

Power politics

Giving government qualities similar to sports could improve public's interest



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The smell of Papa John's floats through the air. Everyone's gathered around the TV, waiting with eager anticipation.

It's Monday night, and ABC has started broadcasting its newest sport to keep its precious football viewers. The fast-paced musical score accompanies the wild graphics explosion on screen. And I can hear the words below from the rugged Hank Williams Jr. in the familiar tune:

Are you ready for impeachment?

Al and Dan are there to comment on the proceedings, live from the Capitol. Sidebar analysts contribute from the Senate floor, former politicians detail pre-trial outlines of strategy; who knows, Vegas may even put out a line between the Republicans and Democrats!

OK, maybe not. There won't be any dancing cheerleaders between sessions, and if the President *does* get removed from office, there really aren't any goalposts for the Republicans to tear down.

But if the Senate decides to proceed with a full trial, politics may become more of a sport than it already is. Not a sport that is reserved for the rich and elite, but a sport for the common American. Everyone may not be a politician, but we can follow politics. This trial may be just the thing the United States needs to see how similar politics and sport actually are.

Politics has sides. Our storied parties are rich in history and rivalry. They have battled for decades through long struggles. It's like the Chiefs and Raiders in pro football — when these heads clash, something big is going to happen.

The parties are staunchly separat-

ed in ideology; time after time throughout this century the wide disparity has been shown. The debate over impeachment has only strengthened the divisiveness between the parties. The whole issue is almost strictly divided on the basis of party line, so it's easy to tell who is against whom. Americans can easily identify with the economically conservative, family-values preaching, bolster-the-military Republicans, or the big-government, environmentally protective, socially liberal Democrats. Throw in a dark horse like the Libertarians or Reform Party, and we've got a competitive league.

Politics has characters. No one would like the NBA if the fans didn't know the players. Fans want to get to know who the competitors are and what they're like. People want to know what makes these celebs tick, how they view life, what their hobbies are and why they do what they do.

Our politicians definitely wouldn't get elected if their constituencies couldn't find out what the candidates were really like. But most Americans barely know anything about their own congressmen, better yet the interesting players throughout the country.

People like Deion Sanders' cockiness and flashy style; why not get interested in J.C. Watts and his vocality and spunk?

Everyone wants some kind of hero — someone they want to be like,

someone with whom they have something in common. From Henry Hyde all the way to President Clinton, our officials have personalities and characteristics with which Americans can associate.

Politics has surprises. What's the most exciting part of sports? The stuff we can't predict. Onside kick recoveries, pitchers hitting homers, half-court buzzer-beaters, interceptions, steals and especially underdog wins. Right now is the most surprising time in politics since Watergate at least. Who would have imagined seven years ago that we would end up impeaching a president for only the second time in our nation's history? Or that the speaker of the House would resign after election, only to

wrestler for leadership! If politics isn't surprising, I don't know what is.

Politics has winners and losers. Society likes closure, outcome, some type of result. In the grand game of politics, some come out ahead, some don't. All of the campaigning, the polls, Sunday morning talk show banter, debate on the floor — it all is summed up with elections.

The officials who have done well during their terms can come back, signed to another contract, so to speak. Those who had off years full of mistakes head back to their legal practices and offices. Granted, watching live result updates of the '98 election won't be exciting as the Super

And that's the one thing every sport strives to obtain: fan interaction. That's the one thing politics truly embodies. Politics has become the pastime that it is only because we, as citizens, choose to vote and elect each year.

