

SPORT

MEN WHO MAKE GODS OF THE SPORTING WORLD... HOW THEY DO IT

Sports Writers Do It, But How They Splash the Adjectives—Much of Sport Writing is Superficial and Only a Few Put Real Meaning Into Their Writings—Calls Them Nitwits.

The following article written in a well known periodical under recent date, is not a little satiric of the manner in which the sports writers of the continent write up the "heroes" and sporting events. Under the title "Men Who Make America's Gods," the article goes about telling of how the sports writers splash the adjectives all over the heroes. The article is reprinted below:—

The morning newspaper in a big city runs to about 30 pages, dividing its space in somewhat these proportions: news, 10 pages, finance, seven pages; sports, five pages; advertisements, two pages; theatre, music, and the movies, two pages; society, one page; shipping, one page; radio, one page; and a page devoted to women. In summer the amount devoted to sports is usually augmented by a page or two borrowed from other departments.

The sports section is one of the most important in the American newspaper of 1935. You can understand how important it is by observing that whereas a music critic with one assistant takes care of the activities of the concert field, a dramatic critic with a dramatic editor covers all openings even in Manhattan, and three or four competent or incompetent men compose the financial section, sports needs a staff all its own. An editor, an assistant editor, make-up men, reporters, specialists, and of course, a columnist are attached to every big newspaper. Whether it is situated in New York or Denver, the men in the sports department are often the best paid on the sheet and not infrequently they are the best writers, or at least, because of the latitude allowed them, the most amusing. The Great Names who run columns syndicated over the country have an enormous influence, their thoughts are household words, and during the height of the football season or at the time of a championship fight their mail rivals Mr. Farley's.

These are the men who make America's gods. Our gods are the heroes of sport—the one and only Babe, the perennial Mr. Tilden, the Deans of the College of Hard Knocks and Three-Base Hits, the track or hockey or golf sensation of the particular season. They are unimportant to you? Possibly, but remember that to millions of your fellow citizens who turn first to the sports pages when they open their newspaper they are the breath of life. The World Court? Unemployment? Rising taxes? Yeah, but what about the Babe, izzy gonna play nex' year or not? Yes, these are our gods, more important than Father Coughlin, more important than Roosevelt himself. Or even, yes, even than Rudy Vallee. And here are the men who make them.

Since the death of W. O. McGeehan, the head of the profession is Henry Grantland Rice. He graduated from Vanderbilt, where he captained the baseball team in 1901; after ten years on Southern newspapers he came north just before the war with an ability to turn out light verse to order,

prose that at times came close to poetry, an unquenchable enthusiasm for things athletic, and a background in sports remarkable in a reporter. Certain phrases coined in his more ecstatic moments are now sporting classics; it was Rice who called the famous Rockne backfield "The Four Horsemen," and nicknamed Grange "the Galloping Ghost."

A first-class newspaperman with a real floor for sports himself—he now shoots a low 80 at golf—he brought something far more valuable to the racket, namely, an inability to take sides on any question. For 20 years he has managed to remain impervious to the more violent hypocrisies of sport as practiced in Anglo-Saxon countries. The evils and abuses of the present system, which came to a peak in 1929 and have not yet by any means vanished, troubled him not at all. As the years rolled along he developed the technique of sitting on the point of a pin until it became a fine art with him. Whenever any controversy arose you could be sure that Grantland Rice would see both sides of the question. And embrace each with equal fervor. "While it is true that...yet, on the other hand..." His sports series in the movies and his syndicated column, filled every day with reams of nothing, have brought him universal respect and an income tax on \$232,000 a year. R.I.P. Henry Grantland Rice.

With less reputation and more ability, Stanley Woodward of the New York Herald Tribune is one of the most improved sports writers of recent years. He played tackle at Amherst College, had a long training in Boston, the home of good sports writing, and is today the most versatile man on the big time. He can turn out a thoroughly competent story on track, football, hockey, golf, rowing, or any branch of athletics; in recent years his work has gained in vigor and virility; and he has imparted a bite to his stuff that makes it the best of its kind in town. It was Woodward who coined the term "ivy colleges" to describe those institutions long on tradition but short on intellectual honesty like Yale, Harvard, and especially Princeton, which refuse to bid openly in the market for their footballists, but purchase them quietly on the side.

Gallico Has Humor

Paul Gallico of the News has ideas, he can write, and his column is burnished by a fine sense of humor. Like most daily stunts his work is uneven; when he's good no one is any better. The thing he did on the death of McGeehan was not only the finest of all epitaphs, it was the sort of thing McGeehan himself would have liked to write; and his interview with Helen Wills Moody in San Francisco last winter was one of the best pieces of sports reporting of 1934. An old Columbia oarsman, Gallico takes the trouble to learn something about those sports with which he is unfamiliar, and when he goes out to cover an event has an idea what it's all about.

