

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

NFL Players And Character Issues

STAR TRIBUNE, Minneapolis (Sept. 20): If there's an upside to the Adrian Peterson situation, or, for that matter, to the seemingly endless police blotter of NFL players arrested in connection with domestic violence, aggravated assault, drunken driving, drug and gun violations, and other serious offenses, it is this: More people are seeing the NFL with eyes wide open, and that's a good thing.

It's not that professional football is without value to society or the economy. The game has, over the last five decades, embedded itself into the national character to the point that it defines Sunday afternoon (not to mention Sunday, Thursday and Monday nights) in tens of millions of homes. Two-thirds of Americans watch the games on TV. Having an NFL team heightens your city's identity, and the economic spillover is considerable. The league generates nearly \$10 billion a year, making it the world's most successful sports enterprise.

At its best, football brings individuals and communities together, reuniting old friends and introducing new ones in ways that strengthen the social fabric. And some players and coaches truly are exemplary public figures and community leaders.

But contrary to what today's TV ratings may indicate, the NFL is not too big to fail, especially if its darker side continues to gain the upper hand.

Since January 2000, there have been 732 arrests (involving 539 NFL players) in connection with various crimes ranging from disorderly conduct to murder. That's out of a pool of 1,700 players at any given moment. Over that span of years, the Vikings have led the league in arrested players — 44.

That's a scandalous amount of police activity for a team and for a league that tries to portray all of its players as model citizens.

But how to crack down? The NFL and its teams face a conundrum. Theirs is a violent game, and getting more so. The increase over the years in velocity and physical impact has been remarkable. Players are handsomely rewarded for the violence they inflict and absorb. It's not surprising, then, that among those people who football attracts are those who may find it difficult to turn off the violence and intimidation when dealing with ordinary life.

Every NFL team has its share of bad actors. The basic problem is that high moral character doesn't win football games. As long as winning at any cost remains the overwhelming priority, the game will continue its downward slide. Women will continue to turn away. More and more families will forbid sons to play football. The NFL will become eventually a base amusement for society's lowest rung. Commissioner Roger Goodell should remember that the sport of boxing once held mass appeal.

For the NFL to sustain its popularity, Goodell, team owners and the players association should convene a blue-ribbon commission to establish a fair, consistent and transparent set of behavior standards. It should be clear to everyone what actions the league will take when a player is charged, when he's indicted and when he's convicted.

Standards should be augmented by rigorous education on what it means to be a public figure and a solid citizen. Salary structures and player evaluations should include components that reward good character.

THE VIEWS PAGE

■ The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** Views page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed editorials represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the **PRESS & DAKOTAN**. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We welcome letters to the editor on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at views@yankton.net.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, Sept. 25, the 268th day of 2014. There are 97 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Sept. 25, 1789, the first United States Congress adopted 12 amendments to the Constitution and sent them to the states for ratification. (Ten of the amendments became the Bill of Rights.)

On this date: In 1513, Spanish explorer Vasco Nunez de Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama and sighted the Pacific Ocean.

In 1690, one of the earliest American newspapers, *Publick Occurrences*, published its first — and last — edition in Boston.

In 1775, American Revolutionary War hero Ethan Allen was captured by the British as he led an attack on Montreal. (Allen was released by the British in 1778.)

In 1904, a New York City police officer ordered a female automobile passenger on Fifth Avenue to stop smoking a cigarette. (A male companion was arrested and later fined \$2 for "abusing" the officer.)

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson collapsed after a speech in Pueblo, Colorado, during a national speaking tour in support of the Treaty of Versailles.

In 1932, the Spanish region of Catalonia received a Charter of Autonomy (however, the Charter was revoked by Francisco Franco at the end of the Spanish Civil War).

In 1957, nine black students who'd been forced to withdraw from Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, because of unruly white crowds were escorted to class by members of the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division.

In 1964, the situation comedy "Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.," starring Jim Nabors, premiered on CBS-TV.

In 1974, Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Tommy John underwent an experimental graft reconstruction of the ulnar collateral ligament in the elbow of his throwing arm to repair a career-ending injury; the procedure, which proved successful, is now referred to as "Tommy John surgery."

In 1978, 144 people were killed when a Pacific Southwest Airlines Boeing 727 and a private plane collided over San Diego.

