

February 21, 2018 – OLYMPICS

Mark Rippetoe says it's time to stop the olympic games.

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There are two distinct problems: the Games themselves, and the media coverage of the Games, which shapes the public's perception of everything about them. ...

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... But even more offensive to sensible people everywhere is the abject silliness of the media coverage of the Olympic Games. The focus of the coverage has shifted from the sports and the athletes' performances to the human interest stories that are, at best, extremely peripheral to the contests. My impression, and probably yours too, is that NBC Sports is far more concerned about the uplifting story of the athlete's mother who overcame cancer, the athlete's brother who is overcoming a learning disability, the athlete's gender-fluid husband who is overcoming workplace discrimination, or the athlete's dog who was just yesterday hit by a gas-guzzling SUV driven by a White Man who was on his way to the Board of Directors meeting of a Private Company that contributes to Global Warming than about the athlete's performance in the sport it is ostensibly covering. ...

Matthew Continetti has more on the loathsome media coverage of the games.

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Yeah, right.

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Then the authors let loose this howler: "Seen by some as her brother's answer to American first daughter Ivanka Trump, Kim, 30, is not only a powerful member of Kim Jong Un's kitchen cabinet but also a foil to the perception of North Korea as antiquated and militaristic." Kim's "Kitchen Cabinet"—why, he's just like Andrew Jackson. And how could anyone have the "perception" that North Korea is "antiquated" and "militaristic"? Sure, they might threaten the world with nuclear annihilation. But have you seen Donald Trump's latest tweet? New York Times reporters are either smarter or more efficient than their peers at CNN, because it took only two of them to write "Kim Jong-Un's sister turns on the charm, taking Pence's spotlight." ...

... What most disturbed me was the difference in coverage of Kim Yo Jong and Fred Warmbier, whose son Otto died last year after being tortured and held captive in North Korea. Fred Warmbier accompanied Pence to the Olympics as a reminder of the North's inhumanity and menace. Journalists ignored, dismissed, and even criticized this grieving man. Among many examples of thoughtlessness and callousness was a Politico tweet that read: "Fred Warmbier criticizes North Korean Olympic spirit." He must have missed Kim's freckles. ...

Nothing sums up the phony nature of the olympics better than Ester Leddecka's surprise gold medal. She's a snowboarder and borrowed skis for a slalom event which she won. She did the interview with her googles on. And why you ask? Is she shy? Nope, it was because she did not expect to place well so before the event she didn't put on any make up. You can't make it up!

Starting Strength

[The Olympic Games: Time to Stop](#)

by Mark Rippetoe

The Olympics has turned from a celebration of human physical performance that once transcended global politics and popular culture into a propaganda event for the dominant interpretation of global politics and popular culture. It is no longer about athletics and who wins the athletic competition – it is now concerned with shaping our perceptions of what it means to compete with each other, and why we probably shouldn't celebrate winning at all. It has become an embarrassing mess for the entire human race, and it's time to stop wasting resources, time, and attention span on it.

There are two distinct problems: the Games themselves, and the media coverage of the Games, which shapes the public's perception of everything about them.

The Olympic Games were originally contested in ancient Greece, and consisted of a combination of athletics and equestrian events that derived primarily from the most practical of considerations of physical prowess – warfare. Various footraces, throwing contests, and jumping

events comprised the ancient Games, which were held in the familiar four-year interval for about a thousand years.

Reconstituted in 1894, they have changed quite a bit over the past century. They now include three basic types of contests: 1.) games such as Golf, Baseball, Hockey, Soccer, and Basketball, where the athletes compete within the framework of a "score" generated within the rules of the game; 2.) artistic judged events such as gymnastics and diving, where the athletes attempt to get as close as possible to a standard for the contested movement developed by their governing organization, and judged for conformation to the standard by the consensus opinion of a panel of expert judges and 3.) athletic events such as the races, the heavy field events, and Weightlifting that generate an objective quantitatively measured score, and combat sports such as wrestling and fencing that generate a win or a loss.