Dan Parker, Boxing Expert

There is hardly an honest boxing writer in the game. Dan Parker of the Mirror is one of the few. This small town boy who showed the city

slickers exactly how crooked the fight racket was knows boxing better than anyone, has a tremendous following, and deserves it. His verbal fistcuffs with James J. Johnston of the Madison Square Garden hierarchy are classics. As becomes a Scotchman, Kerr Petrie of the Tribune knows golf and is one of the two best men on that sport in the United States. Richards Vidmer of the same sheet is an able all-round reporter who will admit under cross-examination that he was the model for the hero in Katherine Brush's best-seller of several years ago, "Young Man of Manhattan." Also in the collegiate vein are Laurence Perry of the Consolidated Press and George Trevor of the Sun. The latter is still a sophomore in college, but the former is a sophomore in high school given to lyrical outbursts, such as: "You all know how Notre Dame always goes to mass before every game, reverently, quietly, and as a matter of course. Years ago, it may be recalled, when Princeton had beaten Yale after a period of defeat running over four years, the football eleven in the dressing-room after the game stained with blood and mud, lifted their faces and sang the Doxology." This sacred moment when the sons of Old Nassau had their faces lifted was the only time on record that Mr. Trevor was out-trevored. He writes chiefly of football, on which he is an expert of long standing, and is read eagerly by infantile-minded college graduates of the metropolitan area, his rococo style fitting in well with the absurdities of intercollegiate football today. See below:

"For his swan song belligerent-jawed Bill will have a squad after his own heart, a bunch of untried novices to varsity football. These fiery Hotspurs champing at the bit will find Roper a magnetic, appealing taskmaster whose hard-boiled patina screens a kindly disposition." The fiery Hotspurs won only a single game, against Amherst, that year, but Mr. Trevor was undaunted. "Football is in the very air you breathe at Princeton. Those russet meadows, golden brown under the bright autumn sun, furnish an ideal patina for this greatest of games." Bismarck and Napoleon, Foch and Hindenburg, are allowed to be compared to his gods, while analogies of war are scattered through his columns. The mud-encrusted Eli regulars troop in out of the wind-lashed rain, their cleats clattering like the hoofbeats of a cavalry squadron on cobblestones." And he suggests that "as the mothers of the world are looking toward Geneva for a solution of the war bogy, so the mothers of America are looking to E. K. Hall, chairman of the football rules committee, for an answer to the question, 'Can football be made reasonably safe for schoolboys?'" And it was Mr. Trevor who pointed out how Freddy Loesser, Yale center, ran behind the goal posts and planted a kiss, "the French accolade of valor," on the blushing cheeks of touchdown-scoring Albie Booth.

This is indeed the stuff to feed the troops. Do the troops like it? They eat it, for Mr. Trevor is by all odds the favorite sports writer of the college graduate in the East, a fairly emphatic indictment of the mentality of the average holder of an A. B. degree from an American university. He also writes on track in winter and golf in summer, but football is his specialty, his forte, his love; and at any given moment in April or May he is liable to burst forth with an analysis of the Notre Dame freshman team of 1940, with first names, weights, and ages of every player.

At the other pole is Joe Williams, sports editor of the New York World-Telegram. In addition to various other duties he syndicates a column that is never dull, for he knows sport and makes his own decisions. Mr. Williams is the hardest working sports writer in the game; possibly his standard would be higher if he did not work so hard. Also on the Telegram is Charles Parker, former Dartmouth football star and rival of Mr.

Yanks Win Game, Not Argument

CAREER AT END



The One and Only Babe Ruth, Whose Playing Career is Almost At An End.

Vidmer as the hero of "Young Man of Manhattan."

Headliners of Sport

John Kieran of the Times has a column unlike anyone else's, one that can invariably be depended upon for entertainment. He is distinguished from the majority of his colleagues by an education which he proves is no more a handicap in sports writing than in other walks of life. He sandwiches traces of a Gallis humor into his daily work, which he keeps to an amazingly high standard, avoiding the hated—by the Times—first-person pronoun in a deft manner.

"But he knew he had a good team?" "Sure," said Mr. Thomas.