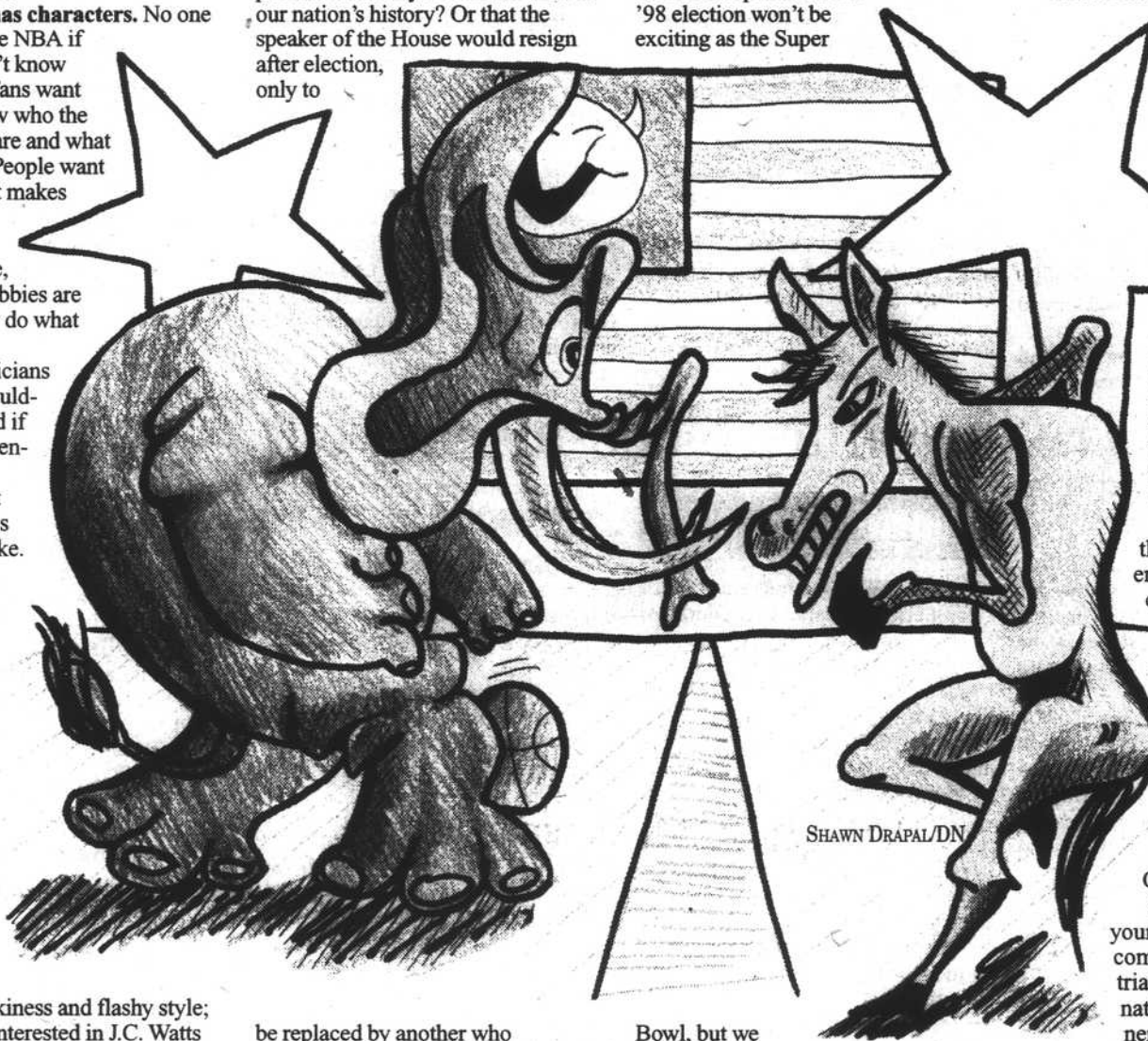
The NBA can cancel half a season and still get by. But if the United States as a whole decided not to participate in elections, just for one November, the country would not be able to function. The government needs us because we are the government, this is our league, with our rules.

But we seem to be as interested in politics as we are in hockey. People respect the sport and know the basics, but really don't follow it closely. But if the impeachment saga is good for anything, it'll actually spark interest in govern-

ment. Sure, impeaching the prez has made us the laughing stock of the world, and brokers are praying this mess doesn't ruin the economy, but it has to have an upside.

America will find things wrong with government and want to change them. People will discover an issue they feel strongly about, or hear the ideas of a senator from another state and check out his back-ground. Take a poli sci class, watch C-SPAN, just vote!

So as Hank says, get all your rowdy friends to come over and follow the trial. It's not too often a nation hits a deep political nerve like ours has, so we better take advantage of the positive side of this ordeal while we can.



SHAWN DRAPAL/DN

be replaced by another who would resign before taking the post? A state of more than 5 million supposedly sane people is looking to a

Bowl, but we can still sit in front of the tube and see if our favorite guy won.

Pride and perceptions

Media's double standard toward women's appearances unjust



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Jennifer Lopez has a "colossal behind." Christina Ricci is "defiantly pudgy." Alicia Silverstone has "chubby arms."