Of these three types of contests, the athletics events display the greatest fidelity to the original idea of the Olympic Games. As far as I'm concerned, the addition of men's and women's Golf was the best indication of the developing intent of the IOC.

The arguments against the Olympics are important. The Olympics are no longer the most important event within most of the sports contested. The professional versions of the games events have their own world championships, at which the best athletes compete for Real Money, not just medals. All sports within the International Olympic Committee have their own annual World Championships, meets that happen more frequently than every four years and which form the basis for the training schedules of most athletes.

The Olympic Games are hideously expensive to host, and the taxpayers of the host nation are often left with a burdensome debt and several abandoned facilities for their trouble. In essence, Greece spent billions of dollars it didn't have to build facilities it doesn't need to host a competition for which NBC Sports could sell advertising.

There are basically two types of competitors at the Olympic Games: those who have been caught using performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) and those who have not been caught using PEDs. This is true of all human athletic competition, so somebody please tell Bob Costas that when the stakes are even *marginally* high competitive people will do anything it takes to win.

Is this cheating? I guess this depends on your definition of cheating, and not everybody has the same definition, because the concept itself is quite subjective. If you are offended by the idea that essentially everybody entered in the Olympics every four years has taken or is taking some type of a very wide selection of substances that improve athletic performance, then you'd better find something besides high-level sports to watch. Sorry, but this is the truth of the matter, sincere denials notwithstanding.

Possibly in reaction to this, NBC Sports, the de facto owner of the Olympic Games, just doesn't include the "testosterone" sports in their coverage – unless there is a severe injury that looks very bad (good) on TV. Swimming is fine (no hairy men), all women's sports are fine (no hairy men), gymnastics, ditto (basically a children's sport), skiing is okay (hair doesn't show through lycra), and the equestrian events are just fine (horses are innocent even if hairy). What you will not see are more than one or two Weightlifters, shot-putters, hammer throwers, or discus throwers. Javelins are too pointy, as are epees and sabers, and such weapon-y things are *threatening*. Basically, you get to see activities you would personally enjoy on a Sunday afternoon – you know, wholesome stuff without the slightest whiff of meanness, bullying, or testosterone.

These errors of omission are quite thoroughly intentional, and are designed by the people who present the vast majority of most people's exposure to the Olympics, 99% of whom are not watching the internet feeds. The Media controls the popular culture, and control is, by definition, not accidental. If you lose in the preliminaries of the 100m Freestyle, you get out of the pool and leave, and everybody's fine – you went *swimming*; if you lose in Freestyle Wrestling, you were *beaten*. And we just can't have that.

But even more offensive to sensible people everywhere is the abject silliness of the media coverage of the Olympic Games. The focus of the coverage has shifted from the sports and the athletes' performances to the human interest stories that are, at best, extremely peripheral to the contests. My impression, and probably yours too, is that NBC Sports is far more concerned about the uplifting story of the athlete's mother who overcame cancer, the athlete's brother who is overcoming a learning disability, the athlete's gender-fluid husband who is overcoming workplace discrimination, or the athlete's dog who was just yesterday hit by a gas-guzzling SUV driven by a White Man who was on his way to the Board of Directors meeting of a Private Company that contributes to Global Warming than about the *athlete's* performance in the sport it is ostensibly covering. The feel-good story of two women, one of whom is a rugby player and the other a stadium manager, who got engaged on the field after a rugby game following a two-year romance in Brazil (we seem to know a lot about this) apparently justifies the incessant, annoying, repetitive commercial breaks, which have generated NBC a reported \$1.2 billion in ad sales for the 2016 Games.

The time has come to move past the Olympic Games, and to move past NBC's attempts to use them as a restructuring device for society even while they make billions of dollars in the process. As the internet develops, NBC will become obsolete, but until then, do yourself a big favor and do not allow them to ride the coattails of sports into your brain.

This article originally appeared on PJ Media on August 16, 2016.

