

Sports, Politics, and the Constitution

by Murray N. Rothbard

"The personal is the political" in today's common leftist chant. It is also a formula for totalitarianism, for regimenting every aspect of our daily life. Relations with friends and spouses, whether or not you open a door for a female or use a deodorant, every twist and turn of life is scrutinized to root out the "politically incorrect."

The only way to combat this nefarious slogan is root-and-branch, total resistance, war to the knife. And that total opposition is libertarianism. For the essence of the libertarian creed is the reverse slogan: "No, dammit, the political is the personal." The personal is the personal, while for the libertarian the political is systematically demystified from its lofty and obscurantist collective perch.

"Sovereignty," "the State," et al. are broken down into their methodologically individualist parts, and seen boldly and candidly as people being permitted to act in a swinish and criminal manner. The State, the political, is individuals acting badly and criminally in ways which they could never get away with if the reality of their personal activity were brought into view. The libertarian, to borrow a phrase from Karl Hess's single contribution to libertarianism, his article in *Playboy* during the 1960s, seeks "the death of politics," its liquidation into the personal, into society and the market economy.

Of all areas of life, sports should be the arena least touched by politics. For the glory of being a sports fan is precisely that we are engaging in fun and play, that we are permitted the freedom to be "irrational"; that is, to be Yankee or Mets fans, to love our team and to hate the enemy, without having to ground these passions in a systematic, moral or metaphysical theory. So it is particularly obnoxious when the gaggle of left Puritans invades and takes over the field of sports. Which they have done, of course, with a vengeance.

The Hate Thought squad has run rampant in sports for years. Veteran and respected sports figures, such as Al Campaneris and Jimmy the Greek, have seen their careers mercilessly destroyed because they

gave one politically improper answer to an interviewer's question. No one dares even explore whether or not their answers were correct; their very expression is a hate-thought-crime; unlike other, seemingly graver, crimes, from their punishment there is no reprieve.

I like to think that sports writers are above politics; that sports and only sports fills their minds. But now, they too have succumbed, and are, in fact, viciously leftish whenever politics is deemed to be relevant to sports. The writers for *The National*, the cream of the sports writing profession, invariably lead the vanguard of the Hate Thought Police. The latest flap, of course, is the Locker Room Controversy. Male pro football players of the New England Patriots, getting edgy and distracted when a female reporter invaded their locker room after a game, surrounded her and made suggestive remarks. Ohh, wow! What a fuss! What a twitter: The female reporter, asserting her rights as a "professional" among hundreds of other female sports journalists, insisted that she was "mind raped." What in blazes is "mind rape?" A new crime invented for the occasion, a crime apparently only slightly less odious than rape-rape. When Victor Kiam, owner of the Patriots, defended his players, organized feminism threatened all sorts of sanctions, including a boycott of Kiam's Lady Remington razors.

Finally, to top it off, when Sam Wyche, coach of the Cincinnati Bengals, insists on barring female reporters from locker rooms in which male players are naked, the gods of wrath will descend upon him. *The National*, the rest of the sports media, and organized feminism, lament the evil reactionary nature of Wyche as well as Kiam. "We thought this had all been settled – female reporters' locker room rights had been decided years ago!" There is nothing that infuriates leftists more than a slipping back, a slackening of the Tide of Progress. Wyche was duly fined the whopping sum of \$30,000 for disobeying NFL rules, to the general chorus of: "not strong enough for that heinous offense."

It turns out, too, that the august U.S. courts had indeed decided the issue. The egregious federal Judge Constance Baker Motley had decreed that women have a constitutional right to enter male locker rooms! Talk about your judicial activism!

But I thought that the ERA was stopped because of such threats as compulsory integration of men's and ladies' rooms! Well, to be fair, Judge Motley did not exactly decree that females have a constitutional right to enter male locker rooms at will. It's just that female reporters, being duly certified professionals, and not simply sluttish thrill-seekers, have the "constitutional right" to equal access with male reporters to locker rooms. Oh. It still seems to me like sneaking the ERA in through the back door. But how about male reporters? Are they entitled to equal access to female locker rooms? Hey, what's the matter with you, you evil sexist exploiter of women!

But why can't Sam Wyche bar all reporters from the locker room, and make reporters wait until after the players are dressed? Well, it's true

that the action would probably be constitutional, but it would violate NFL rules, which compel football teams to admit the press to locker rooms immediately after the game. Those rules, in turn, were imposed at the behest of the press, along with organized feminism. Reporters, you see, are professionals, and professionals have to meet deadlines, and besides they want to interview the players right after the game, before they have a chance to catch their breath and collect their thoughts. Catch them off guard, in short. What? You say players have some sort of right of privacy? What are you? Some sort of rotten reactionary judicial-activist?

Poor honest Sam Wyche has a Plan B which he is prepared to fall back on: To admit all reporters, male and female, to the locker room right after the game, but to keep the players fully clothed and out of the showers until the press is kicked out. No, it won't work, Sam. The football players would not be vulnerable enough then. Besides, all reporters, male and female, have the God-given, constitutional right to see football players naked: male players, that is. Have we got the Constitution all straight by now?