

DAN PRICE    AIRS: 1/26/12    OBSESSION  
w/SPORTS

Yesterday I was eating lunch at Ritas with our church Youth Director and the conversation turned to certain families that tend to go missing from our youth programs during the fall for football, and for winter during the basketball season. We talked about the American obsession with sports and concluded that WE have gone way over the top with the time and energy we put into sports.

Perhaps the nadir of sports fanaticism was displayed after last Sunday's playoff game between the 49ers and the NY Giants. As most know by now, 49er punt receiver Kyle Williams fumbled twice in last Sunday's playoff game, which helped lead to the Niner's loss and spoiled their chance at playing in another Super bowl. What is more shocking than Williams two untimely turnovers are the responses of fans who want to kill him! Literally!

Someone, presumably a 49ers fan, tweeted: "I hope you, your wife, kids and family die, you deserve it" Another wished Williams died in his sleep Sunday night.

Kyle Williams' father is Kenny Williams, who is general manager of the Chicago White Sox. He told ESPN: "I'm used to the years of criticism and threats on my life from time to time, but I have to hear about threats on your son's life while you're watching TV and it certainly makes you question our culture of sports as it stands,"

Our culture of sports *is* questionable as it stands: I believe American sports today has reached a point of diminishing returns for countless kids throughout the country and the sooner parents realize this the better. Why?

1. Our overemphasis on winning has gone to an extreme: Vicarious identification with winners is causing a lot of American males to care more about a bunch of guys throwing a dead pigskin to and fro, than they care about almost anything: like job, family, education, values, and personal fitness. We are becoming like the bored masses of ancient Rome who quelled their boredom by going to the Coliseum to watch the gladiators battle each other to the death: they too, were enamored with winners and disgusted with losers.. High-pressure sports is much like the old time battlefields where victors enjoy the spoils of war! The vanquished get death or slavery.

2. Our overemphasis on spectating has made us lazy.

We should all *do* sports and watch them a lot less. Turn off the TV and jog around the block. Or go hiking, or fishing or surfing. We may lack the physique of those highly paid athletes, but at least the body you are exercising is your own. Physical motion is a part of being alive, and living through some professional athlete on a glowing TV screen has made us sedentary and secluded: cut off from nature, our own body and each other.

3. Under emphasis on studying. In Europe it is rare to find any sports connected with schools.

True, they love their soccer, but the sports activities are all sponsored by clubs and therefore the primary concern for schools is learning, not football or soccer. Today sport has become the tail wagging the dog as many schools live and die with their sports fortunes, and learning has become almost ancillary.

Contrary to the sports fanatics who think otherwise: the 49er's loss last Sunday was not a matter of life and death; it was only a game! Games should be fun, nothing less, but nothing more.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment