pitch (at least a half dozen or more), trying to force his opponent to throw him something good to hit.

Finally, the pitcher made a mistake and Bench ripped a blazing shot down the third base line. A double into the corner would have cleared the bases and tied up the game. But Bill Madlock, the Giants' slick-fielding third baseman, made an incredible diving stop, jumped up, and raced to the bag before the runner could get there, forcing him out. It was a disappointing end to the game and a long day at the ballpark.

Two nights later, my cousin was in the crowd at Riverfront Stadium as Bench homered again to break the catchers' record.

Chapter VIII: Sports Watch

“If your man is a sports enthusiast, you may have to resign yourself to his spouting off in a monotone on a prize fight, football game, or pennant race.” – Marilyn Monroe

When I was a sportswriter for the local weekly newspaper in Richmond, my column was called *Sports Watch*. Was it about sports that happened on my “watch”? Partly – but in truth, the title was also a bit tongue-in-cheek.

During the 1980s, there were frequent TV ads selling subscriptions to *Sports Illustrated* magazine. The high-pressure sales pitches typically offered buyers a bonus item such as a videotape of highlights, a special commemorative edition issue, or an inexpensive plastic timepiece with a team logo on the face – a “sports watch” as they called it.

Outside the Boxing

When I started to take an interest in sports, my father showed me how to read the baseball standings in the newspaper. He often remarked that when his family first got a television back in the 1950s, wrestling was on the tube a lot (and it's still a popular program today, even after all those years). Although my father wasn't really interested in the world of sports very much, he did enjoy Indy car racing and boxing. As a retiree, he began watching golf, so Mom started watching it too. After my father passed away in 1999, my mother continued to follow the golf tournaments on TV most weekends. Myself, I never really enjoyed golf, maybe I would

have if I had played the game. There is an old joke: “What is more boring than golf on television? Golf on the radio.”

As for boxing, I really enjoyed the sport until greedy promoters and fighters ruined it by taking the best bouts off of free TV and putting all the big matches on pay-per-view. In the 1980s, boxing was on network TV every weekend, only the biggest championship fights were broadcast in a handful of locations on *closed circuit*. (You bought a ticket to enter a local arena, auditorium, or theater and watch the fight there. The video was broadcast by satellite to the local site and projected onto a big screen like a movie. That was the forerunner of modern pay-per-view TV.)

The first bout between Sugar Ray Leonard and Thomas (“The Hitman”) Hearns was shown on closed circuit at the IU Auditorium, so I went. I was seated about fifteen rows back. The crowd was already boisterous that night during the preliminary matches and went completely nuts during the main event as it turned out to be a great fight. Leonard rallied to win with a knockout in the 13th round. (The IU Auditorium hosted many other great events for students. For example, I was able to see zany comedian Gallagher perform his unique standup routine on stage there.)

A few years later, I went with a couple of the Hoosiers' tennis team members to Hooligans' tavern in downtown Bloomington to see the big rematch for the world heavyweight title between Michael Spinks and Larry Holmes. That night, we worked our way through the packed club to a prime spot down at the bar, where we drank Long Island iced teas and watched the fight, which was projected on an immense big screen on the wall high above the bar. We scored along for ourselves as

Spinks won a controversial and close decision for the second time. Boxing decisions are often debatable. Remarked legendary trainer Lou Duva, “You can sum up this sport in two words: You never know.”

Usually, you can see sports a lot better on a big screen TV at home. As former Oakland Raiders football coach John Madden once said about the Super Bowl, “If you want to watch the game, watch it at home. If you want to watch people watching the game, go to a bar.”

Field Day

The highly-successful New England Patriots have been a staple of nationally-televised football in recent years. Whenever their games are on, memories come back of my high school days on the southeast side of Richmond. It was a nice area to live in. The names on the Patriots' roster are straight out of my old neighborhood. For example, Hogan lived next door, Edelman and Hill were just down the street, and our other neighbor was Burkhart (almost the same as the Patriots' Burkhead). I don't think there were any Bradys or Belichick on our block, however.

Richmond is situated between three TV markets: Dayton, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis. Cable TV companies were required to carry the major network stations from the nearest market (in our case, Dayton), but the local cable franchise included some channels from all three cities. This was largely driven by demands from pro football fans for the Indianapolis and Cincinnati stations, so we got channel 5 (NBC) from Cincinnati and channel 13 (NBC) from Indianapolis.

Channel 8 from Indianapolis was also carried by our cable system, presumably because CBS was the network for college basketball and the NCAA Tournament – and channel 8 would always have the big IU basketball games. (For the same reason, the cable company also gave us independent station WTTV channel 4, which was on the IU basketball TV network.) IU basketball was more popular in Indiana than pro football, at least until Peyton Manning took the Colts to the top of the AFC in the 2000s.

On many Sundays, a sports fan in our city could choose to watch either the Bengals or the Colts on TV. Because of the success of Manning, eventually the Colts were featured in the networks' "national" games frequently and scheduled in later time slots, meaning that viewers in Richmond could often watch both area teams play.

The NFL's TV package is split by conference. At that time, AFC football games were shown on the NBC network while the NFC games were broadcast by CBS. (Today, the AFC games are carried by CBS while Fox covers the NFC.) This alphabet soup meant that both the Bengals and Colts were playing on NBC stations. Opposing them, the local CBS affiliates were in a tough spot, just hoping to attract any disenfranchised, leftover football fans. Those stations could only opt for whatever NFC matchups and teams looked the most ratings friendly.

By rule, when an NFL team plays at home, no "competing game" can be shown on TV by a different network at the same time. So when the Bengals or Colts were playing home games on NBC, no other NFL game could be shown by the CBS station there. But during away games, the CBS station from Indianapolis usually counter-programmed with games

featuring the Chicago Bears, a team that still had fans in Indiana from the pre-Colts era. The CBS station in Dayton tended to carry whatever eastern contest was deemed the “game of the day” by the suits in New York City.

Home games were usually sold out in Indianapolis but often Cincinnati fans failed to purchase all the available tickets (which was necessary to avoid the NFL's local TV blackout rule), so the Ohio NBC stations sometimes had to carry the Cleveland Browns' games instead. If the Colts were scheduled in the late national game of an NBC doubleheader (or on Monday night), then a Dolphins, Jets, or Patriots game was usually shown at 1 p.m. in Indy.

If the Bengals and Colts were both playing on the road, it was hypothetically possible to choose between four different games at 1 p.m. on Richmond's cable TV system.

For example:

NBC channel 5: Bengals

CBS channel 7: Giants, Redskins, or Cowboys – often

CBS channel 8: Bears – usually

NBC channel 13: Colts

I don't remember if this actually happened very often, but having three different games to choose from was not unusual.

Don't Leave Home Without It

When you go through a medical crisis or start getting older, you might start to hear the eternal clock ticking. But watching sports can be therapeutic. In the year after my divorce, I tuned in to see the Indiana Pacers basketball games almost nightly on TV. They had a very good team then (winning 48 times during

the 2002-2003 season) and it was quite enjoyable to follow the Pacers because they did so well. I think those games, especially with their good results, gave me something meaningful to keep me occupied and helped me get through that difficult period.

In more recent years, when a TV hoops game went to overtime, I would tell my live-in girlfriend, "We're having bonus basketball again!" One season, that got to be so commonplace, she would just get up and go to bed with about two minutes left to play. She knew where those close games were headed. Often her instincts were right, the teams would end up tied and five more minutes would be placed on the scoreboard clock.

Modern technology is changing how people watch sports. Fans can watch games on the go now through their phones and computer pads. In 2014, smartphone penetration in the U.S. reached 75 percent. By comparison, that number was just 10 percent in 2008.¹⁶¹ Less clear is the wisdom of watching a game on your phone while attending a social event with "WAGS" (wives and girlfriends) or while taking them shopping.

Apparently, my own attention span has gotten much shorter. This is a dilemma for me now with televised sports. Many times I can only watch the last quarter of basketball games and the glacial pace of baseball makes it almost a complete no-go for me. Fortunately, YouTube has lots of highlight videos, often posted by users within the hour. The NFL's YouTube channel has especially excellent packages of the best plays from every game. Their videos only last about 12 minutes, just enough time to show almost all the important plays. I like theirs much better than the ones made by the NFL Network because I don't care to hear studio announcers doing

unnecessary voiceover commentary.

In the 1980s, I was able to watch three NFL games on Sundays. I would tune in for the 1 p.m. opening kickoff, then watch the second game of the doubleheader at 4 p.m. That was followed by ESPN's *NFL Primetime* with an hour of highlights, and finally their night game would start at 8 p.m. These days, I am lucky if I can sit through the second half of one game. (I often turn on the Sunday night game and then do other things during much of the contest.)

The TV networks were broadcasting all those games because people wanted to see them. I certainly wasn't the only guy watching football all day, which caused many wives to become dissatisfied with their husbands' Sunday viewing habits. Humorist and newspaper columnist Erma Bombeck once wrote, "If a man watches three football games in a row, he should be declared legally dead."

Set Your Goals High

I'm not a diehard hockey fan. As with baseball, I find it hard to watch regular season hockey games, there are just too many of them. But I have had a favorite team that I have followed since 1985, through many frustrating playoff appearances. This is our story:

Professional hockey has long been a mainstay of televised sports in Canada. Yet for most of its history, it has not been broadcast here in the U.S. on a consistent basis. In the 1970s, NHL hockey briefly appeared on American network TV, followed by coverage on the fledgling USA network beginning in 1979, but it did not gain widespread exposure across the

country until ESPN began broadcasting games in 1985. Living at IU amongst several sports fans from the northeast who wanted to watch those games, I had to quickly learn about a sport that I had really only known through playing a tabletop hockey game as a kid.

I typically support the local sports teams but that presented a problem in this case. During the 1970s, the upstart WHA had the Indianapolis Racers (where Wayne Gretzky had gotten his start¹⁶²) and the Cincinnati Stingers, but the league never got on TV and eventually went bankrupt. So in 1985, Indiana had no nearby professional hockey teams to follow. The closest NHL team was the Chicago Black Hawks, but I wasn't about to cheer for any team from Chicago because the most obnoxious sports fans in our dorm were from that area. So I decided I would have to apply logic to the question and choose my own favorite hockey team from elsewhere.

It had only been a few years since the 1980 USA Olympic hockey team had captured gold after beating the powerful Soviet Union squad in the "Miracle on Ice." Many of the Olympic team's players were still playing in the NHL and cheering for them seemed like a patriotic thing to do. At that time, the Washington Capitals had several of the best American players on their team, and so, with their striking "red white & blue" uniforms, the Caps were easily my first choice. Never mind that they had little team history and had never won anything.

So for many years, I followed the Capitals each April through a long string of disappointing postseason performances. Although talented and strong during the winter months, in springtime they were the NHL's hard luck team.

Routinely, they blew seven-game playoff series after leading them three games to one, and on TV, I saw them agonizingly lose some of hockey's longest seventh games ever in multiple overtimes. Sitting through so many tough defeats in big games, I began to think that Washington would never break through and actually win the Stanley Cup.

In 1995, the snake-bitten Capitals did away with their eye-catching “red white & blue” uniforms. Steel blue and bronze jerseys with black pants replaced them. They also changed their logo to a screaming eagle. This look presented a modern, more aggressive image for the team. Subsequently, their fortunes reversed in 1998. Almost, but not entirely.

I watched on TV as Washington stormed through the Eastern Conference playoffs, winning an amazing six overtime contests. Surely these new Capitals were a team of destiny. But in the Stanley Cup Finals, they faced a Detroit Red Wings team loaded with *Russian* hockey stars (the old villains). The summer before, those ex-Soviets had even hoisted up the Stanley Cup on Red Square in downtown Moscow. So in 1998, the experience of Detroit's veteran players was too much for Washington to overcome. The Red Wings swept the Caps in four straight games. It was a bitter and seemingly unfair way to end the Capitals' quest for their first championship.

The defeat crushed the team's spirit. The next winter, the ghosts of the past returned to haunt the Capitals. Washington missed the playoffs during multiple seasons and lost in two other years to Pittsburgh. So when Nike redesigned many NHL teams' uniforms in 2007, the Capitals took advantage of that opportunity, bringing back a sleeker new version of the old patriotic “red white & blue” uniforms.

Behind the team's top draft pick from 2004, Alexander Ovechkin, the Capitals began to bounce back in their revitalized threads. It wasn't long before they finished atop the league standings, thereby capturing the Presidents' Trophy. But their fantastic 2010 season ended early when the Caps were upset in the first round by the lowest-seeded playoff team, Montreal.

Washington was strong again in 2011, finishing first in the east, but underachieved once again in the playoffs, falling in the second round. Things got even worse from there, as the Capitals then lost to the rival New York Rangers during their next three postseason appearances.

Yet Washington was slowly building a powerhouse hockey team during those disappointing seasons. Eventually, the Capitals won the coveted Presidents' Trophy in back-to-back years, both in 2016 and again in 2017. Finishing atop the league was getting to be routine for the Caps. But in the playoffs, the team had always failed to meet expectations, and that bad habit would not change easily. In 2016 and 2017, the Caps were a postseason bust again, losing in both years to the hated Pittsburgh Penguins (who would go on to win the Stanley Cup twice).

In 2018, the Capitals did well during the regular season again and even won their division. Yet they did not capture the Presidents' Trophy for a third consecutive time, and therefore the team did not face as much pressure as they had during their previous two postseason trips. Although great talent was still there, a deep playoff run wasn't really expected – but the Caps managed one anyway. First, Washington managed to come from behind to take its opening-round series against

Columbus. Next, the Capitals stunned their nemesis, the Penguins, by beating them at Pittsburgh in a game six overtime thriller.

Despite the Capitals' surprise victory over the veteran Penguins, I still didn't quite believe that it was finally their time. A lot can happen in the hockey playoffs, where even a hot goaltender can derail a good team's chances. But then, after trailing three games to two, Washington rallied from the brink of elimination and won the last two contests of their conference final series against Tampa Bay, knocking out the heavily-favored, top-seeded Lightning. The Caps had not gone so far in 20 years.

But it wasn't time to celebrate, not yet. One hurdle remained, and it was a huge one. In the Stanley Cup Finals, the Capitals had to face the ultimate Cinderella team. The Vegas Golden Knights had become the most improbable success story in sports history. An expansion team full of castoffs from other clubs, Vegas had won the Pacific Division and advanced to the hockey finals in their very first season.¹⁶³

But just as the Capitals of 1998 had come up short, the apparent team of destiny from Las Vegas could not complete their mission. The Knights would have to wait their turn too. During the second game in Las Vegas, goalie Braden Holtby made a nearly-impossible save for the ages in the final minutes to preserve a Caps victory, and the entire series turned in that moment. Washington then won the next three games and captured the championship.