This sort of thing would be terrible by anyone except the light-handed Mr. Kieran. On the Times all sports are adequately covered by an enormous staff of specialists with a genius for being boring. The pages of the Tribune, less accurate but far more readable, are commanded by lovable old George Daley. He is so lovable that at times he is almost unbearable. His specialty is horses, but with no one to stop him he exposes himself twice weekly in a column. G. F. T. Ryall of the Sun is the leading turf authority; the most amusing is the talented Damon Runyon, whose column is syndicated to the Hearst papers throughout the country, although occasionally one wishes he would not reserve so much of his talent for the slick-paper magazines. Other Hearst headlines include Jack Koefed, whose "Thrills in Sport" are often more thrilling to writer than reader, and Bill Corum, another columnist who would probably not deny, if you pressed him with it, that he was the hero of Katherine Brush's best-seller, "Young Man of Manhattan."

John Lardner, son of the mighty Ring, runs a column syndicated in the Post which is good but not as good as it will be if he sticks around longer. The Post formerly had two so-called experts, Robert Harron, a minor league Grantland Rice, and John R. Tunis, an unhappy highbrow among the lowbrows. Both have been unemployed since the paper was purchased by its present owner. Alan Gould, sports editor of the Associated Press, knows most games and thanks to a large staff gives adequate coverage, although the work of his boys is often mediocre. Among the best

sports men on the large associations is Henry McLemore of the United Press, who adds life and vitality to everything he touches. Outside New York Bill Cunningham of the Boston Post and Ed R. Hughes of the San Francisco Chronicle deserve mention among others for vigorous writing and thinking on their feet.

These, then, are a few of the men who make America's gods. Any one of them overnight can turn an obscure halfback on a college eleven or a winning distance runner into a national celebrity. The cumulative effect of the writings of men like Abramson on track and Woodward on hockey has helped sell these sports to the clients; they could do the same thing with rope-skipping if they wished. That rackets like wrestling and prize fighting have not been sent to their grave long ago is due to the fact that most sports writers who cover them and more than one sports editor prefer to sell themselves to the authorities in charge.

There is probably more downright graft passed out in the sticks where salaries are smaller and the gravy more necessary, but even in the big time the rank and file are not always incorruptible. The honest ones as often as not are lazy, sitting around explaining that Brown was once a sports writer, so what the hell, hey? Salaries range from \$750 or \$1,000 a week for the leading columnists to \$250 or \$300 for names like Trevor's or Woodward's, and on down to \$40 or \$50 for a copy reader to check their mistakes and do the dirty work on the desk.

Calls 'Em Nitwits

With the exceptions noted earlier, the majority have conventionally grooved minds quite incapable of original thinking, while only a mere handful of them have any independence and still fewer possess the slightest degree of moral courage, or are willing to write of things as they see them and not as the customers want. Hired as specialists at large salaries, with more freedom than anyone else on the paper, they are a gang doing an intellectual goosestep, and their best efforts amount to a dozen really good pieces a year. No wonder the gods they make for America are nitwits like themselves.

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Protest Balk Called On Johnny Broaca—Get Razzing—Won Lifeless Game.

NEW YORK, May 20—New York Yankees lost an argument but won a ragged ball game at Yankee Stadium today at the expense of the league-leading Chicago White Sox.

The New Yorkers made good use of their 10 hits off southpaw Carl Fincher, taking his first start for the Sox, and easily captured the first game of the series 7-2. Johnny Broaca throtled the burly looking visitors in the pinches, leaving 13 men stranded on the bases, and also was the cause of the day's big debate.

The Yankees protested with such violence when Umpire Bill McGowan pulled a balk on Broaca in the seventh that Catcher Bill Dickey was ejected for using abusive language and Pitcher Johnny Allen was banished from the bench for banging the front of the dugout with a bat. The argument, led by Manager Joe McCarthy and Captain Lou Gehrig, lasted nearly 10 minutes but had no bearing on the ultimate outcome.

CANADIAN GOLFER WAS ELIMINATED

ST. ANNES ON SEA, May 20—Sensations were immediately forthcoming when they started the week's golfing wars today in quest of the British amateur title, over the Royal Lytham and St. Anne's layout.

Immediate elimination was the fate of C. Ross "Sandy" Somerville of London, Ontario, former Canadian and United States titleholder. Also knocked out in the first round were the two Scottish favorites, Jock McLean and Hector Thomson. Lawson Little of San Francisco starting defence of the title, had the narrowest of escapes.

Big League Scores

National League
Pittsburgh 11 New York 4.
Chicago 5 Boston 0.
Brooklyn at Cincinnati (wet grounds).
Philadelphia at St. Louis (rain).
American League
Washington 8, St. Louis 2.
Detroit 8, Philadelphia 6.
New York 7, Chicago 2.
Cleveland 4, Boston 1.

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