These are the words of the all-knowing women's fashion publication W. They come from an article whose cover teaser was lovingly, tactfully penned, "Living Large: Fat is Back."

The article talked about how this winter "it's hip to be hippy." As opposed, of course, to the spring season, in which it will be trendy to be devastatingly thin again. Thank God things will be back to normal soon. The magazines just aren't the same without Kate and Shalom on every other page.

What's that? You've become tired

of seeing models who look like starving, anemic children? You're ready to see women who look like women, not prepubescent 11-year-olds? Hmm. I'm not sure I understand you. I guess I'm just fine with the "bony look" that Calista Flockhart captures so well.

Somebody slap me, please. I think I've completely lost my grip on reality. What would possess me to think this way? Could it be what's on TV, or the magazines I've been reading for the last 10 years? Nah. They tell nothing but the truth. Or at least that's what the general public seems to think.

I have a feeling that most women, including myself, have lost their grip on reality when it comes to the female form. OK, so that's kind of a "duh" statement. Most of us know by now that models and actresses are thinner than 97 percent of the female population. I'm just wondering if this bothers anyone anymore.

Apparently, the media are trying to prove to the masses that it bothers them, but I'm not sure it's working.

"Baywatch" is said to be considering a fuller-figured female lifeguard to offset the show's traditional lineup of silicone-laden starlets. Camryn Manheim of "The Practice" won an Emmy and dedicated it "to all the fat girls." The magazine for fuller-figured

glamour, Mode, is making its way into more and more women's homes each month.

But are these happenings making as much of an impact as people are saying? I'll go back to the "Living Large" piece to see if it has the answer.

Seemingly well-meaning, it acknowledges that more women can identify with Kirstie Alley and Queen Latifah than Barbie, er, Pamela Anderson Lee. It recognizes the fact that women like these deserve their rightful spot on the stage and screen and are getting more positive exposure than ever.

Now let's look at the rest of the magazine. Maybe this is an unfounded gut reaction, but it certainly appears to me that these writers are full of crap.

Leaf through the issue, and you'll find nothing but the thinnest of the thin. There are no size 12's sprawled out on lounge chairs in swimsuits or gliding across the floor in voluminous ball gowns. There are no females with curves anywhere but these two pages. Funny, huh? I thought so.

I'm wondering this: Why in the world would a women's magazine make such an effort to say that women don't need to be skinny to be successful, but then proceed to make

absolutely no effort to demonstrate it themselves? If you haven't noticed, it's a double standard that's been going on for a few years, and it's shooting itself in the foot.

Magazines like Mode are being celebrated by women everywhere because they're making valid attempts to show that women are beautiful, no matter what size dress they wear. But more popular magazines such as Vogue and Elle have no qualms about showing unrealistic images, in terms of female body size, on their pages, and they are regarded as the bibles of the fashionable set.

So, who's right?

I hope it's whoever sends the healthiest message. But the healthiest message isn't always the one that people are bombarded with. It's easier to remember something you've seen 1,000 times than something you've glanced at once. I'll bet people remember Kate Moss' Calvin Klein ads a lot more readily than they remember Manheim's acceptance speech.

It stinks, but it's reality. The question lies in whether our reality will be changing any time soon, or if this is just another passing fad in the industries of magazines, movies and television.

Interestingly enough, it's never

been a fad on the male side of things. Men like Danny DeVito and Marlon Brando have been working pretty consistently in entertainment even though they're not exactly the buffest things alive. Tabloids don't freak out when Jack Nicholson gains five pounds.

So why is it such a big deal when Oprah does?

The women of the world need to learn to be OK with themselves, and when they do, things will be right on. That's not likely to happen, though, until the media really make a solid effort to represent reality. True reality, not "we think Kate Winslet is plus-sized" reality.

These magazines and TV shows thrive because we eat up their idealizations. But they aren't law, and we don't have to subscribe to what they preach.

Some words of wisdom: *It's not normal to be shaped like Tyra Banks, and you and I don't need to work out for six hours every day to feel good about ourselves.* Don't pass judgment on your fellow woman because she's bigger than you, and don't think you're less of a person because you're not a size 4. Screw the magazines, and embrace the things that you find beautiful. Including yourself.