Following the Capitals' championship-clinching victory in game five, I watched as team captain Alexander Ovechkin skated around the ice, finally holding the Stanley Cup high over

his head. Although I can only see the games at home on TV, it was quite a moment. I got a bit misty-eyed.

Immediately following that final game, Washington's hockey fans quickly swarmed the downtown streets of their city to celebrate, wearing red t-shirts emblazoned with slogans such as "ALL CAPS" and "ROCK THE RED." It was extremely satisfying for me to see the Capitals finally win the Stanley Cup after so many years of frustration – especially by beating Pittsburgh along the way.

Ironically, after I had begun cheering for the Capitals in 1985 because of their collection of outstanding American players, Washington was led to the championship by Russia's best hockey player, Alexander Ovechkin.

The "Great Eight" has been named the winner of the Hart Memorial Trophy as the NHL's Most Valuable Player (MVP) three times. In his 13th season, Ovechkin also was awarded the Conn Smythe Trophy as the MVP of the 2018 playoffs.¹⁶⁴

A month later, "Ovi" would get his own chance to lift the Stanley Cup on Moscow's Red Square, a spontaneous rally in which he would be surrounded by throngs of his homeland's devoted hockey fans.

Chapter IX: Poker Vortex

“Life is not always a matter of holding good cards, but sometimes playing a poor hand well.” – Jack London

Onward now to some stories about poker.

During the “poker boom” that began in 2003, millions of people played the game online and high stakes tournaments were all over cable TV. In my first book, *Keep Going*, I described how poker also became one of my own hobbies. From about 2006 until I moved to Phoenix in 2009, I entered numerous tournaments each weekend on poker websites such as PokerStars and Full Tilt. My username at the online poker “tables” was **sw_son**.

Fortune Favors the Skilled

In *Passport Renewed*, I wrote extensively about poker and included detailed explanations regarding its rules and terminology. (That would be a good place to go next if you'd like to read more on this topic.) So here, I'm going to avoid an unnecessary rehash of all that technical stuff. Still, discussing a few words about the game itself is probably a good idea before I start typing up some poker stories.

Poker is mostly a game of skill, not chance. Luck certainly plays a part too (this is called *variance* by pros and poker writers) but it vanishes over the long haul and skill prevails.¹⁶⁵ A winner often plays the opposing player instead of the cards. The ability to bluff, watching your opponents' patterns of play, and reading the other players' *tells* (physical cues) are

important keys to winning. People who call poker “gambling” or say that “it’s all luck” are the same folks who always lose and can never figure out why – it’s because they don’t (or can’t) understand the nuances of the game.

In addition, many poker players just aren’t good enough to be winners. Like many of the financial experts with PhDs in economics who helped cause the recession of 2008, these individuals are often unable to see reality and delusional about their own skills.¹⁶⁶ (Recall the insightful research report that I referenced in an earlier chapter, “Why the Unskilled Are Unaware.”¹⁶⁷)

Yet some people do have outstanding poker skills that make them regular winners. A very talented pro named Daniel Negreanu has a reputation for reading other players extremely well. Frequently, he even calls their hands out loud with uncanny accuracy. (Some pros like to talk at the table, trying to get an edge on their opponents by making them react, distracting them, or getting them to say too much.) Although most of my poker games were of the online variety, I recognized the value of reading other players, and I tried to work on it in earnest when I got the opportunity to play in live games.

Once in our regular game, I was raised by an opponent (often referred to in poker manuals as the *villain*), and I had a strong feeling from his pattern of play that he had me beat with a monster hand. So I said, “You’ve got a bigger king than I do,” and I tossed my cards (a king and a meager seven) into the center of the table, thereby folding my hand.

Having won, the villain casually tossed his own cards into the *muck* (the “dead card” pile). A third player sitting at the

table then reached into the muck, picked up my opponent's two cards, turned them over, and looked at them (a major breach of poker etiquette). The villain had been holding a king and a jack. That visibly shook up the third guy quite a bit. (He was actually more experienced at poker than I was and typically was very successful in our game.) That's exactly the image that you want to build – making your opponents believe that you have the ability to always know what's in their hand.

There are two ways to play poker: (1) cash games, in which each chip has monetary value and a player can “cash out” and leave the game at any time; and (2) tournaments, in which the chips have no cash value, players stay until they lose them all, and the total amount of everyone's “buy-in” money is divided up among the tournament's top finishers. Tournaments were very popular for a few years after the poker boom, but cash games are a more traditional way to play poker and are commonly found at informal home meet-ups. The strategies of the two formats are very different.

One of the hardest things in establishing a regular poker game (and keeping one going) is getting enough people to show up. Family commitments, conflicting work schedules, and even spousal opposition are always working against your predetermined game night. So inevitably, to help fill the table, someone brings along a friend or relative as a guest.

For some reason that neither modern science nor classical philosophy has addressed or adequately explained, the universe usually selects a rude and obnoxious individual for the role of “newcomer.” Not being part of the regular group, often the visitor does not observe their behavioral conventions or care about the house rules, sometimes he doesn't even

understand how to play the game of poker. In those instances, the uninformed guest quickly becomes “that guy” (which is what the regulars will call him tomorrow, among other names).

You've probably already met “that guy” in a lot of different places. In poker, “that guy” is someone who: talks about a hand when he's not playing in it (repeatedly calling out possible draws when the community cards are turned up on the table), *splashes the pot* (throws his chips in the middle so you can't tell how many he actually put in), picks up his cards off the table and holds them up (because he's seen that done in the movies), loudly criticizes other players when they make mistakes (because he wouldn't have done things that way, ever), and/or digs out dead cards from the muck and looks at them (a previously mentioned no-no). If experienced at poker, “that guy” might even try *angle shooting* (physically acting in an unethical and purposely deceptive fashion, or trying to apply the “letter of the rules” in an unsportsmanlike manner to gain an advantage).

This behavior tends to put the regulars on *tilt* (make them lose their cool and play wildly). If you are “that guy,” then stop doing all those things. Not only will the other players dislike you, they might not invite you back either (not even to win your money).

One of the most common mistakes that even experienced poker players sometimes make is criticizing or making fun of others at the table for bad decisions. You don't want to scare away the “fish” (poor players), better to make them feel welcome at your game by congratulating them on their occasional wins with a friendly comment like “Nice hand!” or “Well played!”

Often, a novice seems to be a “luckbox” and wins the first time out, yet a little beginner's luck is actually a good thing. In the long run, skill and the law of averages work in favor of the better players. The smart ones know to let newcomers win a little bit so they will feel lucky and comfortable at your game. Then they will happily bring their money back again next time. The late “Amarillo Slim” Preston was a well-known poker champion, but was also an unsavory hustler who won a lot of money gambling in a variety of shady ways back in the “old days.” He said, “You can shear a sheep a hundred times, but you can skin it only once.”

Department of Home Game Security

Only a few years ago, there were numerous private poker clubs operating openly around Phoenix in public locations such as small strip malls. Most made money by collecting a flat membership fee from players who entered and joined the action. Upon receiving pressure from the area's tribal casinos, overenthusiastic local police agencies gradually busted up those games. The resulting high profile raids seemed designed to intimidate local card players and show the media how the cops were working hard at fighting “crime” operated by “unsavory elements” and thereby protecting us from ourselves.

Security is essential at any card game where significant money is on the table. Players were robbed with regularity at illegal contests held in the back rooms of businesses and secluded speakeasies during the “old days.” In that era, serious poker players hit the road and traveled around Texas to small dusty towns in search of high stakes games. But even going to a

friendly game in the big city can be cause for concern, depending on the neighborhood.

One night in 2009, our weekly get-together was held in a high-crime area here in the Valley. A coworker named Roberto had been coming to our games and quickly had become a poker enthusiast too. When he graciously offered to host the following Friday night's event, my friend Joey and I accepted. All three of us were employed at a white-collar office in an upscale midtown business district. It never occurred to me that some of my coworkers might live far away in shady parts of town. I didn't know anything about Roberto's neighborhood but I had already gotten accustomed to visiting unfamiliar places in Phoenix, even at night.

Sometime after dark, Joey and I squeezed into a tiny white Ford Escort (he was a big, strong guy) and his fiancée, Lorraine, drove us across town to the neighborhood in south Phoenix where Roberto lived. We arrived at his apartment complex ready for an evening of cold beer and poker. Joey brought in a case of "brewskis" from the convenience store while I carried some poker gear – cards, chips, etc.

Before we had even started the game, Roberto informed us that a dead man had been found floating in the swimming pool outside, just a couple of days earlier.

A bit later, it occurred to me that we could sure use some food with our beer. Joey agreed. At that point, Roberto revealed that the nearby pizza chains refused to deliver to their apartment complex because it was too dangerous there, so he offered to go pick up the pizzas himself. After hearing that unexpected news, I thought that (at the least) I should offer to pay for the pizzas, so I gave Roberto a couple of \$20 bills as he

left. Fortunately, he had a reliable car, or it literally might have been a “food run.”

After a few hours, two pepperoni pizzas, and many cans of beer, our tournament finally concluded. (I finished second that evening, as Joey “sucked out” by drawing a long shot runner-runner straight on the final hand.) Then I packed up my traveling poker gear and our team split, speeding away from the sketchy neighborhood in the early a.m. darkness.

It is a good idea to give your host a few bucks to help pay for the food and drinks, unless his game is always B.Y.O.B. Generally, it is legal in most places for a host to receive a bit of reimbursement money *only* for the refreshments he has provided – unless he is actually charging all his players a fee for them and making a profit. A person cannot make a profit merely by hosting a poker game, that would put him into the province of “running an illegal gambling operation.”

Shady Mechanics

I've never encountered any hustlers in our small stakes contests. The vast majority of poker games are merely friendly get-togethers held in a basement or around a dining table. But just as in the movies, there are always a few games floating around that aren't like that. Poker can be a fun pastime, but be aware, there are a few shady things to watch out for.

Con artists known as “mechanics” can smoothly deal cards in tricky ways such as off the bottom of a deck, while other “grifters” can mark certain cards with their thumbnails. Having a dedicated dealer who is not playing in the game, as well as changing decks occasionally, are two ways to help prevent

cheating. Swindlers might also try to sneak in a few extra high-value chips, especially in cash games, so the use of customized poker chips can deter such duplicity. Even allowing real cash to “play” in place of high value chips can be a short term solution.

When it comes to money, some poker players can be quite dishonest, even in small stakes home games. These moochers show up with no cash and ask if they can pay later, or they borrow the buy-in amount from someone else. Then if they win some money during the evening, they usually walk out without repaying their debts (this is called “welching”).

Books by long time poker players are full of stories about gambling addicts who disingenuously borrowed money from them. Often their acquaintances claimed that they needed funds for various legitimate reasons but then simply took the cash to play in poker games instead. Did they repay their debts? Sometimes, but not always. Many of those deadbeats never came back around again.

Chapter X: The Politics of Poker

“There are few things that are so unpardonably neglected in our country as poker.” – Mark Twain

Many presidents enthusiastically played poker including Teddy Roosevelt, Warren Harding, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Richard Nixon, Dwight Eisenhower, and Ronald Reagan.¹⁶⁸ Politics and poker have a lot in common.

Nikita Khrushchev was the controversial leader of the Soviet Union who provoked the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, a high stakes showdown if ever there was one. Of him, Nixon once said, “Nikita Khrushchev would have been a superb poker player.”

The Name of the Game

When the Chinese invented paper, playing cards were among their first creations. Later, invading Arab armies brought papermakers back with them on their return to the Middle East. Eventually, merchants from Venice traveling to the Arab world obtained early versions of playing cards in trade. During the Renaissance, literate Italians played cards in apartments called *casini*.

Card games similar to poker came to the United States in the early 18th century via French soldiers visiting gambling establishments in New Orleans. There, they played a game known as *poque*. The locals pronounced this as “pokuh” which soon became known as “poker” when the game traveled north and west during the Civil War and the gold rush.¹⁶⁹

Poker was one of several card games that cowboys and scoundrels played in countless small towns throughout the Old West. Although many saloons requested that patrons “check their weapons” and insisted that cheating was not allowed, they seldom were able to prevent dishonest play or occasional violence. Great danger was associated with card games played anywhere in the Wild West, whether liquor was served or not.

Although that era was swept away by the sands of time, illegal underground poker games continued in many sketchy locations for many decades. The dangers of playing high stakes poker in unsavory settings persisted throughout much of the 20th century. In his books, Texas poker legend Doyle Brunson has told numerous tales about his harrowing experiences in hazardous back room and roadhouse card games during the old days. In another book, famed poker pro T.J. Cloutier recalled a story about a notorious gambler named George who always carried two guns. One day at a poker game in Dallas, George went broke, so he robbed everyone else at the table. The next day, George came back to the same game – and sat down to play as if nothing had happened.

Veteran poker players used to say that you should invite local policemen to your game because you'll have more security. In addition, the cops won't raid your game if they're welcome there. (I don't think they did it exactly that way in Texas during the old days, although underground game operators often had “agreements” with local sheriffs.)

Until TV coverage made poker “legitimate,” it was looked down upon socially and usually viewed as a less-than-proper pastime, despite its widespread popularity. Today, things are seen much differently. World Poker Tour (WPT) events appear

each Sunday night on cable TV and the WSOP is nationally televised every summer from Las Vegas.

Freedom from Choice

Like the other presidents previously mentioned, Barack Obama was also a poker player, so he was supported by the poker community in the hope that he would legalize online poker. Unfortunately, that talk faded soon after his election¹⁷⁰ and Obama did little to help. In fact, online poker's worst day, Black Friday, happened under his administration in 2011 (more details to follow).

Whether they will admit it or not, the record shows that most full-time poker pros are gamblers at heart. Not surprisingly, many behave in a self-centered fashion, spending freely and living fast lifestyles. Frequently, poker pros tend to be somewhat libertarian in their political views and endorse whichever candidates whom they believe will help them play (and profit) from poker – even politicians who promote ideas that don't make much sense when looking at the big picture for the USA, or beliefs that are far outside the mainstream.

During the poker boom, many politicians in Washington continuously looked for ways to stop online poker. Although the specific language is a bit ambiguous, the “Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act of 2006” (UIGEA) made it illegal for banks to process payments to “gambling businesses.” Republicans Bill Frist of Tennessee and Jon Kyl of Arizona helped sneak the UIGEA into the Safe Port Act (an anti-terrorism bill)¹⁷¹ which expedited the proposal's passage (a douchebag maneuver, because no one wanted to vote against

the larger goal of stopping terrorism).

After President George W. Bush signed the UIGEA into law, “e-wallets” such as Netteller could no longer be used by players to fund their accounts on poker websites, but most found other methods¹⁷² such as the reloadable debit cards available at many drug stores and large retailers. Yet by making it more difficult to deposit money, UIGEA did have a major effect on casual players, causing many to quit playing online poker – which made the games tougher to beat.¹⁷³ The “Golden Age” of online poker wasn't quite over yet, but the writing was on the wall, and it would only last for five more years.

