

Violent fans prove sports too important

The Wide World of Sports has always been a brutal place.

Week after week, millions of Americans tune in to watch formalized violence. Sure, violence isn't usually the objective of sports — boxing being a notable exception — but it is an accepted element of many of the most popular and most revered athletic activities we take part in.

However, the biggest news story in sports these days has nothing to do with the traditionally violent games of football and hockey. Instead, it concerns the attack last week on figure skater Nancy Kerrigan, which left her unable to compete in the Olympic trials against rival Tonya Harding.

The new wrinkle in the story, however, is the link that drawn between that attack and Harding's husband and bodyguard. The FBI is investigating charges that the two men hired an Arizona "hit man" to injure Kerrigan in order to ensure Harding's national championship.

No evidence so far has surfaced to indicate that Harding herself had any knowledge of the alleged plan, but even if the two men acted alone, it darkens the world of sports just the same.

Since it broke, the Kerrigan/Harding story has been compared to the stabbing of tennis star Monica Seles at a tournament last year. In that case, the guilty party was a psychotic fan of Steffi Graf, who wanted Seles out of the way so Graf could once again assume the world's number-one ranking.

The comparison will be especially appropriate if it turns out that Harding's associates did in fact arrange the attack on Kerrigan. It'll just be another case of a fan (husbands and bodyguards are fans, too) who takes the sport way too seriously.

But why should our society be so disturbed by the attacks on Seles and Kerrigan? Thousands of more grievous assaults and murders are committed every day, for reasons just as trivial — like stealing the victim's shoes.

The fact that Seles and Kerrigan are celebrities certainly has something to do with it. Even if you don't know much about either sport, their names are familiar. After all, they were both No. 1.

There might be a little more concern for them because they're women, too, and because they compete in sports that involve no violence at all, except for falling down. How many barroom brawls have football and baseball players been wounded in, where no one raised an eyebrow? Probably a lot more than we know.

It's ironic that our society embraces violence in some contexts, but abhors it in others. It would be premature to declare these two incidents of off-the-field sports violence as a trend. We must admit that the attacks on Seles and Kerrigan are the acts of a few fanatics, not representative of the average sports enthusiast.

Still, we need to consider whether our society, by giving sports such a high priority, are partially to blame for these incidents. Sports are a big deal because we make them a big deal. It's a shame that a few crazies out there think that "Who's number one?" is such an important question that they'll go out and maim someone just so they can determine the answer.



OPINION

Bobbitt is back, at least reattached



ROBBIE REEVES

OK, OK, I can't resist. I didn't plan on writing this column, but the Bobbitts are back in the news, and I couldn't let them go unscathed. After all, how many stories are there in the news as outrageous as this one?

As just about everyone knows by now, John and Lorena Bobbitt, once a happily married couple, made headlines during the past few months for a passionate night that didn't quite end that way.

John Bobbitt, as the story goes, went to bed one night with Lorena and wanted to have sex then and there. And so they had sex, except that Lorena claimed she didn't really want to have sex.

Lorena complained to her husband, but he apparently didn't really care what she thought about it, as her side of the story goes.

So Lorena did what anyone in that position would naturally do. She went to the kitchen to get a knife and cut off two-thirds of her husband's penis.

She then got in her car and drove away, with penis in hand. She then tossed it out onto a nearby field.

John (after announcing "I've been cut" — the understatement of the year!) was rushed to the hospital by an overnight guest and taken into surgery after losing a significant amount of blood.

The penis was found by police later and successfully reattached to its rightful owner.

Lorena Bobbitt has repeatedly claimed that John abused her a number of times and that the incident of alleged rape on the night in question wasn't the first time he assaulted her.

So Lorena is on trial now, accused of "maliciously wounding" her husband.

The trial looks pretty cut and dried. Everyone stipulates that John was missing his member for several hours on the fateful night, as pictures shown to the Bobbitt trial jury showed.

And no one really questions the fact that Lorena was the perpetrator of this treacherous act.

Then that would make Lorena guilty, right?

Well, maybe not.

Lorena Bobbitt is claiming that after being subjected to repeated abuse by John, she had an "irresistible impulse" to lob off her husband's penis that night.

Wow.

Let me digress here for a second. To be perfectly clear, assaults, including rape, are horrible crimes, and if John is guilty of those, then he should be punished for them.

However, John has already gone on trial for assaulting his wife and was acquitted of those charges this past fall.

Lorena might have been justified to have injured her husband (in a less malicious way) to defend herself against unwanted sex while John was making overtures to it.

However, it seems like a stretch for her to claim innocence on the basis of some odd impulse she felt that she had to act on.

Not surprisingly, the Bobbitts are looking to end their marriage at this point. A pretty prudent move, all would agree.

Some of the stuff that happened the night of the injury was weird enough, but the story only gets more interesting.

John Bobbitt has been working the trashy TV talk show circuit. I saw him on some two-day Bobbitt extravaganza on (I think) the *Jenny Jones* show.

Bobbitt was clearly enjoying the show as much as the audience was. He answered a variety of questions, ranging from the obvious (Did you feel any pain?) to the oddball (Have you had sex since the reattachment?). And yes, he tried to have sex afterward. But not with Lorena.

In fact, John has set up a toll-free number to collect donations for his substantial medical and legal bills. In return for a dona-

tion of a certain amount (about \$20), a Bobbitt fan can receive a T-shirt that graphically and illustratively describes his injury. I saw this T-shirt on the show, and I guarantee that you would stand out on campus if you wore one.

The Bobbitt case has inspired a number of other wives to violently rebel against their husbands in rather malicious ways.

Several months ago there was a case in the newspaper of a wife dumping some sort of acid into her husband's "lap." The husband sustained substantial injuries. There have also been sporadic reports of attempted castrations and other wounding incidents.

I would hate to think that this was becoming a trend in America. There are far more civil ways of solving marital problems than by effectively rendering the male partner inoperative.

While John Bobbitt's actions cannot be condoned (if they are true), one has to wonder why Lorena didn't just leave him if things were getting to be so bad.

Rape and assault are serious problems in America. Many women in this country are battered by their spouses on a daily basis, and that is a tragedy something must be done about.

However, Lorena Bobbitt crossed the line. Rather than showing herself as a victim and her husband as a villain, Lorena risks going to jail for 20 years and being deported (she is Ecuadoran), all for acting on her "irresistible impulse." Not a smart thing to do.

If anything good can come out of this (other than the fact that talk shows have booming ratings and that the media can now say "penis"), it might be the fact that assault has come into the spotlight as a societal and criminal problem that needs to be dealt with.

It's now up to the courts to decide just whose assault was the problem, John's or Lorena's.

Meanwhile, it seems that husbands around the country have been served with a warning — either shape up, or else!

Robbie Reeves is a columnist for the Emerald.

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