

Iron Mike is a changed man

What a difference a month makes. In February, sports fans were moaning because the football season had just finished, and baseball showed no signs of ending the strike or beginning spring training without scabs.

March Madness was still a month away, and the NBA and NHL regular seasons were just warm-ups for their playoffs.

Then, just in the nick of time, two of the world's most recognizable sports figures began comebacks that could dramatically change the sports world.

Almost everybody greeted Michael Jordan back at his lofty perch in the NBA. They cheered wildly in the hope that he would save this fragile organization from the black eyes being delivered by the rash of quadruple-millionaire Jordan wannabes and crybabies who have recently infiltrated the sport.

The other's resurgence has both been hailed by many and protested by others who are objecting to the star status that follows him. But Mike Tyson will bring back a faithful following to a sport that needs its "true" champ to carry the banner again.

Last Saturday at 6:30 in the morning, "Iron Mike" left the Indiana Youth Center, where he was detained for three years on a six-year sentence for raping beauty pageant contestant Desiree Washington.

Some women's rights groups are loudly protesting the fact that people still feel Tyson is a hero because of what he did in the past. His marauding style of completely devouring his opponents and leaving them a pile of broken flesh in the ring has thrilled our hearts and showed us how tough a human being can be.

But the advocates also like to



Robb Goff

point to the past to find his faults. There's little doubt that Tyson, in his youth, was an equally aggressive bully out of the ring. He was known to hit and push around his ex-wife, actress Robin Givens.

It is true that Tyson was found guilty by a jury of his peers and sentenced to six years for his crime. He served half of that sentence and was released for good behavior; he will be on probation for the next four years. But what's important is that Tyson is a free man after paying his debt to society, and we should let him be just that.

But as we all know our media so well, that simple and polite task just won't happen. He will be watched, scrutinized, cheered and jeered on his journey back from the lower depths to his past place in history.

Current speculation has it that Tyson will spend a few months getting back in touch with society and then begin to train for his long-awaited comeback. The rumor mill has begun to churn news that he will fight in July against a journeyman punching bag who'll get his 15 minutes of fame before the fight begins, then about 15 seconds more before Tyson reconstructs his face.

The big payday, however, is and will be looming in the future. A prospective \$100 million purse could be waiting for Tyson if and when he decides to take on the imposters who currently hold his crown. Most experts say that

Tyson's take could be somewhere near the \$50 to \$55 million range.

That's right, \$55 million for knockin' the snot out of some guy. Even if he loses, he'll still get the nice paycheck. Heck, even I would step in the ring with him for a few million. It would be more than enough to cover the plastic surgery on my nose, and I would still have plenty of pocket change.

But what is really important is that current whippersay that Tyson is a changed man, not like the overbearing brute he once was.

He reads constantly, has recited poetry with Maya Angelou and has converted to Islam. There's even current speculation that he will change his name to Malik Abdul Aziz. Not the sort of name that strikes fear in the hearts of his opponents, like Iron Mike, but this is the new Mike Tyson and he deserves a shot at life in society without the hounds dogging him everywhere he goes.

People do change, and past mistakes can be forgiven. That is what a fair and trusting society should allow its members to do. Tyson made a mistake, and he paid his price. Now let's let him do what he does best: bash the brains out of individuals.

That may sound barbaric, but our society loves it, thrives on it, craves it. All you have to do is look at some of the television shows and movies currently circulating through our society. The American people like staged violence and all the aggressive brutality that comes out of it. And frankly, there is no one better than Tyson to deliver those goods to us.

Welcome back Mike. You've been sorely missed.

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Welfare reform idle as blame game lasts

All right, I will admit to a certain amount of pleasure in seeing the Contract negotiations break down. There was something smug about the claims of the Newt kids on the block that they would wing through all the social problems of our era in a hundred days — soaring across great cultural divides into blissful new territories.

In the middle of the flight pattern, some of the passengers started to have second thoughts about the crew. One morning, Americans looked up at each other over the breakfast table saying, "Hon, do you remember voting against the school lunch program?" "No, sweetie, was it on the ballot?"

School lunch, food stamps, block grants, big cuts. By the time welfare reform got to the House floor, the nice, safe voter demand to "do something about welfare" had turned into anxiety about what actually was being done. The country began wondering if the Republicans even knew what they were doing.

Maybe the folks who wrote the Contract hadn't exactly figured out how the government could reduce the number of children born out of wedlock while also reducing abortions. Or how to come down hard on poor mothers while lifting their kids up. Or how to get more mothers to work without paying a whole lot more for child care. And by the way, what about health insurance?

Finally it seemed that Democrats had found their voice — a yell — with Rep. Sam Gibbons claiming the right "to be as petulant as I want to be." Republicans were fighting with each other over abortion and fighting with Democrats over their reputation. Things got so bad for the Republicans last Wednesday that they sent their gentler and kinder female House members out to talk to the media as mothers and teachers, with Rep. Deborah Pryce of Ohio asking, "Now, do we look like ogres?"