On April 15, 2011, the poker world changed forever in an event that has become known as “Black Friday.”¹⁷⁴ Federal authorities indicted the “big three” online poker sites – PokerStars, Full Tilt Poker (FTP), and the Cereus Network (Absolute Poker and Ultimate Bet) – on fraud and money laundering charges that were largely based on the UIGEA. The U.S. government alleged that those three poker sites, all based at offshore locations near other countries, had used fraudulent methods to fool banks into processing (unlawful) payments. The Department of Justice (DOJ) seized many bank accounts and shut down the U.S. versions of the poker websites.¹⁷⁵

Also involved in the discussion was the “Interstate Wire Act of 1961” which had made it illegal to place bets and make any transfer of gambling information via wire communications between states (then by telephone, today by using the Internet). The DOJ had always taken the position that this law encompassed all types of gambling (even in-state wagers) that used the phones or the Internet.¹⁷⁶ Not so. In November 2002, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court ruled that the Wire Act only

applied to sports betting, stating: “The Wire Act does not prohibit non-sports internet gambling...”¹⁷⁷

So online poker did NOT violate the Wire Act, despite the DOJ's stance to the contrary. Nevertheless, poker was already illegal in some individual states at the time of Black Friday, so the earlier Fifth Circuit Court ruling did not necessarily mean that the UIGEA did not apply to online poker.

Prolific poker writer James McManus blamed Black Friday on Republican resistance in the House of Representatives.¹⁷⁸ But Barney Frank, an extremely liberal Democratic congressman from Massachusetts who had unsuccessfully championed the cause of online poker for many years, blasted the Obama administration over the move.¹⁷⁹

PokerStars continued offering online poker in other parts of the world and seemed to handle the gloomy situation remarkably well. FTP did not and soon closed down, going offline on June 29, 2011.¹⁸⁰

Full Tilt had been founded by a group of professional poker players who, by their own admission, were not businessmen. It was heavily endorsed by a number of other recognizable pros. Caps and shirts bearing the website's logo were conspicuously worn by many of the contestants in televised poker games such as *Poker After Dark*, which was virtually a half hour infomercial for FTP. The TV marketing blitz obscured the fact that the company was being run like a lemonade stand. An additional civil complaint was filed against FTP five months after Black Friday. “Full Tilt was not a legitimate poker company but a global Ponzi scheme,” said U.S. District Attorney Preet Bharara.¹⁸¹

The second round of federal accusations against FTP

included charges of misappropriation of its players' funds, such as diverting millions in revenues to its directors, mainly high-profile pros Chris Ferguson and Howard Lederer.¹⁸² The resulting scandal caused Full Tilt to collapse completely. The case caused thousands of members to lose their account money and did irreparable damage to the reputations of many pros associated with the site, especially Ferguson and Lederer.^{183 184}

In September 2011, just a few months after Black Friday, the DOJ went public with a new formal opinion on the Wire Act. It finally agreed with the Fifth Circuit Court, stating that "Interstate transmissions of wire communications that do not relate to a 'sporting event or contest' fall outside the reach of the Wire Act."¹⁸⁵ However, this announcement did not restore U.S. access to the two major online poker sites that had continued operating.

Although the Cereus Network remained open for about a year after Black Friday, it had already been steadily losing its customer base for years following a cheating scandal. It finally closed in 2012, approximately \$50 million in debt.¹⁸⁶

Eventually PokerStars settled financially with the DOJ, and in the process somehow acquired the former Full Tilt Poker. PokerStars then reopened FTP to international members in November 2012.¹⁸⁷ In time, money was refunded (in part) to many American players, but few of them ever trusted or joined the smaller online poker sites that had remained open to U.S. members. Casual gamblers were no longer playing poker online. In the weeks and months following Black Friday, online professionals had either moved to other countries, switched to live games held in casinos, or found other lines of work.¹⁸⁸

So much for Obama. But he had only admitted that he was

a “pretty good poker player”¹⁸⁹ and had never promised to help legalize online poker. Later, Obama's administration allowed the creation of legal online poker in states like Nevada, New Jersey, and Delaware.¹⁹⁰ (Perhaps a bone thrown to his colleague, prominent Nevada Democrat Harry Reid?)

Some analysts predict that eventually most states will work together to make interstate poker games available online – run by the big casino corporations and heavily taxed by the government, as you might expect. With Pennsylvania approving its own legal online poker in 2018, merging its player pool with the other three states would make good financial sense.¹⁹¹ As I noted in a previous chapter, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2018 that PASPA was unconstitutional, opening the door for individual states to legalize sports gambling. This also allowed those states to join in any potential interstate poker compact.¹⁹²

Yet just when the future looked quite promising for online poker, the DOJ reversed course once again in late 2018 and announced in a new opinion that the Wire Act *does* in fact apply to *all* types of bets, not only those involving sports.¹⁹³ They were immediately sued, of course. The first lawsuit was filed by the New Hampshire Lottery, but experts believe that probably will not be the last such case.¹⁹⁴ They also think that the DOJ's revised policy is not likely to stand up in court, especially in light of the Supreme Court's PASPA ruling.¹⁹⁵

Chapter XI: Horseshoe Sense

“Trust everyone, but always cut the cards.” – Benny Binion

The initial World Series of Poker (WSOP) was held in 1970 when Benny Binion invited a few of the best players in the world to a poker game at his Horseshoe Casino in Las Vegas. The first WSOP was not a tournament like it is today, but instead featured a variety of ongoing cash games that lasted for three days.

At the end, the competitors were asked to choose the best player. Supposedly, all the contestants voted for themselves. Asked to pick the second-best player, Johnny Moss was chosen and therefore was named as the first WSOP champion.¹⁹⁶

Mind Control

Poker is equal parts math and psychology. Older players (who often prefer “live” games) are usually more skilled in psychology while younger players (who might have been trained by playing online) are frequently better at math. Those who are experienced in live games also usually have a strong ability to read *tells* (non-verbal cues that tip off what types of cards their opponents are holding).

Psychology is a big part of poker. It's no accident that a psychologist (Jerry Yang) won the WSOP in 2007. Playing poker can help a person understand that he or she will not be successful all the time in life. It takes the right mental approach to become a winning poker player, just as in life. You must learn to accept that luck will not always be with you and

that you cannot control external variables. This situation is just as true in the real world as it is in poker. Even when you do everything right, sometimes you will lose anyway.

Like golf, poker is easy to learn but takes a lifetime to master, yet if you enter enough games, you are bound to win occasionally. In a single event or night, almost anyone can be successful at poker. For example, just think about how many “donkeys” (players who greatly overestimate their own skill) make the final table at any televised poker tournament. You will invariably see a few individuals there who are merely riding a lucky streak into the spotlight. The immensely large fields of modern tournaments bring more variance into play.

The best players try to get all their chips “in the middle” when they have the odds in their favor, but many all-in tournament hands feature one pair against two high cards. Pre-flop (with five community cards left to turn up on the table), this is essentially a coin flip that could go either way. Most pros know that you have to win a few coin flips to take first place in a modern poker tournament. That's variance in action and why *cashing* (winning a share of the prize payout) is the primary goal of professional poker players. Good ones can “finish in the money” with regularity, despite the looming specter of variance.

Think of it this way: let's imagine that we are at a coin flipping tournament. We begin with over 6,000 participants, like the WSOP Main Event. Each flip is either heads or tails, a 50/50 chance of winning, so each coin toss eliminates half the field. After just ten coin flips, we are left with only a half dozen survivors. That's the math of the WSOP Main Event. It's akin to winning the lottery. By tossing “heads” ten times in a row,

even an ordinary person can make the final table at the WSOP and take home a million bucks. Much easier said than done.

The long grind of today's large tournament fields has sent many veteran players to more lucrative cash games. In those high roller-only affairs, "whales" (rich gamblers) risk lots of money playing in secluded spots like Bobby's Room, a private poker area located at the Bellagio in Las Vegas. Top pros also play in the highest buy-in tournaments available (such as the WSOP Poker Players' Championship, which costs \$50,000 to enter). The crazy high buy-in amounts discourage the thousands of donkeys from entering those games, a major difference that has a substantial effect on tourney results: their reduced variance gives the sharks a better chance to flex their poker skills.

The 2018 WSOP ran from the end of May until mid-July and held 78 events during that period. (The \$10,000 Main Event is the most famous WSOP tournament but not the whole enchilada.) The overall competition set staggering new records for largest attendance (123,865 entries) and biggest total prize pool (\$266,889,193).¹⁹⁷ The poker boom might have ended but interest in the game continues to grow.

Professional poker players are largely divided into cash and tournament specialists, but some pros play both. Many cash game regulars don't seem to like tournament champions, though. The backroom cash game sharks always seem to think, "If the guys from TV would just bring their money over here, I would win it all because they aren't any good." And the sharks might be right.

Here's one of the more remarkable things that you will see in televised poker tournaments: after someone has just pushed

all his chips into the pot, often you will hear him shout, “One time!” (As in, “God, please give me the winning card just this one time!”) On some occasions, this appeal to a higher power is successful in bringing the player a fortunate result, other times, not. I don't know if it really helps, math seems to have a lot to do with the outcome too. I'm not sure that God is constantly checking His inbox for prayers from professional gamblers, but if He is, what must He think about those?

Also, does the phrase “One time!” mean once today or only once *ever*? I lean toward the latter answer, yet a few players do shout “One time!” during every all-in hand. (Perhaps this behavior doesn't quite turn someone into “that guy” but it's enough for me to hope that the bigmouth player loses the hand and gets sent home.) At the very least, I think each person should save his “one time” for when he really needs it the most and use it just once in each tournament.

Boom or Bust

In 2003, an aptly-named accountant known as Chris Moneymaker won the WSOP Main Event, surprisingly defeating all the Vegas pros, hustlers, and other “sharks” (highly skilled players). His stunning victory started the poker boom. Suddenly, even home game players believed that they had a chance to win a fortune too. Moneymaker remarked, “The beautiful thing about poker is that *everybody* thinks they can play.”

Before anyone decides to choose poker as a profession, they should read a book called *Deal Me In*. It is a collection of stories about how 20 individuals became professional poker

players. Each one had his or her own share of big financial ups and downs – and this book is just about “winners.” Even most well-known pros have gone broke multiple times, not only while learning the game, but even after becoming successful and well-established in the field. Playing poker is a stressful career path, an uncertain roller coaster ride.¹⁹⁸

Poker pros and writers often talk about concepts such as *bankroll management* (budgeting your gambling money wisely), *table selection* (choosing the correct games to join) and making bets with *positive expected value* (or +EV) as ways to stay *in the black* (profitable) When TV announcers talk about a tournament player's career winnings, they never tell you how much money that person dropped on entry fees for all the games that they lost.

Shiny casinos aren't paid for by winners. Those tall hotels and majestic fountains are bought by losers – monuments to bad judgment and the illusion of easy money. There are *no* table games where the player starts with an edge against the “house” (casino) or *everyone* would play them, and then the casino would go broke. The house has a significant statistical edge (which varies) in almost every single game¹⁹⁹ – except one: poker, where you can create an advantage because you are competing against the other players at your table instead of the dealer, although you still have to beat the *rake* (the house's cut of each pot) to turn a profit.²⁰⁰

The only real way that a casino can lose substantially at live poker is through *opportunity cost*, the economic concept that having a room full of poker tables instead of other, more profitable forms of gambling (such as slot machines) is a poor business decision. With that in mind, a few casinos have done

away with poker since the heyday of the poker boom passed by.

It is true that counting cards at blackjack can tip the scales in your favor, but don't expect to get rich at it. Most casinos have implemented changes in recent years to make this practice extremely difficult. First, everything that happens on a casino floor is caught on camera and watched live in the security office upstairs. Upon raising suspicions, a player is often met by a *pit boss* (floor manager) who begins using tactics such as “comping” (offering free rooms and meals) just to get a winning player away from the table, changing dealers, frequent shuffling of the card decks, and raising the minimum bet at the table to an uncomfortably high amount.²⁰¹ If all of that doesn't work and the bosses suspect that you are still counting cards (which is actually not illegal, because you are only outsmarting the house), the guys in dark suits will toss you out the front door and ban you from ever coming back.²⁰²

(Even highly-observant poker champion Phil Ivey was denied a win of £7.7 million by a London casino. Ivey merely spotted that the patterns on the backs of the casino's cards were asymmetrical and astutely used that to his advantage.²⁰³ There's nothing fair about playing against the house.)

It has been stated that there are some variations of video poker, that when played *perfectly*, can result in a razor-thin edge to the player.²⁰⁴ Remember, if it was that easy to win at it, everyone would be doing it, so don't just expect to read a book on basic strategy and then go take down the big Las Vegas casinos. They already know the score.

Priority Fail

“Leaks” are non-poker ways in which players routinely lose money. Some individuals become addicted to sports gambling. Las Vegas pros can also become involved in other vices. Those often include:

1. sports book betting;
2. casino games such as roulette, craps, and blackjack;
3. strange and unusual side wagers with other pros;
4. playing sports like golf and pool for money against more talented hustlers;
5. buying exotic cars;
6. spending lavishly on gold jewelry and watches;
7. excessive partying;
8. alcohol and drugs;
9. adult companionship.

The WPT even awards a \$20,000 Hublot watch to its monthly TV tournament winners. Most people would be better off to just purchase the timepiece instead of spending thousands of dollars to play in poker games that often fail to produce a profit. (Typically, tournament payouts are limited to the top 10 or 20 percent of the field and are quite heavily weighted toward the finishers at the very top – often only the best five or ten players.)

George Raft, famed for his tough guy roles in old gangster movies, once described how he had squandered his Hollywood earnings by saying, “Part of the loot went for gambling, part for horses, and part for women. The rest I spent foolishly.”

Stories abound of phenomenal poker players who lost

fortunes through leaks in their bankroll management. The most famous tale involves Archie Karas, a Greek immigrant²⁰⁵ who gambled in high stakes games around Los Angeles. After finding himself down to his last \$50 in late 1992, Karas went to Las Vegas and quickly became rich, winning \$7 million by hustling pool and playing poker. Then during a three month streak in 1993 known as “The Run,” Karas increased his bankroll to \$17 million by beating poker legends such as Stu Ungar, Chip Reese, and Johnny Chan in heads-up games.²⁰⁶

Soon Karas was unable to get much “action” because of his winning reputation, so he switched from playing poker to shooting dice. Eventually he won a total of more than \$40 million, but like many other gamblers, he couldn't stop while he was ahead. Eventually Karas lost it all back within a span of only three weeks during 1995, mostly at the craps tables.²⁰⁷

Karas continued gambling without ever having a replay of his legendary run of good luck, but eventually, things got even worse. In 2013, he was implicated in a blackjack cheating scandal in San Diego. Then in 2015, Karas was placed in Nevada's infamous “Black Book,” and banned from entering all casinos there.²⁰⁸

Revenue Scheme

Many average people dream of being high rollers and living the glamorous life. (Like them, I myself have thought about that, many times.) A small number of foolhardy individuals will do almost anything to achieve that end. But there is a good reason why most of those desperate few aren't already rich: usually they are bad gamblers.

