
STEERING OWN LIFE LEADS TO CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH LIFE-DITCH

“Athletes, on their very best day, still do a terrible job of impersonating God.”

Chris Rock may be a comedian, but his observation regarding the sexual escapades of professional athletes is no laughing matter. He said, “A man is only as faithful as his options.” (SP, Dec. 5, 2009)

While probing the transgressions of Tiger Woods, arguably the world’s most famous athlete, Rock implies that marital faithfulness will always play second fiddle to sexual opportunity.

In driving home the point, he cites an impressive list of athletes who were known for more than their prowess in sports -- they also excelled in marital infidelity: Babe Ruth, Joe Louis, Joe DiMaggio, Muhammad Ali, Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan and Alex Rodriguz. He states, “Fact is, in the last century the greatest athletes of whatever day are virtually winless against sexual temptation...”

I find such comments both disturbing and intriguing. Why is it that athletes who excel at disciplining the body have such a dismal record when it comes to the discipline of their sex drive? I suspect it is more than testosterone talking.

I believe the root issue is discovered in the first historical sporting event, recorded in the book of Genesis, which opens, “in the beginning” (sports fans can read that as *big inning*). Humans had the opportunity to hit a home run against temptation, but instead grounded out. Though lacking uniforms, Adam and Eve clearly knew whose team they were on and understood the game-plan Coach God had laid out. But when opportunity came knocking to run their own lives, make their own decisions, play their own game they caved in to the pressure. They sinned.

At that moment something changed in mankind – a spiritual DNA shift, so to speak. It’s summarized in the statement heard many years ago, “I believe in theology -- and I’m Theo.” Yes, the disease of sin leads to delusional thinking; a warped belief that we can do an effective job of managing our own lives; playing God.

All of which leads us back to professional athletes. Sporting prowess leads to accolades, recognition and financial gain. The public spotlight becomes a greenhouse in which pride and independence naturally grows, if left unchecked. Cheering, when cherished, can echo in the soul, creating a warped perspective of personal ability to manage one’s own life. The embrace of such thinking will always lead to eventual chaos, misplaced values, pain and self-

destruction. Athletes, on their very best day, still do a terrible job of impersonating God.

And so they fail, and we the public, profess shock and amazement. Radio phone-in shows ring with the underlying question, "How could they?"

I want to phone in some day and ask, "How could they not?" Seizing the steering wheel of one's life will always eventually result in a close encounter with a life-ditch.

No wonder Carrie Underwood implored, "Jesus take the wheel." It's wise advice for individuals of all walks of life; athletes and auto mechanics, politicians and poets, movie stars and mothers. Pride and independence is something we all battle with.

If Chris Rock is right and that we are only as faithful as our options, then perhaps it is time society increased the list of options to include submission to God, humility and a return to a Heavenly Father who is passionately in love with all -- Mr. Rock, Mr. Woods, and thankfully, you and me.