In 1981, Sandra Day O'Connor was sworn in as the first female justice on the Supreme Court.

In 1994, Russian President Boris Yeltsin began a five-day swing through the United States as he arrived in New York, hoping to encourage American investment in his country's struggling economy.

Ten years ago: U.S. warplanes, tanks and artillery repeatedly hit at

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's terror network in the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah, Iraq. Billionaire oilman, philanthropist and onetime Fox studios owner Marvin Davis died in Beverly Hills, California, at age 79.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, in Pittsburgh for a G-20 summit, accused Iran of constructing a secret underground uranium enrichment facility and hiding its existence from international inspectors for years. Former Democratic Party chairman Paul G. Kirk Jr. stepped in as the temporary replacement in the Senate for his longtime friend, the late Edward Kennedy. Classical pianist Alicia de Larrocha, 86, died in Barcelona, Spain.

One year ago: Nearly a dozen of Syria's powerful rebel factions, including one linked to al-Qaida, formally broke with the main opposition group in exile and called for Islamic law in the country, dealing a severe blow to the Western-backed coalition. Skipper Jimmy Spithill and Oracle Team USA won the America's Cup with one of the greatest comebacks in sports history, speeding past Dean Barker and Emirates Team New Zealand in the winner-take-all Race 19 on San Francisco Bay.

Today's Birthdays: Broadcast journalist Barbara Walters is 85. Folk singer Ian Tyson is 81. Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates is 71. Actor Josh Taylor is 71. Actor Robert Walden is 71. Actor-producer Michael Douglas is 70. Model Cheryl Tiegs is 67. Actress Mimi Kennedy is 65. Actor-director Anson Williams is 65. Actor Mark Hamill is 63. Basketball Hall of Famer Bob McAdoo is 63. Polka bandleader Jimmy Sturr is 63. Actor Colin Friels is 62. Actor Michael Madsen is 56. Actress Heather Locklear is 53. Actress Aida Turturro is 52. Actor Tate Donovan is 51. TV personality Keely Shaye Smith is 51. Basketball Hall of Famer Scottie Pippen is 49. Actor Jason Flemyng is 48. Actor Will Smith is 46. Actor Hal Sparks is 45. Actress Catherine Zeta-Jones is 45. Rock musician Mike Lucre (Drowning Pool) is 43. Actress Bridgette Wilson-Sampras is 41. Actress Clea DuVall is 37. Actor Robbie Jones is 37. Actor Joel David Moore is 37. Actor Chris Owen is 34. Rapper T.I. is 34. Actor Van Housen is 33. Actor Lee Norris is 33. Actor/rapper Donald Glover (AKA Childish Gambino) is 31. Singer Diana Ortiz (Dream) is 29. Actress Emmy Clarke is 23.

Thought for Today: "The richer your friends, the more they will cost you." — Elisabeth Marbury, American writer (1856-1933).

FROM THE BIBLE

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. 2 Timothy 1:5. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



MAKE
BY THE ARTIST CHARLIE O'NEAL
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Writer's Block

A Real 'Arabian' Tale

BY JIM VAN OSDEL

For the Press & Dakotan

"George Bush should have been tied to a tree and made to watch 'Lawrence of Arabia' three times before making the decision to invade Iraq."

That was my quote in 2003 and I stand by it, even though Obama should be better able to contemplate what these people are thinking than was George Bush.

Then there were folks who could not comprehend the gist of Doug Sall's fine letter to the editor in the July 1 *Press & Dakotan*. I said it was an excellent letter and that folks should refer to my comment of 2003.

Think back to the great movie of 1962 (yes, it was that long ago) when T.E. Lawrence, played brilliantly by Peter O'Toole, amazingly convinced several tribes of what was then called Arabia to make the treacherous march across a barren desert to take the port city of Aqaba from the Turks and Germans.

The tribes were overjoyed with their English leader when they achieved their triumphant victory over their enemies and marched into Aqaba. But then the tribes fell back into their old ways, many centuries of fighting among themselves, in trying to determine who would operate which facilities of the city.

It appears only a strong-willed leader can control these tribes. Remember when Tito was replaced in Yugoslavia? Civil war came about.

Once again, without watching the movie, American leaders are trying to impose their will upon those tribes who have fought among themselves for a thousand years. Get out now.