For example, there was the Buddha who needed to be enlightened. From 1999 to 2001, a young Latino man was frequently seen playing in high stakes games at various casinos around Southern California. The fellow lost a lot of money but seemed to be wealthy and kept returning. Nicknamed “Buddha,” the man wanted to be a professional poker player and reportedly dreamed of winning the WSOP someday.²⁰⁹

In 2002, it all came to an end when Robert “Buddha” Gomez and his friend James R. Nichols were arrested for a car selling scheme that bilked investors out of \$21.1 million. Gomez had claimed to be the adopted son of a rich gentleman named John Bowers. Supposedly, Bowers had passed away and left behind 16 vehicles that good Christians could purchase for the small sum of only \$1000. However, the estate was in probate so the cars could not be delivered yet and the purchase price had to be paid in advance. At least, that was the story.

Nichols was made the executor of Gomez's estate but publicly represented himself as the executor of Bowers's estate. Then the money started rolling in, fueled by an expanding organization of sellers working through churches across the country. The sales just kept on going far past the original 16 “miracle cars.” Yet the funds weren't being placed into escrow, instead they went directly to Gomez, who used them to finance his gambling habit. At five local cardrooms, Gomez converted this money into casino chips, which he could then legally cash out at up to \$1.5 million per month without alerting the IRS. By December 2000, Buddha had become the biggest gambler in Southern California.

Refunds were processed for buyers who wanted to drop out of the “miracle cars” deal, helping make the offer look

legitimate. Nevertheless, the scheme still netted \$12.5 million before the sheriff in one small Missouri community alerted the district attorney in Kansas City about his concerns. In turn, the D.A. from K.C. contacted an IRS agent and a federal postal inspector. The feds discovered that no wealthy fellow named John Bowers had actually passed away anywhere and there were never any cars for sale. Of the \$12.5 million received, \$8.7 million had been spent in casinos and was never found.²¹⁰ Nichols and Gomez were given prison sentences of 24 and 22 years respectively.²¹¹

A losing gambler who dreamed of playing high stakes poker also found himself in the middle of another true crime story. At around 4 a.m. one night in late 2010, Anthony Carleo ran through the Bellagio in Las Vegas wearing a helmet to hide his identity, quickly grabbed \$1.5 million of high denomination chips off the tables, and rode off on his speedy motorcycle.²¹²

Of course, Carleo couldn't just cash in the chips (at the Bellagio, maroon "cranberries" were worth \$25,000 and white "flags" were equal to \$5,000), so he tried the next dumbest idea: he reentered the casino carrying some of the \$5K chips and used them to play table games there. (Moving questionable funds through a legitimate business to make them appear "clean" is known as *laundering money*. Would buying chips from a casino qualify?)

However, Carleo was a really bad gambler. Over the next several weeks, he lost a lot of the stolen money right back to the house, so as he ran out of \$5,000 chips, he finally gave up on that plan. But Carleo had raised some suspicions in one poker dealer, who tipped off the police. In their investigation of the suspect, the detectives quickly uncovered lots of troubling

details but not enough hard evidence to prove a case.

Eventually, Carleo tried in desperation to sell the cranberries online to a poker forum member, who turned him in to the authorities. An undercover agent posing as a New Jersey loan shark and potential chip buyer got the suspect to conduct four deals over two days before an arrest was made.²¹³

A few days before the Bellagio heist, Carleo had also robbed the Suncoast Casino in similar fashion. (A warmup?) The total sentence for both crimes was 9 to 27 years.²¹⁴ The kicker to this story: the bandit's father was a local judge.²¹⁵

Chapter XII: Chip Shots

“That’s all your house is: a place to keep your stuff.” – George Carlin

Around 2007, I began collecting casino chips. My forum user name was **byline9**. Most hobbyists can talk about their pastimes all day, so I will attempt to keep this chapter brief.

I will start with a little background about the chip collecting hobby. I will try to avoid repeating too much information that I previously covered in *Passport Renewed*.

Collect Calling

“Chippers” can collect entire sets, single chips, or both. Sets can be custom made for an individual buyer but more frequently, they are just large quantities of chips originating from closed casinos (often assembled piecemeal through online purchases, one “rack” – 100 chips – at a time).

There are two kinds of chips for the two types of poker: (1) cash chips that are essentially equivalent to money; and (2) tournament chips that have no cash value. Casino chips can be “obsolete” (usually from closed establishments) or “live” (currently in use and therefore cashable at face value). Some folks who make regular trips to Las Vegas like to take home a souvenir from each casino they visit, therefore, inexpensive \$1 chips are the main choice for those collectors. Often they display all those chips in frames (or cases) on the walls of their home poker rooms (which usually are their basements).

Typically, only actual casino chips are collected as singles,

but some hobbyists who like *sample sets* (one chip of each denomination from a larger set) will seek those out from other chippers who have had unique custom sets made. (Personally, I would *not* sell sample sets of my custom chips, if I had any. I wouldn't want any of my high denomination chips floating around out there somewhere – even “no cash value” tournament chips.)

Chip set collectors discuss their hobby on websites such as pokerchipforum.com (PCF). Prior to 2015, the main chip collecting forum was chiptalk.net (CT), but after the website began having numerous issues (some technical, some not), most collectors moved over to PCF. (*Note: as of the second edition of this book published in 2021, the CT website is no longer up.*) Some collectors can literally fill an entire poker table with all their sets. This is quite a sight to see and the word “insanity” can come to mind. A few chippers on the forums jokingly refer to their hobby as a “sickness,” one that will empty your wallet.

There are other chip websites to visit. Progressing from its early days of specializing in chips, the Casino Collectible News magazine is a terrific resource for modern collectors of all types of casino items. This quarterly publication can be read online at ccgtcc-ccn.com. Detailed information about individual casino chips can be found at chipguide.com.

Casino chips were once called “checks” because they are also a promise of money. In days past, people in Las Vegas even used chips to repay debts. Today, casinos can refuse to cash them in and can even confiscate your chips if you can't prove you won them there. You should use the casinos' Players Club cards because they record your amount of play and can

thereby earn you free food and occasionally even free rooms (these complimentary freebies are known as “comps”).

The reason that casinos use chips instead of cash is to make the player think that he is just playing a game and forget that he is gambling money. That way, he will play more loosely and likely lose more of his funds. That's also why the drinks are usually “on the house” in Las Vegas casinos (although this has been changing in some places).

Colorful high roller “Big Julie” Weintraub invented the Las Vegas junket, a regular gambling trip for New Yorkers who wanted to visit “Sin City.”²¹⁶ He said, “The guy who invented gambling was bright, but the guy who invented the chip was a genius.”

Seize the Clay

Chips considered to be “real clay” are actually compression-molded using a composite of materials. Beware of injection-molded plastic chips cheaply made in China that are not actually made from a clay composite. Also be careful about online auctions and department stores offering clay chips with “official” weights of 11.5 grams: these are typically just worthless plastic crap with metal slugs inside for added weight.

Paulson/GPI is the manufacturer of most real clay chips used in casinos today. Their products are considered by hobbyists to be the “gold standard.”^{217 218} Today, those chips are made in Mexico. But back when Paulson chips were produced in Las Vegas, sometimes a few racks became available through the local “Paulson store.” For example, if a casino ordered chips and then unexpectedly went out of business or was sold

and changed names, Paulson was sometimes stuck with thousands of undelivered chips. Then they often sold them locally – obsolete but still in mint condition. Sometimes those chips can still be found for sale today on eBay or collectors' forums, but usually only as singles or in very small quantities.

Classic Poker Chips is the only company that still makes custom clay chip sets in the USA for home game players. Formerly known as ASM, their prices aren't exactly cheap at around \$1 to \$3 per chip,²¹⁹ with a production waiting list that can stretch several months. Two renowned former clay chip manufacturers that are no longer in business are Blue Chip Company (BCC) and T.R. King.

In the last decade, less expensive composite chips known as “China clays” have hit the market. Made cheaply in China, the material in these chips allegedly is similar to antacid tablets, but I would not suggest eating one – there is probably a lot of plastic mixed in there too. While China clays initially look nice, they are brittle and do not seem to have very good longevity.

Sometime around 2005, a Chinese firm made one huge run of the best injection-molded plastic chips ever. They were nicely textured with a somewhat cheesy-looking dice “mold” (imprint) pressed into their faces and so they were called “deluxe dice” chips. Chippers just called them “faux clays” because they stacked like much more expensive real clay chips.

You could use RIT dye to make the white chips any color that you wanted. Faux clays originally came in many solid colors, but after a while, only red and gray chips were left. Eventually, those colors also became extinct because the original Chinese company never manufactured another run of faux clay chips and no enterprising chipper could ever track

down exactly where they had been made. (“Super diamonds” would be the closest plastic chips still in production today.)

In the back of my closet, I still have a faux clay tournament set with both some of the original colors plus a few dyed chips that I made. As inexpensive starter chips, they have been eclipsed in recent years by the numerous variations of China clays that have hit the market, and most serious collectors eventually move up to real clay chips such as Paulsons.

In stark contrast to both clay and plastic poker chips, ceramic chips are available from a variety of manufacturers such as ABC Gifts and Awards.²²⁰ Ceramics are durable and have the advantage of being able to be printed with any design or logo. Having new ceramic chips custom made can be a bit expensive (roughly around \$1 each) but casino-used ceramic chips can frequently be purchased for far less than clay chips.

The feel of ceramic chips is totally different than that of clay or plastic chips, so before buying any set, always get samples first and see for yourself which kinds you like best. (Personally, I am not really a big fan of ceramic poker chips.)

Chip colors are standardized in most states: white = \$1, red = \$5, green = \$25, black = \$100, purple = \$500. However, the state of California allows other colors so many of their casinos have used a very different color scheme: blue = \$1, yellow = \$5, red = \$10, black = \$20, purple = \$25, white = \$100, and gold or gray = \$500 (these are often called “Cali colors”).

I used to own a few mixed sets of used Paulson casino chips, but no longer, as they have become too expensive for me. Today, I only have three sets of China Clay chips, which can be used for different types of games: two for small tournaments and one large, versatile (but unlabeled) cash set.

Someday, I'd like to add a micro cash set in unusual Cali colors. It's in the planning stages.

I have spent many hours creating custom poker chip labels to stick on blank chips and old casino Paulsons. I taught myself how to use an art program just to create those designs. It wasn't something that I could just open up a book and learn, I had to figure out how to make the software perform the tasks I needed to do. (This skill also proved useful when I was trying to design my own personal and fantasy league webpages back in the early days of the Internet.)

However, not all design ideas are good ones in actual practice. Once I wanted a classy label for some cheap chips and so I called my fictional club "Olivier's Poker Room" with debonair actor Lawrence Olivier in mind. (In the next section, I'll describe the highly-collectible chip set from Olivia's Poker Hall in Washington state.) Unfortunately, every time we used my cheap set, one of the players kept calling them "Oliver's."

Then there's the new design I've been working on for my orange and black China clay cash set: it has a picture of a tiger on the label. At first, I was going to call it "Steve's Lucky Tiger Poker Room." After some careful deliberation, I dropped the "Steve's" part from the artwork. I figured someone would probably refer to it as the SLUT set.

Case Closed

During the early 2000s, a few sets of obsolete casino chips began to hit the market and the hobby of chip collecting took a new turn. At around the same time, the poker boom saw many little cardrooms open up – but a number of them went belly-up

during the recession that began in late 2008. The economic downturn also caused some small casinos to sell out to large gaming corporations, when those establishments were rebranded, all new chips were required.

In either case, many of the old chips entered the hands of collectors at anywhere from a quarter to a dollar each. Today, the value of most of those chips (especially clay Paulsons) has tripled since about 2015 and some prices have increased even more than that.

California, Washington, Missouri, Indiana, and Illinois have allowed large numbers of chips from many closed casinos to reach collectors during the past 15 years or so. By contrast, New Jersey and Nevada are major gambling states that do not approve the release of old chips into the marketplace. There, all obsolete chips must be destroyed, so playable sets from those states are much harder to collect. Typically, a redemption period must be publicly announced in the local newspapers before casino chips officially become nonredeemable.

Each former casino has its own unique history and there are far too many to review in this book. Here are just a few of the best stories about casinos with collectible chip sets:

One of the rarest sets in circulation is from a small cardroom that was named “Olivia's Poker Hall.” Featuring an unremarkable-looking false wood grain inlay with a top hat and cane, the “Olivias” are distinctive both because their color scheme uses a lot of pink and the set has unique black \$1 chips. They were produced in very small quantities (only one known playable tournament set exists)^{221 222} and are highly collectible.

Olivia was a real person: a poker room manager in Las Vegas. Around 2000, she and her husband (Gorden Hall)

moved to Washington state where they purchased their own cardroom in Bellingham. The club was only open a short time before Gorden passed away, then Olivia closed the cardroom and moved back to Las Vegas. She had only 20,000 chips. All of them, still new or lightly-used Paulsons, were sold to a Vegas shop full of gambling supplies and old casino chips), and then found their way into the hands of collectors.²²³

Occasionally a group of Olivias comes up for sale, but you should be prepared to dig deep into your wallet if you want one. In 2012, a set of 900 chips sold for about \$2,600.

In March 1996, the Vineyard Casino optimistically opened for business in the small town of Fowler, located in the middle of California's Fresno Valley. Also, it was only a big poker room and not actually a full-fledged casino. For those two main reasons, the Vineyard Casino was a financial flop and it went bust after just a few months. The building sat empty for almost seven years before finally being converted into a church, of all things. In 2005, the new Vineyard Worship Center sold the former casino's 150,000 lightly-used chips at auction.²²⁴

A wide range of exceptionally well-designed Paulson clay chips made in striking Cali colors had been used at the Vineyard Casino. Their inlays sported an artistic rendition of a bunch of grapes and featured very stylish fonts.²²⁵ Not many chips were produced for the little cardroom and they saw little action there so they have steadily climbed in value over the years. Nevertheless, enough "Vineyards" are floating around that obtaining a playable cash game set is definitely possible if you are willing to spend a few hundred dollars.

Another cardroom that opened up in California during the year 1996 was the Crystal Park Casino in Compton. Its Paulson

chips read “Crystal City, CA” on their faces as the owners obviously didn't want the real name of the host city on them. (Compton had gained a bad reputation and was nationally-infamous for its crime and gang activity.^{226 227}) The Crystal Park set had bright Cali-colored chips with a distinctive inlay design that featured a prism and rainbow similar to that used on the cover of Pink Floyd's hit album *Dark Side of the Moon*.

