Sport as Cultural Assimilation: Representations of American Indian Athletes in the Carlisle School Newspaper

By Ray Gamache

The article analyzes archival Carlisle school newspapers to demonstrate how the institution used news representations of athletics and recreation to foster assimilationist aims. The article argues that athletics and recreation were imbued with different meanings for the various constituencies, all of whom used athletics and recreation to construct identities, express emotions, and struggle over the politics of assimilation. The conjuncture of Carlisle’s athletic programs and the growth of sports coverage resulted in representations of Indian athletes within the context of a racial ideology that portrayed the Indian as both a noble and primitive savage whose instinctive abilities and cunning allowed him to compete against whites despite a lack of scientific training. In the process, a modern bicultural athletic world came into being, but it was not destined to last. The very cultural system that had supported Indian athletes in the early twentieth century was transformed in ways that rendered Indian athletes invisible.

Introduction

When in 1879 Captain Richard Henry Pratt opened the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in south central Pennsylvania, barely three years had passed since the battle of the Little Bighorn, and the question of what to do with Indians was still being debated. Pratt had become convinced of the efficacy of teaching Indians vocational skills while holding a group of incarcerated Indians at Fort Marion, Florida, for almost three years (1875-1878). There he was joined by Sarah Ann Mather and like-minded volunteers from St. Augustine who believed that the best way to assimilate Indians into white-dominated American society was through education. Appointed to a one-year term at the
Hero Crafting in *Sporting Life*, an Early Baseball Journal

By Lori Amber Roessner

“Next to religion, baseball has furnished a greater impact on American life than any other institution.”

–President Herbert Hoover

By the turn of the twentieth century, organized baseball had emerged as America’s national pastime with larger-than-life heroes enshrined in mythic lore. Early sports writers engaged in a symbiotic relationship with professional baseball, promoting the sport, its leaders, and players, yet all the while profiting from the game’s success. This article examines how *Sporting Life*, one of the earliest sports journals, played a role in manufacturing heroes out of early American baseball players. This study identifies mechanisms that *Sporting Life* used to craft heroes in the decade preceding the 1920s, which scholars have long identified as the Golden Age of sports writing. Many scholars have examined legendary Jazz-Age sports writers such as Grantland Rice and Paul Gallico, who mythologized sports stars in the 1920s, but this study reveals that only a decade prior to the Golden Age, *Sporting Life* writers were crafting heroes of the Dead Ball Era. One question served to guide the narrative: what techniques did *Sporting Life* writers employ to mythologize prominent professional baseball stars and leaders from 1912 to 1917? After a broad reading of *Sporting Life* issues throughout the 1910s, twenty-five issues were systematically selected and more than 205 articles were analyzed utilizing an in-depth textual analysis.

By the turn of the twentieth century, organized baseball, which originated in the late 1830s, was firmly entrenched as America’s national pastime, heaped in mythic legend and lore. Early baseball journalists, a number of whom were former amateur players, made a
In 1970, baseball star Curt Flood sued Major League Baseball in an effort to change the game’s free agency rules. With few exceptions, those who have written about Flood’s case agree that sports-writers of the era were overwhelmingly unsupportive of Flood because they believed that his lawsuit would destroy the national pastime. The author researched hundreds of newspapers and magazine articles, and has concluded that the belief that the majority of sports columnists considered Flood’s lawsuit “a traitorous undertaking,” as one author put it, is false. In fact, a majority of sports scribes both criticized and praised Flood, as well as the baseball establishment. And while a number of sports columnists unambiguously castigated Flood and his actions, nearly as many enthusiastically backed his lawsuit and rhetoric. This article, then, argues that the sporting press of the early 1970s was more socially aware and sensitive to racial issues, and demonstrated more empathy for an outspoken black man like Flood, than is commonly believed. The author suggests that the opinions of the white sporting press on the divisive issues of the era were as varied and intricate as those of the wider American public.

On January 2, 1970, veteran sports columnist Red Smith wrote:

CURTIS CHARLES Flood is a man of character and self-respect. Being black, he is more sensitive than most white players about the institution of slavery as it exists in professional baseball.¹

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During the Summer Olympics in 1968, Tommie Smith and John Carlos made history. Although they won the gold and bronze medals, respectively, in the 200-meter dash, their athletic accomplishments were overshadowed by their silent protest during the medal ceremony. Images of Smith and Carlos each holding up a single, closed, gloved fist have become iconic reminders of the Civil Rights movement. What met the two men after their protest was criticism from the press, primarily sportswriters. This article examines media coverage of the protest and its aftermath, and looks at how reporters dealt with Smith's and Carlos's political and racial statement within the context of the overall coverage of the Olympic Games.

On the night of October 16, 1968, at the Olympic Games in Mexico City, U.S. sprinter Tommie Smith set a world record for the 200-meter dash by finishing in 19.8 seconds. The gold medal winner celebrated in a joyous embrace of fellow Olympian, college team-mate, and good friend, John Carlos, who won the bronze medal. However, Smith and Carlos had something other than athletic accolades or the spoils of victory on their minds. In the same year the Beatles topped the charts with the lyrics, “You say you want a revolution? Well, you know, we all want to change the world,” Smith and Carlos sought to use their feats on the track oval to advance the mission of the Olympic Project for Human Rights, a group Smith helped start. The principal driver behind the OPHR was sociologist and college professor Harry Edwards, who

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A ‘Race’ for Equality: Print Media Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Protest by Tommie Smith and John Carlos

By Jason Peterson