A couple years ago, the Yankton Community Library acquired a book called "Hero" by Michael Korda. His work is compiled primarily from T. E. Lawrence' own manuscript, over which he had worked laboriously for 10 years or so.

If you wish to know more about this "Lawrence of Arabia" character or if you are looking for a book to take your mind off your troubles, this is the one for you. This is a book of more than 900 pages and makes a great read.

T.E. Lawrence was a very interesting character himself. He showed great promise as an archaeologist at Oxford. He was sent to "Arabia" where he acquired considerable items of antiquity. This is the era when the Pyramids were being explored, financed by Lord Carnaevan whose great mansion is now the great topic of public television popularity on Sunday evenings, starting again this fall season.

But the Turks and Germans interrupted rail service, so Lawrence called upon a friend for help. Soon three English battleships arrived at the port to bring T. E. Lawrence and his treasure trove of souvenirs home to England. Lawrence, obviously, had friends in high places.

YOUR LETTERS

Water Talk

Pam Koch, Fordyce, Neb.

We all know how important water conservation is, just ask Californians. Seniors, like me, who live on a rural homestead, are acutely aware of it as it is our only source of water for everything.

Some of these wells stretch down for miles and some only a few hundred feet, but they all have one thing in common, they have a bottom.

We do not know where that bottom is; however, that does not mean we take it for granted.

With more and more irrigation guzzlers rising up to mar our perfect landscape, we wonder, how long will this one well last and are those systems leaching off of our well?

Now before the farmers start writing, I am neither against nor for irrigation, it has its place. The economy and poor crop years have caused the need for these. I live across the road from a system as well as being surrounded by them.

As I was watering gardens at the beginning of spring, I came to the realization that I could do my part.

I bought a wheeled cooler and used the hose to fill it, used my arms and legs to get there, back and waist to pour the ice cream buckets of water on the flowers and I walk with a cane! My front yard is the size of a base-

ball field, so it's a workout. I was doing two good things at once, conserving water and getting my exercise — no end to the benefits for that!

If you just take a little extra time (if you are retired, you have that) and a little effort, instead of buying a lighter hose, get a wheeled cooler.

Another benefit is my flowers get the water direct and it is stress-relieving. Another health benefit!

So, I guess, if we all do our part, small though it may be, we can save some of that free, clear liquid, so it's around for many generations to come!

When the British army needed help fighting the Germans and Turks, they recruited a diminutive giant who assimilated himself to the tribesmen of "Arabia" with his horsemanship, marksmanship, willingness to walk barefoot in the blazing desert sands and to eat as sparingly as they.

Then he taught them something that has killed many Americans: improvised explosive devices.

Lawrence became disheartened with the British Army because he rightly felt the tribes had been taken advantage of through him. So he returned to England.

What to do with himself? Go into the service? But he did not like the drab British military uniform and he set his cap for the blue uniform of the Air Corps. But the stuffy brass in the Air Corps did not want him. He was too small. At just 5 feet, 5 inches tall, T.E. Lawrence did not "fit the bill." Again,

just like the quiz show, he called a friend. His friends were as interesting as was Lawrence, himself. At a cocktail party, his friend Lady Astor, temporarily miffed at Churchill, said, "If I was married to you, Winston, I would put poison in your brandy." To which Churchill replied, "If I was, indeed, married to you, I would drink it."

This time his friend, Winston Churchill, was not in charge of the British naval forces but was superintendent of the entire British military, Army, Navy, Marines and, yes, the Air Corps.

Churchill then made a call to the Air Corps commandant who quickly issued an invitation to Lawrence to don his favorite blue uniform. But envy prevailed and the diminutive friend of the desert tribesmen was sent to work on boats and motors, which he immediately noticed were in need of repair.

Lawrence redesigned the boats and rebuilt the engines. These much more speedy craft were put into use 15 years later when they were used to rescue downed pilots in the English Channel after being shot down defending England from German aircraft in World War II.

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ELECTION LETTERS

■ With the election season here, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** has decided that all political letters received as of Sept. 9 will only run for a fee. All letters will be referred to the advertising department, and author will be given the option of paying to have the letter printed in its entirety elsewhere in the newspaper. Send your letters or questions to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email us at views@yankton.net.

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PRESS & DAKOTAN LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor and asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less.

Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

■ Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email us at views@yankton.net.