Following a number of financial improprieties and some massive debts going well past due, Crystal Park Casino was shut down by state authorities in October 1997.²²⁸ Its chips eventually hit the collectors' market in 2000.²²⁹ I couldn't find a total number of how many Crystal Park chips were made, but I know a substantial number of large sets have been bought and sold over the years on the collectors' forums. The casino later reorganized and reopened.

A proposed gambling boat that would have operated out of New York City turned into a bonanza for chippers. In 1998, President Casino Inc. applied for a gaming license when offshore gambling near the Big Apple appeared to be on the horizon. The company had experience: it had operated the President Casino on the Admiral (PCA) in St. Louis since 1994.²³⁰ But in an unexpected reversal of course, Mayor Rudy Giuliani decided that shipboard gambling originating from New York City was not a great idea after all. The President Casino New Yorker (PNY) was not to be.

Although their NYC gaming license never materialized, President had already ordered 163,000 impressive-looking Paulson chips featuring grand scenes of the city: the Chrysler Building, Radio City Music Hall, the Statue of Liberty, the Wall Street Stock Exchange, the World Trade Center, and the

Metropolitan Museum of Art. The order was never delivered and remained in storage at the Paulson warehouse until an employee there arranged to buy the unused chips in 2005. He then resold them to hobbyists through online sources such as eBay.²³¹ While it is true that the PNY never actually became a real casino, racks of its unique chips are highly desired by collectors anyway. From time to time, they still show up for sale online at high prices.

President Casino Inc. continued operating their gambling boat in St. Louis until closing it in 2010.²³² A few months later, a huge haul of 371,000 PCA chips made by Paulson (many heavily worn, but a small number that were still new) joined the PNY sets on the collectors' market.²³³

About 1,700 colorful Paulson chips bearing the name “20th Century” were used at an illegal high stakes private poker room in an Atlanta suburb. Known as the “Sugarloaf game,” it was raided by law enforcement in 2005²³⁴ and the chips were seized as evidence. The 20th Century chips resurfaced on a police auction website in 2009 and were purchased by a collector located in the state of Washington for the incredibly low sum of \$301 – a “steal” at that price (sorry, but I had to say that). Eventually he split up the set and resold all the chips. Then a long-time chip forum member from Atlanta who had played regularly in the Sugarloaf game successfully tracked them down and reassembled the original set.²³⁵

The 20th Century line of chips was a “fantasy” edition (not a real casino set) created by Paulson, so certainly others are in existence that were not used in the Sugarloaf game. Those other chips have remained “in the wild” for many years now. It's hard to know how many more there might be, but it's

possible that several thousand 20th Century chips are hidden deep in the dark closets of a few collectors.

Probably the strangest chip story is that of the “Big Dig.”²³⁶ By law, the State of New Jersey is financially responsible for guaranteeing the value of all outstanding chips used there. So when Atlantic City's Playboy Casino closed down in 1984, it inventoried the chips in its possession, deposited \$450,000 with the state's Casino Control Commission to cover all the outstanding chips, then shipped the ones it had left to the Green Duck token factory in Mississippi to be destroyed.

However, the workers responsible for the chip chopping failed to complete the job properly. They simply pitched the Playboy chips into a big hole outside the building, covered them with dirt, and poured a concrete slab over the top. The Green Duck facility did remain open for quite a while, but eventually closed in 1999.

Fast forward to 2008. The former Green Duck property had been turned into a community center. The City of Hernando (its new owner) unknowingly dug up the concrete and exposed the pit full of old, abandoned chips that were buried in the ground beneath. Naturally, the Playboy Casino had oddly chosen to use “coin-in-center” chips which are made from a combination of plastic and metal – unusual to find here in the U.S. but a favorite among Caribbean island casinos because of their resistance to the elements (such as extreme humidity). The old chips in the pit were a bit dirty but otherwise were still like new. Construction workers took some souvenirs home while a few astonished onlookers grabbed handfuls of chips.

By the next morning, the word was already out. Looters were showing up with tubs and buckets to carry away the

Playboy booty. Quickly, eBay filled up with listings for the formerly-rare chips and their collectible value immediately plummeted. Soon after, New Jersey CCC officials became aware of the find, but they did not know exactly how many used chips had been sent to Mississippi for destruction. About \$12,000 later, the CCC refused to redeem any more of the Playboy chips. This made sense because most of them were not even supposed to exist any longer (and so technically, were exempt from the state law).²³⁷

A fictional story based on the Big Dig saga was even used by the TV crime show *CSI* in the plot of one episode, “All In.”²³⁸

When the Chips are Down

Just like most of the homeowners on TV programs such as *Property Brothers*, many poker chip collectors often have an inflated sense of what their things are actually worth. Due to those distorted beliefs, it is often difficult to conduct business with those chip owners and usually leads to their available items remaining unsold for long periods of time.

Personally, I know that I am not a “lowballer” (someone who only makes unreasonably low offers) because I have successfully completed a large number of poker chip transactions through the online collector forums – both buying and selling – by always trying to make and accept reasonable offers on items for sale. Not everyone does things the same way though. Also, when you value an item more than anyone else does, then you can’t realistically expect that it will sell.

Sometimes sellers are just fishing for rich buyers by listing their items at crazy-high prices. One chipper with a somewhat

rare set from the Ritz-Carlton in San Juan, Puerto Rico used to occasionally list it on eBay for around \$1,800. (I don't know how he arrived at that number, but at the time, it seemed like about two or three times what even a deep-pocketed forum member would pay.) I don't think he ever found a buyer, but with poker the sort of pastime that attracts people with excess money to spend (or lose), he probably knew that there was always a chance.

On the flip side to all of this: as the economy has improved since the 2008 recession, fewer casinos have gone bankrupt in recent years.²³⁹ As a result, the amount of “new” chips hitting the market has fallen dramatically. Paulson also ceased production of the various home lines that they had made for private consumers, ostensibly to focus on their more lucrative casino business.²⁴⁰ Since collectors have stashed away most of the casino sets that were once available, there are far fewer high-quality clay chips currently on the market than were for sale just five years ago.

These factors have caused prices for existing Paulson chips to rise dramatically.²⁴¹ In many cases, they are now selling for three to five times what they had gone for as recently as 2015. (With prices skyrocketing, someone might take the \$1,800 Ritz-Carlton deal today, but I doubt if the owner would sell it for that price now.) Good deals are getting increasingly hard to find.²⁴² The “Golden Age” of cheap chipping is probably over. The hobby has become too expensive for me.

The poker chip market could conceivably crash, as prices for baseball cards did in the early 1990s, but it seems unlikely that chip values will fall much below their 2009-2015 levels. Scarcity is the biggest difference. Millions of each baseball card

were printed while only thousands of each clay casino chip were pressed. Also, poker players are often gamblers by nature, loose with their cash, and therefore more willing to spend big money on vanity items such as collectibles.

In November 2018, GPI (owners of Paulson) announced that they were being acquired by Angel Holdings Godo Kaisha of Kyoto, Japan for \$110 million. Angel does produce playing cards and gaming equipment for both the industry and retail (home) markets.²⁴³ It is unknown if this means that Paulson will return to selling chips to the public, although that prospect seems unlikely.²⁴⁴

The concepts covered in this section should apply equally well to other types of sales, whether those involve houses, cars, computers, or poker chips. *Caveat emptor*.

Chapter XIII: Extra Innings

“Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending.” – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

That's quite a statement, but Longfellow was absolutely right, even for a work of non-fiction like this book. (Ending a fictional story is probably a hundred times more difficult, that much I will readily concede.) I didn't really have a great ending mapped out for this one, so I looked back at my other texts for inspiration, and then I decided to give you a sneak preview of my upcoming writing projects.

In researching the previous chapter, I discovered a ton of information about the history of some collectible poker chip sets and I also realized that a few of the things which I had believed about some old casinos were not exactly true. Every time I write a book, I learn a lot of new things.

Yet after working determinedly on a manuscript for a book about science and the future all last summer, by September I was ready to take a break from its heavy subject matter. While I did do some reading and proofreading during the autumn months, I also watched a lot of football. Then, around the end of the year, I started putting together this sports book.

I admit that I've continued slowly adding pages to my science book (and another future project, as yet untitled) while working on the manuscript for this text. Although a majority of the creative work on my next project is finished at this point, a couple of major sections remain incomplete. Also, the entire manuscript needs rereading and probably a whole lot of smoothing out. In Hollywood, a very rough draft of a story idea

is sometimes referred to as a “treatment” while they call rewriting a finished draft “script doctoring.” That's what I do too after completing a manuscript, I go back through its pages and give it a thorough examination. It usually needs treatment.

In addition, I still need to add endnotes to a couple of chapters of my science book. Back when I started writing it, I wasn't using them yet, but as page after page of intense subject matter kept materializing, I started to realize that I needed to include some form of footnotes for all the facts that I was referencing. (In truth, the course of completing this book went exactly the same way.) I have discovered that going back and adding notes is my least favorite part of the authoring process, because it's too much like work! So, I've started doing them by the correct method now: gradually including them along the way, as you research your topics.

In the final chapter of my preceding book, I wrote that I still had plenty of stories left over to include in a future text. I went ahead and typed up those notes last fall, then put all that material together. Although the completion of that project might be a long way down the road (pending experiencing some new stories), I have gotten a good start on it, already having written 126 pages and over 30,000 words. The partial manuscript looks like a promising companion volume to my first two books. However, I still have a lot of blank pages left to fill and many topics that I want to address in that one.

Occasionally I think of something important that I want to quickly add to the manuscript, so I open the file and work on it for a few minutes. That's how I always write my books: a page in this one today, then a section in the next one tomorrow, and the day after, perhaps two paragraphs in some nebulously-

planned future text. I keep going and eventually reach the concluding chapter in one of them.

This book is the fourth one that I have written since my recovery from a stroke in 2014. It still has a big effect on my everyday life but I try not to dwell on those things. I just take one task at a time and keep going.

During my recovery, Marlene (the counselor who came to visit me each week at Osborn and to encourage me) used to tell me not to worry about the future, but to just live in the “here and now,” a major concept in Zen philosophy. It helped me tremendously then, but much of my next book is going to be all about our future. After an ample amount of careful consideration concerning the “here and now” philosophy during my recovery, I concluded that feature was also the main drawback to Zen. It tends not to take into account the value of thinking about the future and the need to prepare for it – which is something I spend a lot of time thinking about. That's just my nature and it's not going to change now.

Yet I still believe that the Zen philosophy which I read so much about then was great stuff and I urge everyone to at least look into it. (It's easy. There are lots of free Kindle books on Amazon about Zen. That's how I learned about it.) Just don't completely forget about the value of the future.

This brings to mind the words of Charles Kettering, a truly visionary individual. He was a prolific and revolutionary inventor who founded Delco Electronics in Dayton, Ohio and was the head of research for General Motors from 1920 to 1947.²⁴⁵ Numerous times and in a variety of different ways, he said this: “We should all be concerned about (the future) because we will have to spend the rest of our lives there.”

Appendix A: Photo Credits

“A hot dog at the game beats roast beef at the Ritz.” –
Humphrey Bogart

I didn't include photos in this book as I had done in my other ones. Most of my personal sports experiences were done on my own so there just aren't any pictures of those events. I wish I had some. In addition, due to various copyright and trademark restrictions, I'm not able to use some of the free photos that would be relevant. I didn't want to add random images just for the sake of having photos in my book.

Figure 1. This chart was created by me.

Front cover: Photo of the crowd at a major league baseball game by **Jamie Smed** through Flickr. (The original photo has been cropped.) This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license. URI:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/legalcode>

To view a copy of Creative Commons licenses, visit the webpages listed above or send a letter to:

Creative Commons

PO Box 1866

Mountain View, CA 94042

Appendix B: Endnotes

“Great things can happen when you don't care who gets the credit.” – Mark Twain

I've cited a large number of articles in my endnotes. It's definitely worth taking a look at them. I've tried to use reliable, authoritative sources whenever possible, so I encourage you to follow up on this text by reading those stories yourself. Any facts that I've given, assertions that I've made, or anything else in these pages that I did not add a citation for, go ahead and feel free to Google them.

Due to the amount of information used today from various Internet sources, formatting their names properly can be a bit tricky. So for my list, I have developed two guidelines for consistency: these are just rules of thumb, not hard and fast requirements. For organizations and major publications, generally I have just cited their titles, but for online-based journalism and some other types of businesses that maintain a strong web presence, I have allowed the use of “.com” at the end of their names. Of course, extenuating circumstances have caused me to make a couple of exceptions to this rule.

At least I got them in here.

- 1 "History of sport," Wikipedia.org, retrieved January 25, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_sport.
- 2 Geno Jezek, "History of Sports," History of Sports, retrieved January 26, 2019, <http://www.historyofsports.info/>.
- 3 Isobel Roser, "Sport: A Tool of Colonial Control for the British Empire," the *Butler Scholarly Journal*, April 30, 2016, <http://butlerscholarlyjournal.com/2016/04/30/sport-a-tool-of-colonial-control-for-the-british-empire/>.
- 4 "The British Empire," Victorian School.co.uk, retrieved January 26, 2019, <http://www.victorianschool.co.uk/empire.html>.
- 5 Stephen Hall Clark, "The Development of Leisure in Britain, 1700-1850," Victorian Web.org, 1996, <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/leisure1.html>.
- 6 Garry Archer, "Why soccer?," UTexas.edu, retrieved January 26, 2019, <https://www.cs.utexas.edu/~pstone/why.html>.
- 7 Brandon J. Smith, "Baseball Origins, Growth and Changes in the Game," the People History.com, retrieved January 26, 2019, <http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/baseballhistory.html>.
- 8 "History of Field Hockey," iSport.com, retrieved January 25, 2019, <http://fieldhockey.isport.com/fieldhockey-guides/history-of-field-hockey>.
- 9 Brandon J. Smith, "Basketball Origins, Growth and History of the Game," the People History.com, retrieved January 26, 2019, <http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/basketballhistory.html>.
- 10 "A Brief History of Narrowcasting," EZ Texting.com, retrieved January 28, 2019, <https://www.eztexting.com/blog/history-of-narrowcasting>.
- 11 "The Cable History Timeline," Cable Center.org, 2014, <https://www.cablecenter.org/images/files/pdf/CableHistory/CableTimelineFall2015.pdf>.
- 12 "What is TVRO?," Stason.org, retrieved January 28, 2019, <https://stason.org/TULARC/entertainment/satellite-tv-television-receive-only-tvrp/01-What-is-TVRO.html>.
- 13 Ernie Smith, "Deep Dish," Tedium.co, August 27, 2015, <https://tedium.co/2015/08/27/early-satellite-dish-history/>.
- 14 "Videocipher," Revolvvy.com, retrieved January 28, 2019, <https://www.revolvvy.com/page/Videocipher>.
- 15 "What about DBS?," Stason.org, retrieved January 28, 2019,

<https://stason.org/TULARC/entertainment/satellite-tv-television-receive-only-tvtrp/06-Okay-now-I-know-a-bit-about-BUD-systems-But-those-minid.html>.

- 16 "TVRO - TV Receive Only," Hobby Space.com, retrieved January 28, 2019, <http://hobbyspace.com/TVRO/index.html>.
- 17 David Peisner, " 'In Living Color' at Super Bowl: How It Birthed the Modern Half-Time Spectacle," *Rolling Stone* magazine, February 3, 2018, <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/in-living-color-at-super-bowl-how-it-birthed-the-modern-half-time-spectacle-122887/>.
- 18 Joyce Ehrlinger, Kerri Johnson, Matthew Banner, David Dunning, & Justin Kruger, "Why the Unskilled Are Unaware: Further Explorations of (Absent) Self-Insight Among the Incompetent," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, January 1, 2008. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2702783/>.
- 19 Matt Snyder, "Umpires who escalate rather than defuse arguments need to grow up," CBS Sports.com, April 12, 2016, <https://www.cbssports.com/mlb/news/umpires-who-escalate-rather-than-defuse-arguments-need-to-grow-up/>.
- 20 "San Francisco 49ers at Washington Redskins - November 17th, 1986," Pro Football Reference.com, retrieved January 31, 2019, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/boxscores/198611170was.htm>.
- 21 Mark Maske, "Roger Goodell admits blown call in Rams-Saints but never considered overturning result," the *Washington Post*, January 30, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2019/01/30/roger-goodell-admits-blown-call-rams-saints-nfl-will-consider-replay-pass-interference/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.800ce26dao2d.
- 22 "San Francisco 49ers Cheating History," Your Team Cheats.com, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://yourteamcheats.com/SF>.
- 23 "NFL hammers Saints for bounties," ESPN.com, accessed April 11, 2019, http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/7718136/sean-payton-new-orleans-saints-banned-one-year-bounties.
- 24 "University of Notre Dame," *U.S. News & World Report*, retrieved January 28, 2019, <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/university-of-notre-dame-1840>.
- 25 "2018 Football Roster," the University of Notre Dame, retrieved January 17, 2019, <https://und.com/roster.aspx>

roster=60&path=football.

- 26 "2018-19 Men's Basketball Roster," the University of Notre Dame, retrieved January 17, 2019, <https://und.com/roster.aspx?roster=239&path=mbball>.
- 27 Gunnion, "Behind."
- 28 Diana Lutz, "Less lively aluminum baseball bats change game," Washington University in St. Louis, February 17, 2012, <https://source.wustl.edu/2012/02/less-lively-aluminum-baseball-bats-change-game/>.
- 29 G. Lippi, G.L. Salvagno, M. Franchini, & G.C. Guidi, "Changes in technical regulations and drivers' safety in top-class motor sports," the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* via the National Institutes of Health, October 9, 2007, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2659001/>.
- 30 Ryan Herrington, "Tiger Woods speaks out about the golf ball going too far: 'We need to do something'," *Golf Digest*, November 3, 2017, <https://www.golfdigest.com/story/tiger-woods-speaks-out-about-the-golf-ball-going-too-far-we-need-to-do-something>.
- 31 Sara J. Martinez, "Handling the Rough Game: The Slow Evolution of Sports Medicine," the *Atlantic*, October 17, 2011, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2011/10/handling-the-rough-game-the-slow-evolution-of-sports-medicine/246645/>.
- 32 Marshall Pruett, "No Matter How Safe Racing Gets, It'll Always Be Dangerous," *Road and Track* magazine, September 3, 2015, <https://www.roadandtrack.com/motorsports/a26586/no-matter-how-safe-racing-gets-itll-always-be-dangerous/>.
- 33 Jeanne Marie Laskas, "Bennet Omalu, Concussions, and the NFL: How One Doctor Changed Football Forever," *Gentleman's Quarterly (GQ)* magazine, September 14, 2009, <https://www.gq.com/story/nfl-players-brain-dementia-study-memory-concussions>.
- 34 Alex Reimer, "The NFL's crusade to mask the dangers of head trauma looks worse than ever," SB Nation.com, March 28, 2016, <https://www.sbnation.com/nfl/2016/3/28/11250362/nfl-concussions-cte-connection-roger-goodell-comments>.
- 35 Iain R. Murray, Andrew D. Murray, & James Robson, "Sports Concussion: Time for a Culture Change," the *Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine*, March 2015, https://journals.lww.com/cjsportsmed/fulltext/2015/03000/Sports_Concussion___Time_for_a_Culture_Change.1.aspx.

- 36 "Frequently Asked Questions about CTE," Boston University Research: CTE Center, retrieved January 21, 2019, <http://www.bu.edu/cte/about/frequently-asked-questions/>.
- 37 Joseph Brean, "Behind Ernest Hemingway's suicide," National Post.com, April 28, 2017, <https://nationalpost.com/entertainment/hemingways-depression-was-spurred-on-by-cte-blows-to-the-head-new-book-argues>.
- 38 Jason M. Breslow, "New: 87 Deceased NFL Players Test Positive for Brain Disease," *Frontline* (PBS.org), September 18, 2015, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/new-87-deceased-nfl-players-test-positive-for-brain-disease/>.
- 39 Lee Igel, "New Study Of Retired NFL Players' Brains Shows Why Tackle Football Should Be 'No Children Allowed'," *Forbes* magazine, January 29, 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/leeigel/2015/01/29/new-study-of-retired-nfl-players-brains-shows-why-tackle-football-should-be-no-children-allowed/#7ecaddb253b4>.
- 40 Steve Fainaru and Mark Fainaru-Wada, "For the NFL and all of football, a new threat: an evaporating insurance market," ESPN.com, January 17, 2019, http://www.espn.com/espn/story/_/id/25776964/insurance-market-football-evaporating-causing-major-threat-nfl-pop-warner-colleges-espn.
- 41 Rodd Zolkos, "Athlete concussions could replace asbestos as key issue for high school insurers," Business Insurance.com, September 08, 2013, <https://www.businessinsurance.com/article/20130908/NEWS06/130909874#3>.
- 42 Judy Greenwald, "Insurers unlikely to greet return of asbestos with open arms," Business Insurance.com, September 11, 2018, <https://www.businessinsurance.com/article/20180911/NEWS06/912323875/Insurers-unlikely-to-greet-return-of-asbestos-with-open-arms>.
- 43 Jacob Bogage, "The future of football equipment? Measuring a hit's impact on the brain, not just the helmet," the *Washington Post*, June 2, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/highschools/the-future-of-football-equipment-measuring-a-hits-impact-on-the-brain-not-just-the-helmet/2017/06/02/d6ddocb8-47bo-11e7-98cd-af64b4fe2dfc_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.dbe215bcdfoo.
- 44 Henry Bushnell, "Another CTE diagnosis in soccer adds to growing

- concern,” Yahoo Sports, August 7, 2018,
<https://sports.yahoo.com/another-cte-diagnosis-soccer-adds-growing-concern-181530448.html>.
- 45 “Sports-related Head Injury,” the American Association of Neurological Surgeons, retrieved January 30, 2019,
<https://www.aans.org/Patients/Neurosurgical-Conditions-and-Treatments/Sports-related-Head-Injury>.
- 46 Kelley McMillan, “Ski Helmet Use Isn’t Reducing Brain Injuries,” the *New York Times*, December 31, 2013,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/01/sports/on-slopes-rise-in-helmet-use-but-no-decline-in-brain-injuries.html>.
- 47 The Associated Press, “Years after accident, Formula 1 legend Michael Schumacher's health remains a mystery,” *USA Today*, March 17, 2018,
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/motor/formula1/2018/03/17/as-f1-season-begins-schumacher-is-still-fighting-far-away/33050439/>.
- 48 Charles Bernick & Sarah Banks, “What boxing tells us about repetitive head trauma and the brain,” *Alzheimer's Research & Therapy* via the National Institutes of Health, June 4, 2013,
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3706825/>.
- 49 Clyde Haberman, “Boxing Is a Brutal, Fading Sport. Could Football Be Next?,” the *New York Times*, November 8, 2015,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/09/us/boxing-is-a-brutal-fading-sport-could-football-be-next.html>.
- 50 “Diagrams of Basketball Courts,” Recreation Unlimited, December 29, 2015, <https://www.recunlimited.com/blog/diagrams-basketball-courts/>.
- 51 Recreation Unlimited, “Diagrams.”
- 52 “Three-Second Violation,” Sporting Charts.com, retrieved March 9, 2019, <https://www.sportingcharts.com/dictionary/nba/three-second-violation.aspx>.
- 53 Chris Parker, “How the NBA learned to love zone defense,” the (London) *Guardian*, November 25, 2015,
<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2015/nov/25/nba-learned-love-zone-defense>.
- 54 Charlie Zegers, “How Basketball Teams Use Isolation Play for Points,” ThoughtCo.com, September 03, 2018,
<https://www.thoughtco.com/isolation-play-325735>.

- 55 "Restricted Area," Sporting Charts.com, retrieved March 9, 2019, <https://www.sportingcharts.com/dictionary/nba/restricted-area.aspx>.
- 56 Larry Strauss, "The NBA Needs to Blow the Whistle on Its Defensive Three Second Rule," Huffington Post.com, May 5, 2011, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/larry-strauss/nba-rules_b_857643.html.
- 57 Parker, "How."
- 58 Jonathan Abrams, "Subtly, Zone Defense Helps Open Game," the *New York Times*, February 27, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/28/sports/basketball/28zone.html>.
- 59 David Jones, "NBA Playoffs are becoming a sick joke because star players, not coaches, run American basketball," Penn Live.com, May 22, 2017, https://www.pennlive.com/sports/2017/05/nba_playoffs_cavs_lebron_celti.html.
- 60 John Branch, "The Golden State Warriors Play the Beautiful Game," the *New York Times*, October 25, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/26/sports/basketball/golden-state-warriors-nba-stephen-curry-kevin-durant.html>.
- 61 Tim Bontemps, "The 15-year chain reaction that led to the NBA's current offensive explosion," the *Washington Post*, February 21, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/sports/wp/2017/02/21/the-15-year-chain-reaction-that-led-to-the-nbas-current-offensive-explosion/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.897f0046e1d2.
- 62 Tim Reynolds, "NBA sets sixth consecutive 3-point record," NBA.com, March 30, 2018, <http://www.nba.com/article/2018/03/30/nba-set-break-3-point-record>.
- 63 Reid Forgrave, "What's the end game for NBA's 3-point revolution? Coaches and players sound off on the game's most dominant shot," CBS Sports.com, Nov 15, 2018, <https://www.cbssports.com/nba/news/whats-the-end-game-for-nbas-3-point-revolution-coaches-and-players-sound-off-on-the-games-most-dominant-shot/>.
- 64 Andrew Powell-Morse, "NBA Shooting By the Numbers (1980-Today)," Best Tickets.com, February 10, 2014, <https://www.besttickets.com/blog/nba-shooting/>.
- 65 Sam Smith, "Jordan Cries Foul On Special-Treatment Talk," the *Chicago Tribune*, April 11, 1990,

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1990-04-11-9002010097-story.html>.

- 66 Andrew Heisel, "The Plot to Kill the Slam Dunk," Vice.com, February 12, 2015, https://sports.vice.com/en_us/article/xyj9gk/the-plot-to-kill-the-slam-dunk.
- 67 Lucas Aykroyd, "Wayne Gretzky Has a Few Points to Make About a Decline in Scoring and Creativity," the *New York Times*, April 6, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/07/sports/hockey/wayne-gretzky-laments-decline-of-scoring-and-creativity-in-nhl.html>.
- 68 Adam Gretz, "3-on-3 overtime is doing exactly what the NHL hoped it would do," CBS Sports.com, October 29, 2015, <https://www.cbssports.com/nhl/news/3-on-3-overtime-is-doing-exactly-what-the-nhl-hoped-it-would-do/>.
- 69 Gretz, "Overtime."
- 70 John Matisz, "3-on-3 OT: The NHL has found the sweet spot — and we're all better for it," the *Toronto Sun*, January 23, 2018, <https://torontosun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/3-on-3-ot-the-nhl-has-found-the-sweet-spot-and-were-all-better-for-it>.
- 71 Frank Curto, "The NHL needs to dump the shootout and revamp the points system," Elite Sports NY.com, January 8, 2018, <https://elitesportsny.com/2018/01/08/nhl-needs-to-dump-shootout-revamp-points-system/>.
- 72 John Dietz, "Toews, Crawford and many more have ideas on how NHL can get better," the (Chicago) *Daily Herald*, January 25, 2019, <https://www.dailyherald.com/sports/20190125/toews-crawford-and-many-more-have-ideas-on-how-nhl-can-get-better>.
- 73 Barry Petchesky, "MLB's Attempts To Speed Up The Game Appear To Be Working," Deadspin.com, April 14, 2015, <https://deadspin.com/mlbs-attempts-to-speed-up-the-game-appear-to-be-working-1697688811>.
- 74 Kari Paul, "Why the biggest battle in Major League Baseball is happening off the field," Market Watch.com, February 27, 2017, <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/5-ways-mlb-is-trying-to-get-younger-fans-interested-in-baseball-2017-02-22>.
- 75 Maury Brown, "Inside The Numbers: MLB's Attendance Is Down 6.5%; Here's How It Can Be Fixed," *Forbes* magazine, June 18, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/maurybrown/2018/06/18/inside-the-numbers-mlbs-attendance-is-down-6-5-heres-how-it-can-be-fixed/#16527e9839c2>.