You could hear the breakfast talk on Thursday morning: "Hon, do you remember voting for an ogre?" "No, sweetie, was there one on the ballot?"

But despite my good cheer at this comeuppance, I have a little trouble remaining uplifted by a debate about which plan is cruelest. We're now witnessing a shouting contest between those who say the current welfare system is what's really meant to kids and those who say the Republican overhaul is what's truly mean.

Well, really, truly, and without



Ellen Goodman

being petulant, I think there's more agreement in the public than in Congress. Two years ago, the reformers in the Clinton administration thought that a deal had been brokered between liberals and conservatives.

Liberals were finally admitting that welfare should be temporary and welfare mothers should be directed toward work. Conservatives were finally admitting that it would take money to make the transition.

The Clinton plan was tough. It placed a time limit of two years for most families on welfare. It proposed to cap payments so that there wouldn't be more money for a child born while the mother was on welfare. But in return, it promised a serious increase in child care and in training and jobs. Instead of a handout, as they said over and over again, a hand-up.

There was a lot of grumbling among liberal Democrats who called this a Republican plan. The conservative Republicans thought Clinton was doing their act.

But then the far right decided to out-tough the administration. The current Republican plan not only cuts off cash payments to mothers under 18, but rolls welfare into a block grant of social programs, cuts the funds, drops the whole thing on the states' doorsteps and walks away.

The idea of reforming welfare has become a plan to slash it. The goal of changing lives has become a plan to save money. And the public is getting belatedly uneasy about whacking away at the poorest and youngest.

So now the Republicans are in a contest with the Democrats to determine who's the cruelest of them all. The good news is that both sides are worrying about appearing too mean to the poor, instead of worrying about appearing tough enough. The bad news is we're back in the blame game.

"Hon, do you remember voting for the blame game?"

"Sweetie, maybe that'll be on the ballot next time."

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Lauck only tip of Nazi iceberg

Ask most Americans about Nebraska, and they'll tell you one of three things: We have a good football team; we have a lot of cornfields; or we're a big state north of Canada.

Ask most Germans about Nebraska, and they might say the same things. Chances are, however, that they'll tell you Nebraska is home to Gerhard Lauck, neo-Nazi hate-broker extraordinaire.

Since the early 1970s, Lauck has manufactured and distributed Nazi propaganda from his home base here in Lincoln. In recent years, business has been booming. German police estimate that up to 70 percent of all crimes involving Nazi paraphernalia in Germany can be traced to Lauck. Because Lauck is protected in America by the First Amendment and because he generally does not deliver his goods to Germany himself, German police have been powerless to stop him.

Last week, Germany stepped up its pursuit of Lauck, issuing arrest warrants through Interpol to 15 countries where Lauck was believed to have contacts.

It worked.

Last Thursday, it was reported that Lauck had been arrested in Denmark and that the German government would be beginning the extradition process.

Good news?

Not really.

While it is true that Lauck has been in almost constant violation of German law for 20 years and that his work is an embarrassment to America and an affront to civilized society, one fact stands out.

The arrest and imprisonment of



Doug Peters

Gerhard Lauck will not make things better — it may make things worse.

Lauck is not the only person on earth who claims the Holocaust never existed. He is not the only person who believes in the superiority of the German "race." He is not the only person capable of supplying German neo-Nazis with swastika flags and "Jews go home" bumper stickers.

He is, however, a martyr for his cause.

Rather than being some racist jerk who knows how to run a printing press, Lauck has been transformed into a dangerous criminal mastermind intent on bringing down the Federal Republic of Germany and reinventing Nazism. His clout among his colleagues has been increased hundredfold by the very people who have worked to bring him down.

Lauck will serve his time in a German prison, just as other neo-Nazis have. He will then be released to return to the underground. His reputation enhanced by his incarceration, Lauck will attract donors sympathetic to the cause.

Then he will "Seig Heil" and goose step all the way to the bank.

Hate exists with or without Gerhard Lauck and his publishing

house. He didn't create it; he just marketed it. The elimination of buttons and banners will not eliminate the feelings that caused them to be produced.

The hate, not the symbols of the hate, is the problem.

Since 1990, there have been thousands of violent crimes committed by German neo-Nazis. More than 30 people have been killed in these attacks. As far as I know, none of the victims were killed by rolled-up propaganda posters or bludgeoned by stacks of "Great Hitler Speeches" cassette tapes. On the contrary, they have been stomped to death, burned to death and thrown off balconies.

Gerhard Lauck is a twisted, hateful person. What he does and what he stands for makes me ill. Getting him out of Lincoln and into jail is a great step for the Germans and for us here in Nebraska. However, you can't kill a dandelion by cutting off the bloom. You have to put it out by the roots.

Gerhard Lauck is not the roots of the neo-Nazi movement.

If members of the international community are serious about tackling the neo-Nazi threat, they will concern themselves with the firebombing, brick-throwing, immigrant-stomping thugs who have plagued Germany for the past several years. They should find these people, arrest them and prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law.

Instead, they are slapping high fives over the capture of a guy who makes videotapes and posters.

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Mike Luckovich