- 76 Christopher Hayes, "The Steroids Era Was Just Like The Housing Bubble: How MLB Incentivized Widespread Fraud," *Deadspin.com*, July 19, 2012, <https://deadspin.com/the-steroids-era-was-just-like-the-housing-bubble-how-5927199>.
- 77 Adam Hadhazy, "Do anabolic steroids make you a better athlete?," *Scientific American.com*, February 11, 2009, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-rod-steroids-better-athlete/>.
- 78 Liz Clarke, "Steroid-era athletes confront how much they've hurt their legacies," the *Washington Post*, January 8, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/nationals/steroid-era-athletes-confront-how-much-theyve-hurt-their-legacies/2013/01/08/f1d3dd4c-59d7-11e2-beee-6e38f5215402_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.c6ed70512303.
- 79 James Smith, "Why Steroids Are a Bigger Deal in Baseball Than Any Other Sport," the *Daily Lounge.com*, retrieved March 16, 2019, <http://dailylounge.com/the-daily/entry/why-steroids-are-a-bigger-deal-in-baseball-than-any-other-sport>.
- 80 Hayes, "Steroids."
- 81 Brown, "Inside."
- 82 Dave Sheinin, "Tanking in MLB has led to too many great teams, too many awful ones, and a decline in fans," the *Washington Post*, June 22, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/sports/wp/2018/06/22/tanking-in-mlb-has-led-to-too-many-great-teams-too-many-awful-ones-and-a-decline-in-fans/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.379fa03c9396.
- 83 Paul Sullivan, "To DH or not to DH? Baseball's never-ending debate starts anew," the *Chicago Tribune*, June 16, 2018, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/ct-spt-mlb-cubs-dh-rule-sullivan-20180616-story.html>.
- 84 Tom Verducci, "There Are Too Many Strikeouts in Baseball: Here's How to Fix the Problem," *Sports Illustrated*, June 14, 2018, <https://www.si.com/mlb/2018/06/14/strikeouts-effect-major-league-baseball>.
- 85 Tyler Kepner, "More Strikeouts Than Hits? Welcome to Baseball's Latest Crisis," the *New York Times*, August 16, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/16/sports/baseball-mlb-strikeouts.html>.
- 86 Michael Clair, "Four stats that showed why baseball had to lower the

- mound after 1968,” MLB.com, December 3, 2015,
<https://www.mlb.com/cut4/why-was-the-mound-lowered-in-1968/c-158689966>.
- 87 Kepner, “Strikeouts.”
- 88 Benjamin Elisha Sawe, “The Most Popular Sports in the World,”
worldatlas.com, retrieved March 17, 2019,
<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-are-the-most-popular-sports-in-the-world.html>.
- 89 Shane Dale, “Phoenix Rising’s playoff run, fan support enhance bid for expansion MLS team,” abc15.com, October 24, 2018,
<https://www.abc15.com/sports/sports-blogs-local/phoenix-risings-playoff-run-enhances-bid-for-expansion-mls-team>.
- 90 Archer, “Soccer.”
- 91 “Why is soccer the world’s most popular sport?,” You Coach.it,
retrieved March 17, 2019, <http://www.youcoach.it/en/article/why-soccer-world%E2%80%99s-most-popular-sport>.
- 92 Brian Goff, “The 5 Best And Worst Things About Soccer,” *Forbes*
magazine, July 8, 2014,
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/briangoff/2014/07/08/the-5-best-and-worst-things-about-soccer/#672660d23017>.
- 93 Sawe, “Popular Sports.”
- 94 Sawe, “Popular Sports.”
- 95 Brian Goff, “Euro 2016 Final Showcases Soccer’s Ongoing Problem -- Lack Of Scoring,” *Forbes* magazine, July 11, 2016,
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/briangoff/2016/07/11/euro-2016-final-showcases-soccers-ongoing-problem-lack-of-scoring/#1a8f879e762a>.
- 96 Goff, “Euro.”
- 97 Oliver Roeder, “In 126 Years, English Football Has Seen 13,475 Nil-Nil Draws,” fivethirtyeight.com, October 3, 2014,
<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/in-126-years-english-football-has-seen-13475-nil-nil-draws/>.
- 98 Kyle Smith, “Let the World Have Soccer,” *National Review*, June 16, 2018, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/06/soccer-corrupt-hyper-regulated-low-scoring-boring/#slide-1>.
- 99 Oliver Staley, “The problem with penalty kicks in soccer,” Quartz.com, July 3, 2018, <https://qz.com/1319419/world-cup-2018-the-problem-with-penalty-kicks/>.

- 100 Maske, "Goodell."
- 101 Dan Steinberg, "If you get emotionally invested in a playoff hockey team, you're a masochist," the *Washington Post*, May 6, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/dc-sports-bog/wp/2016/05/06/if-you-get-emotionally-invested-in-a-playoff-hockey-team-youre-a-masochist/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.eb21c58221c3.
- 102 Abdur Chowdhury, "Can Ten do it Better? Impact of Red Card in the English Premier League," Marquette University, January 2015, https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1047&context=econ_workingpapers.
- 103 Andrew Beasley, "How important is the referee in soccer betting?," Pinnacle.com, September 20, 2017, <https://www.pinnacle.com/en/betting-articles/Soccer/referee-soccer-betting/2GS2LFTF9E4JUAG7>.
- 104 Goff, "5 Best."
- 105 Goff, "Euro 2016."
- 106 Goff, "Euro 2016."
- 107 Goff, "5 Best."
- 108 Christian D'Andrea, "How does soccer's offside rule work?," SB Nation.com, June 14, 2018, <https://www.sbnation.com/soccer/2018/6/14/17458570/how-does-soccer-offside-rule-work-2018-world-cup>.
- 109 Goff, "5 Best."
- 110 Telegraph Sport staff, "16 football rules that drive us mad and must be changed," the (London) *Telegraph*, February 10, 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/12147935/The-football-rules-that-drive-us-mad-and-must-be-changed.html>.
- 111 Staley, "Penalty kicks."
- 112 Jonathan Wilson, "Good Riddance: Why Abolishing the Away-Goal Rule is the Way to Go," *Sports Illustrated*, February 08, 2019, <https://www.si.com/soccer/2019/02/08/away-goal-rule-tiebreaker-uefa-vote-abolish>.
- 113 Wilson, "Good Riddance."
- 114 Tom Bogert, "MLS announces new playoff format for 2019 season," MLS Soccer.com, December 17, 2018, <https://www.mlssoccer.com/post/2018/12/13/2019-mls-playoff-structure>.

- 115 Wilson, "Good Riddance."
- 116 Andre Vergara, "Tom Brady isn't nearly as good in AFC championship games as you think he is," Fox Sports.com, Jan 22, 2017, <https://www.foxsports.com/nfl/gallery/nfl-playoffs-new-england-patriots-tom-brady-isnt-good-afc-championship-games-as-you-think-he-is-steelers-broncos-colts-012117>.
- 117 "QuickFacts United States," U.S. Census Bureau, retrieved March 26, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045217>.
- 118 Jake New, "A Long Shot," Inside Higher Ed.com, January 27, 2015, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/01/27/college-athletes-greatly-overestimate-their-chances-playing-professionally>.
- 119 "Odds of a High School Athlete playing Pro Sports," Scholarship Stats.com, retrieved March 27, 2019, <http://www.scholarshipstats.com/odds-of-going-pro.htm>.
- 120 "Hockey: List of NHL Teams," Ducksters.com, retrieved March 27, 2019, https://www.ducksters.com/sports/list_of_NHL_teams.php.
- 121 The USTA National Collegiate Varsity Committee, "Going to College or Turning Pro? Making an Informed Decision!", USTA.com, October 2010, <http://assets.usta.com/assets/1/15/USTA%20College%20Varsity%20Analysis%20of%20College%20vs%20Pro%20FAQ.pdf>.
- 122 Michael Noer, "On the Edge: Money, Life and Loneliness on the Fringe of the PGA Tour," *Forbes* magazine, February 8, 2012, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelnoer/2012/02/08/ben-martin-pga-tour/#18dcfd6c1d27>.
- 123 "Powerball Odds," Powerball.com, retrieved March 27, 2019, <https://www.powerball.com/games/powerball>.
- 124 "How Dangerous is Lightning?," the National Weather Service, retrieved March 27, 2019, <https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-odds>.
- 125 NACE Staff, "Class of 2018's Preliminary Starting Salary Shows Slight Drop," National Association of Colleges and Employers, October 10, 2018, <https://www.nacweb.org/job-market/compensation/class-of-2018s-preliminary-starting-salary-shows-slight-drop/>.
- 126 "New Spectrem Group Market Insights Report Reveals Significant Growth in U.S. Household Wealth in 2017," Spectrem.com, March 19, 2018, <https://spectrem.com/Content/press-release-new-spectrem-group-market-insights-report-reveals-significant-growth-in-US->

household-wealth-in-2017.aspx.

- 127 Gunnion, "Behind."
- 128 Gunnion, "Behind."
- 129 John Grindrod, "Pro athletes, once upon a laborious off-season," *Lima Ohio.com*, February 5, 2018,
<https://www.limaohio.com/sports/284135/pro-athletes-once-upon-a-laborious-off-deason>.
- 130 "Minimum salary," *Baseball Reference.com*, retrieved March 28, 2019,
https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Minimum_salary.
- 131 Kurt Badenhausen, "Average Baseball Salary Up 20,700% Since First CBA in 1968," *Forbes* magazine, April 7, 2016,
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kurtbadenhausen/2016/04/07/average-baseball-salary-up-20700-since-first-cba-in-1968/#3f6262d93e48>.
- 132 Pablo S. Torre, "How (and Why) Athletes Go Broke," *Sports Illustrated*, March 23, 2009,
<https://www.si.com/vault/2009/03/23/105789480/how-and-why-athletes-go-broke>.
- 133 NPR Staff, "How To Win The Money Game: A Former NBA Star Shares Financial Advice," *NPR.org*, June 27, 2015,
<https://www.npr.org/2015/06/27/416793011/former-nba-star-explains-how-to-win-the-money-game>.
- 134 Billy Corben, "BROKE," *ESPN.com*, retrieved March 20, 2018,
<http://www.espn.com/30for30/film?page=broke>.
- 135 Lester Munson, "Where's Daddy?," *Sports Illustrated*, May 4, 1998,
<https://www.si.com/vault/1998/05/04/242554/paternity-ward-fathering-out-of-wedlock-kids-has-become-commonplace-among-athletes-many-of-whom-seem-oblivious-to-the-legal-financial-and-emotional-consequences>.
- 136 Andre Khatchaturian, "The 9 Most Financially Irresponsible Players in NBA History," *Bleacher Report.com*, February 29, 2012,
<https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1085063-the-9-most-financially-irresponsible-players-in-nba-history#slide9>.
- 137 Katy Osborn, "10 Insanely Rich Pro Athletes Humbled by Financial Ruin," *Money* magazine, August 11, 2015,
<http://money.com/money/3983997/famous-athletes-bankruptcy/>.
- 138 William M. Welch, "California cities looking for economic recovery," *USA Today*, May 15, 2013,
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/05/15/california>

-city-bankruptcies/2076197/.

- 139 Luis Gomez, "Is Raiders' \$750 million Las Vegas subsidy peak public stadium financing?," the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, March 28, 2017, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/the-conversation/sd-raiders-las-vegas-stadium-public-subsidy-overshadows-chargers-stadium-in-san-diego-20170328-htmlstory.html>.
- 140 Chris Isidore, "The short life of an NFL stadium," CNN.com, September 8, 2014, <https://money.cnn.com/2014/09/08/news/companies/nfl-stadiums/index.html>.
- 141 Elaine S. Povich, "Why should public money be used to build sports stadiums?," PBS.org, July 13, 2016, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/public-money-used-build-sports-stadiums>.
- 142 Patrick Sisson, "10 challenges that will define cities in 2019," Curbed.com, January 2, 2019, <https://www.curbed.com/2019/1/2/18165392/2019-cities-housing-transit-traffic-big-tech>.
- 143 "Anderson votes to keep Wigwam open," the *Indianapolis Star*, March 10, 2009, <http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090310/NEWS04/90310071&s=TimeStampDescending&page=3#pluckcomments>
- 144 Austin Hough, "The state of Indiana's identity; Crowds, participation down for Indiana high school basketball," the *Goshen News*, March 1, 2019, https://www.goshennews.com/across_indiana/crowds-participation-down-for-indiana-high-school-basketball/article_3944fbe2-3ae2-11e9-aeb5-6357c373823f.html.
- 145 Gregg Doyel, "These historic Indiana gyms are dying," the *Indianapolis Star*, August 10, 2016, <https://www.indystar.com/story/sports/columnists/gregg-doyel/2016/08/10/doyel-these-historic-indiana-gyms-dying/88369000/>.
- 146 Stuart Hirsch, "Wigwam saved from wrecking ball," the (Anderson) *Herald Bulletin*, August 28, 2014, https://www.heraldbulletin.com/news/article_6602ec96-2f09-11e4-a65f-0019bb2963f4.html.
- 147 Joshua Rogers, "Communist Sports Leagues Are Better," *Forbes* magazine, August 6, 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joshuarogers/2015/08/06/communist-sports-leagues-are-better/#5cb6180e658c>.

- 148 Rogers, "Communist."
- 149 Mike Konczal, "Colleges are teaching economics backwards," the *Washington Post*, November 30, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/11/30/colleges-are-teaching-economics-backwards/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.33d4eebd5e57.
- 150 "TV Selling Prices," TV History, retrieved March 4, 2019, <http://www.tvhistory.tv/tv-prices.htm>.
- 151 "U.S. Inflation Rate Calculator," the Official Data Foundation, retrieved March 4, 2019, <http://www.in2013dollars.com/1860-dollars-in-2017?amount=1>.
- 152 TV History, "Prices."
- 153 "Useful Notes / Switch to Color," TV Tropes.org, retrieved March 12, 2019, <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/UsefulNotes/SwitchToColor>.
- 154 TV History, "Prices."
- 155 Dylan Tweney, "Infoporn: How Flatscreen TVs Get Cheaper," *Wired* magazine, April 26, 2011, <https://www.wired.com/2011/04/st-infoporn-lcds/>.
- 156 "Top TV Deals," Best Buy.com, retrieved March 5, 2019, <https://www.bestbuy.com/site/promo/tv-deals>.
- 157 Brian O'Connell, "The 7 Best Times to Buy a TV and Why," the *Street.com*, November 7, 2018, <https://www.thestreet.com/technology/the-best-time-to-buy-a-tv-and-why-14771601>.
- 158 Richard Wolf, "Supreme Court strikes down ban on sports betting in victory for New Jersey," *USA Today*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/05/14/supreme-court-strikes-down-ban-sports-betting-new-jersey/1053022001/>.
- 159 Kim Yuhl, "All Bets Are On: Supreme Court Strikes Down Sports Betting Ban," *Play USA.com*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.playusa.com/nj-scotus-sports-betting-ruling/>.
- 160 Drake Dunaway & Blaine McCormick, "Betting on your favorite teams still on hold in Arizona Legislature," *Cronkite News*, February 19, 2019, <https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/2019/02/19/arizona-sports-gambling/>.

- 161 Lester Gunnion, "Behind the Numbers: Professional sports and the merits of being big and connected," Deloitte.com, August 07, 2015, <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/economy/behind-the-numbers/us-professional-leagues-sports-and-technology.html>.
- 162 "Wayne Gretzky," On This Day.com, retrieved January 29, 2019, <https://www.onthisday.com/people/wayne-gretzky>.
- 163 Matt Rybaltowski, "Vegas Golden Knights Reach Stanley Cup Finals in First Season," the *New York Times*, May 20, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/20/sports/golden-knights-stanley-cup-finals.html>.
- 164 "Alex Ovechkin #8," NHL.com, retrieved January 29, 2019, <https://www.nhl.com/player/alex-ovechkin-8471214>.
- 165 Nathan Williams, "Is Poker a Game of Skill or Luck? This Will SHOCK You," Black Rain 79.com, retrieved February 22, 2019, <https://www.blackrain79.com/2016/11/is-poker-game-of-skill-or-luck.html>.
- 166 Erin Coghlan, Lisa McCorkell, and Sara Hinkley, "What Really Caused the Great Recession?," University of California - Berkeley, September 19, 2018, <http://irle.berkeley.edu/what-really-caused-the-great-recession/>.
- 167 Ehrlinger et al, "Unskilled."
- 168 Martin Harris, "U.S. Presidents who played poker," PokerStars.com, 2016, <https://www.pokerstars.com/en/blog/2016/us-presidents-who-played-poker-162602.shtml>.
- 169 History.com Staff, "Where did poker originate?," History.com, April 23, 2013, <https://www.history.com/news/where-did-poker-originate>.
- 170 Martin Harris, "The Top Five Poker-Playing Presidents," Betfair.com, August 9, 2013, <https://betting.betfair.com/poker/news/the-top-five-poker-playing-presidents-070813-77.html>.
- 171 Savannah Lavinder, "The Effect of the UIGEA on Poker in the United States," US Pokersites.us, retrieved February 20, 2019, <https://uspokersites.us/uigea/>.
- 172 "UIGEA," US Pokersite.net, retrieved February 20, 2019, <https://www.uspokersite.net/uigea/>.
- 173 Nate Silver, "After 'Black Friday,' American Poker Faces Cloudy Future," the *New York Times*, April 20, 2011, <https://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/04/20/after-black-friday-american-poker-faces-cloudy-future/>.

- 174 Card Player News Team. "Black Friday: The Day That Changed Online Poker," *Card Player*, April 13, 2012, <https://www.cardplayer.com/poker-news/13127-black-friday-the-day-that-changed-online-poker>.
- 175 Matt Richtel, "U.S. Cracks Down on Online Gambling," the *New York Times*, April 15, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/16/technology/16poker.html>.
- 176 "DOJ's Reversal on the Wire Act - What It Means for Internet Gaming," National Law Review.com, January 3, 2012, <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/doj-s-reversal-wire-act-what-it-means-internet-gaming>.
- 177 Scott Balber & Steven Jacobs, "DOJ Goes All-In Against Online Gambling, But Can Wire Act Opinion Withstand Scrutiny?," Legal Sports Report.com, January 28, 2019, <https://www.legalsportsreport.com/28179/doj-wire-act-opinion-scrutiny/>.
- 178 Peter Alson & James McManus, "A Glimpse Into President Obama's Complicated Relationship With Poker," Poker News.com, August 28, 2013, <https://www.pokernews.com/news/2013/08/a-glimpse-into-president-obama-s-complicated-relationship-wi-16136.htm>.
- 179 Gautham Nagesh, "Rep. Frank: Administration 'wasting time' with online poker crackdown," The Hill.com, April 18, 2011, <https://thehill.com/policy/technology/156655-rep-barney-frank-blasts-obama-admin-for-online-poker-crackdown>.
- 180 Robbie Strazynski, "Full Tilt Poker is Finally Back in Business," *Card Player* magazine, November 6, 2012, <https://cardplayerlifestyle.com/full-tilt-poker-is-finally-back-in-business/>.
- 181 Matt Richtel, "Poker Web Site Cheated Users, U.S. Suit Says," the *New York Times*, September 20, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/21/business/poker-site-misused-players-money-us-says.html>.
- 182 Shira Ovide, "Highlights from the Full Tilt Ponzi Lawsuit," the *Wall Street Journal*, September 20, 2011, <https://blogs.wsj.com/deals/2011/09/20/highlights-from-the-full-tilt-ponzi-lawsuit/>.
- 183 Natalie Faulk, "Why Does Everyone Hate Howard Lederer?," Upswing Poker.com, December 7, 2017, <https://upswingpoker.com/howard-lederer-full-tilt-poker-hate/>.

- 184 David Schoen, "Controversial players Howard Lederer, Chris Ferguson get cold reception at WSOP," the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, June 12, 2016, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/sports/controversial-players-howard-lederer-chris-ferguson-get-cold-reception-at-wsop/>.
- 185 The U.S. Department of Justice. "Whether Proposals By Illinois And New York To Use The Internet And Out-Of-State Transaction Processors To Sell Lottery Tickets To In-State Adults Violate The Wire Act," Justice.gov, September 20, 2011, <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/olc/opinions/2011/09/31/state-lotteries-opinion.pdf>.
- 186 Natalie Faulk, "Ultimate Bet and Absolute Poker: What Happened?," Upswing Poker.com, March 27, 2018, <https://upswingpoker.com/ultimate-bet-absolute-poker-scandal/>.
- 187 Strazynski, "Full Tilt."
- 188 Paul Oresteen, "Black Friday: Where Poker Stands Six Years Later," Poker Central.com, April 15, 2017, <https://www.pokercentral.com/articles/black-friday-where-poker-is-six-years-later/>.
- 189 Alson & McManus, "A Glimpse."
- 190 Oresteen, "Black Friday."
- 191 Geoff Fisk, "5 Reasons the Future Looks Bright for U.S. Online Poker," *Card Player* magazine, November 26, 2018, <https://cardplayerlifestyle.com/5-reasons-the-future-looks-bright-for-u-s-online-poker/>.
- 192 Wolf, "Supreme Court."
- 193 Balber & Jacobs, "DOJ."
- 194 James Gatto, "DOJ Sued Over its Reinterpretation of the Wire Act," Law of the Level.com, February 19, 2019, <https://www.lawofthelevel.com/2019/02/articles/gambling/doj-sued-reinterpretation-wire-act/>.
- 195 Balber & Jacobs, "DOJ."
- 196 Ryan Lucchesi, "WSOP: History -- 1970 Recap," *Card Player* magazine, June 4, 2008, <https://www.cardplayer.com/poker-news/4323-wsop-history-1970-recap>.
- 197 Seth Palansky, "2018 WSOP Bigger Than Ever," WSOP.com, July 23, 2018, <http://www.wsop.com/news/2018/Jul/10724/2018-WSOP->

BIGGER-THAN-EVER.html.

- 198 Darrel Plant, "Why You'll Never Make A Living Playing Live Poker Tournaments," Deadspin.com, February 19, 2014, <https://deadspin.com/why-its-hard-for-poker-pros-to-make-a-living-playing-l-1526098295>.
- 199 "Everything You Need to Know About the Casino House Edge," Legit Gambling Sites.com, retrieved February 22, 2019, <https://www.legitgamblingsites.com/online-casinos/house-edge/>.
- 200 Williams, "Is Poker?"
- 201 "How Casinos Stop/Prevent Card Counters," Counting Edge.com, retrieved February 22, 2019, <https://www.countingedge.com/how-do-casinos-stop-card-counting/>.
- 202 William Herkewitz, "How Does Counting Cards in Blackjack Work?," Mental Floss.com, June 3, 2014, <http://mentalfloss.com/article/56506/how-does-counting-cards-blackjack-work>.
- 203 Victoria Coren Mitchell, "Casino rule 1: the house always wins," the (London) *Guardian*, October 11, 2014, last modified on December 2, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/12/poker-casino-phil-ivey-gambling>.
- 204 Legit Gambling Sites.com, "Everything."
- 205 "Archie Karas Bio," Gambling Sites.org, December 2016, <https://www.gamblingsites.org/biographies/archie-karas/>.
- 206 Paul McGuire, "The Return Of Archie 'The Greek' Karas," *Bluff Magazine*, September 2008, <http://archive.bluff.com/magazine/the-return-of-archie-the-greek-karas-7146/>.
- 207 Joey Richardson, "Archie Karas: The Posterboy for Stop Loss Limits in Gambling," Gambling Sites.net, September 4, 2018, <https://www.gamblingsites.net/blog/archie-karas-the-posterboy-for-stop-loss-limits-in-gambling/>.
- 208 Chad Holloway, "Famed Gambler Archie Karas Banned from All Nevada Casinos," Pokernews.com, September 21, 2015, <https://www.pokernews.com/news/2015/09/archie-karas-banned-from-nevada-casinos-22834.htm>.
- 209 Robert Turner, "One poker 'Buddha' who turned out bad," Gaming Today.com, July 9, 2013, https://www.gamingtoday.com/race_sports/article/42220-

One_poker_Buddha_who_turned_out_bad.

- 210 John Phillips, "The Miracle Cars," *Car and Driver* magazine, October 1, 2003, <https://www.caranddriver.com/features/a15133983/the-miracle-cars-feature/>.
- 211 The Associated Press. " 'Miracle Car' conspirator gets 22-year sentence," the *Lawrence Journal-World*, December 12, 2003, http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2003/dec/12/miracle_car_conspirator/.
- 212 Dave Toplikar, "Bellagio bandit gets 3-11 years for \$1.5 million chip heist," the *Las Vegas Sun*, August 23, 2011, <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2011/aug/23/bellagio-bandit-gets-3-11-years-15-million-chip-he/>.
- 213 Keith Romer, "Bellagio Bandit: How One Man Robbed Vegas' Biggest Casino and Almost Got Away," *Rolling Stone* magazine, November 3, 2016, <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/bellagio-bandit-how-one-man-robbed-vegas-biggest-casino-and-almost-got-away-105349/>.
- 214 Dave Toplikar, "Bellagio 'biker bandit' to serve at least 9 years in prison," the *Las Vegas Sun*, August 25, 2011, <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2011/aug/25/bellagio-biker-bandit-serve-least-9-years-prison/>.
- 215 Romer, "Bellagio."
- 216 Ed Koch, "Las Vegas junket king Weintraub dies at 77," the *Las Vegas Sun*, September 23, 1997, <https://lasvegassun.com/news/1997/sep/23/las-vegas-junket-king-weintraub-dies-at-77/>.
- 217 "ASM Rounders Question," Poker Chip Forum.com, Feb 11, 2016, <https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/asm-rounders-question.10170/>.
- 218 "What are the best poker chips?," Two Plus Two.com, November 24, 2010, <https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/24/home-poker/what-best-poker-chips-925593/>.
- 219 "Real Clay Poker Chips Price List From 1/1/2019," Classic Poker Chips.com, retrieved February 11, 2019, <http://www.classicpokerchips.com/pokerchips/realclay/pricelist.htm>.
- 220 "39mm Totally Custom Ceramic Poker Chips," ABC Gifts and Awards, retrieved February 11, 2019, <http://abcgiftsandawards.com/39mm->

- totally-custom-ceramic-poker-chips/.
- 221 “northernferg's Olivia's Tournament set,” Poker Chip Forum.com, November 27, 2018, <https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/northernfergs-olivias-tournament-set.35470/#post-650993>.
 - 222 “Biggest chipsets per casino, owned by PCF'ers,” Poker Chip Forum.com, October 27, 2016, <https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/biggest-chipsets-per-casino-owned-by-pcfers.15614/>.
 - 223 Gene Trimble, “Olivia's Poker Hall chip History,” the Chip Board.com, May 18, 2007, <http://www.thechipboard.com/archives/archives.pl/bid/317/md/read/id/618977/sbj/olivia-s-poker-hall-chip-history/>.
 - 224 “The Vineyard Casino : History and Info,” Poker Chip Forum.com, April 26, 2017, <https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/the-vineyard-casino-history-and-info.20015/>.
 - 225 “Paulson Vineyard Casino set,” Poker Chip Forum.com, August 24, 2013, <https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/paulson-vineyard-casino-set.855/>.
 - 226 Jessica Bennett, “How Compton Got Its Groove Back,” *Newsweek* magazine, March 23, 2009, <https://www.newsweek.com/how-compton-got-its-groove-back-76361>.
 - 227 Phillip Reese, “Here’s where and how California youths are most often murdered,” the *Sacramento Bee*, April 4, 2018, <https://www.sacbee.com/site-services/databases/article207460664.html>.
 - 228 Jeff Leeds, “State Closes Compton Card Club, Cites Cash Shortage,” the *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 1997, <http://articles.latimes.com/1997/oct/12/local/me-42038>.
 - 229 “Top Hat & Cane Poker Chips From The Closed Crystal Park Casino In Los Angeles,” Google Groups, October 30, 2000, <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/rec.gambling.poker/HgrBxEakKOo>.
 - 230 New York Times News Service, “Missouri Opens First Two Riverboat Casinos,” the *Chicago Tribune*, July 17, 1994, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1994-07-17-9407170088-story.html>.
 - 231 “PNY Part 1 - President Casino New Yorker History,” Poker Chip

- Forum.com, March 24, 2017,
<https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/pny-part-1-president-casino-new-yorker-history.19264/>.
- 232 Tim Logan, "Floodwaters close President Casino for good," the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 25, 2010,
https://www.stltoday.com/business/floodwaters-close-president-casino-for-good/article_46d1e474-7258-5b00-847b-e558c0c12a90.html.
- 233 "President Casino on the Admiral (PCA)," Poker Chip Forum.com, November 8, 2014,
<https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/president-casino-on-the-admiral-pca.3714/>.
- 234 "Home Game Bust In Georgia," Full Contact Poker.com, March 2, 2005, <https://fullcontactpoker.com/poker-forum/index.php?showtopic=5538>.
- 235 "Paulson Chip Worth?," Poker Chip Forum.com, February 11, 2016,
<https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/paulson-chip-worth.10180/post-146972>.
- 236 "The Story of the Playboy Casino Chip Find," Poker Fraud Alert.com, October 26, 2016, <https://pokerfraudalert.com/forum/entry.php?132-The-Story-of-the-Playboy-Casino-Chip-Find>.
- 237 Judy DeHaven, "For collectors of casino chips, an unwelcome jackpot," the (Newark, N.J.) *Star-Ledger* via the Chip Board.com, April 24, 2008,
<http://www.thechipboard.com/archives/archives.pl/md/read/id/711565/bid/318/sbj/for-collectors-of-casino-chips-an-unwelcome-jackpo/>.
- 238 "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (TV Series) 'All In' (2009)," IMDB.com, retrieved February 16, 2019,
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1435001/plotsummary>.
- 239 "Just curious: Why all the Washington state casino chips out there?," Poker Chip Forum.com, November 5, 2018,
<https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/just-curious-why-all-the-washington-state-casino-chips-out-there.34742/>.
- 240 "The End of Chipping History — ?," Poker Chip Forum.com, April 27, 2018, <https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/the-end-of-chipping-history-%E2%80%94-94.29351/>.
- 241 "Price of Paulsons Skyrocketing!," Poker Chip Forum.com, retrieved March 1, 2019, <https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/price-of-paulsons-skyrocketing.5392/>.

- 242 Poker Chip Forum.com, "The End."
- 243 Press Release, "Angel to Acquire GPIC," Market Watch.com, November 27, 2018, <https://www.marketwatch.com/press-release/angel-to-acquire-gpic-2018-11-27>.
- 244 "GPI gets bought out," Poker Chip Forum.com, November 28, 2018, <https://www.pokerchipforum.com/threads/gpi-gets-bought-out.35486/>.
- 245 "Charles F. Kettering," Ohio History Central.org, retrieved February 2, 2019, http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Charles_F._Kettering.