Commentary

[The Hack Olympics](#)

by Matthew Continetti

A few days before the Winter Olympics, North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un announced that his sister, Kim Yo Jong, would travel to South Korea as part of his official delegation. Never in the 65 years since the Korean War has a member of the ruling family visited South Korea, which made Kim's journey a historic and newsworthy event. If only the coverage of Kim, a member of the North Korean Politburo and a minister of propaganda, had treated her with the appropriate moral and intellectual seriousness and detachment.

Yeah, right.

What we got instead was a combination of celebrity puffery and partisan cheap shots at the Trump administration. The politics of North and South Korea, and the equally complex and intricate relations between these two countries and China, Japan, Russia, and the United States, were reduced to just another amateur sport. Ignorant and supercilious reporters transposed the clichés of the electoral horse race, complete with winners, losers, buzz, and sick

burns, to nuclear brinkmanship. Major news organizations could not have done Kim's job any better for her.

A representative example was written by no less than seven CNN reporters and researchers who concluded, "Kim Jong Un's sister is stealing the show at the Winter Olympics." The lead of this news article—I repeat, *news* article—was the following: "If 'diplomatic dance' were an event at the Winter Olympics, Kim Jong Un's younger sister would be favored to win gold." Gag me.

Then the authors let loose this howler: "Seen by some as her brother's answer to American first daughter Ivanka Trump, Kim, 30, is not only a powerful member of Kim Jong Un's kitchen cabinet but also a foil to the perception of North Korea as antiquated and militaristic." Kim's "Kitchen Cabinet"—why, he's just like Andrew Jackson. And how could anyone have the "perception" that North Korea is "antiquated" and "militaristic"? Sure, they might threaten the world with nuclear annihilation. But have you seen Donald Trump's latest tweet?

New York Times reporters are either smarter or more efficient than their peers at CNN, because it took only two of them to write "Kim Jong-Un's sister turns on the charm, taking Pence's spotlight." Motoko Rich and Choe Sang-Hun described Kim's "sphinx-like smile" and "no-nonsense hairstyle and dress, her low-key makeup, and the sprinkle of freckles on her cheeks." They contrasted the "old message" of Vice President Pence, who has no freckles, with Kim's "messages of reconciliation." They cited one Mintaro Oba, a "former diplomat at the State Department specializing in the Koreas, who now works as a speechwriter in Washington." What they did not mention is that Oba worked at Barack Obama's State Department and writes speeches for a Democratic firm. Not that he has an axe to grind or anything.

The typical Kim puff piece began with her charm, grace, poise, statesmanship, and desire for unity and peace. Then, 10 paragraphs later, the journalist would mention that oh, by the way, North Korea is a totalitarian hellscape that Kim's family has been plundering for over half a century. For instance, describing the South Korean reaction to Kim, Anna Fifield of the *Washington Post* wrote,

They marveled at her barely-there makeup and her lack of bling. They commented on her plain black outfits and simple purse. They noted the flower-shaped clip that kept her hair back in a no-nonsense style. Here she was, a political princess, but the North Korean "first sister" had none of the hallmarks of power and wealth that Koreans south of the divide have come to expect.

A political princess! It's like *Enchanted*, except with gulags and famine.

Deep in Fifield's article, however, we come across this sentence: "Certainly, Kim, who is under U.S. sanctions for human rights abuses related to her role in censoring information, was treated like royalty during her visit." Just thinking out loud here, but maybe human-rights abuses and censorship deserve more than a glancing reference in a subordinate clause. Fifield went on to say that "Vice President Pence, who was also in South Korea for the opening of the Winter Olympics but studiously avoided Kim, had worried in advance that North Korea would 'hijack' the Olympic Games with its 'propaganda.'" Now where could he have gotten that idea?

The fascination with Kim revealed both the superficiality and condescension of much of our press. Fifield's colleague, national correspondent Philip Bump, tweeted out (and later deleted) a photo of Kim sitting behind Pence at the opening ceremonies with the comment, "Kim Jong Un's sister with deadly side-eye at Pence," as if he were being snarky about an episode of *Real Housewives*.

When Kim departed the Olympics, Christine Kim of Reuters wrote an article headlined, "Head held high, Kim's sister returns to North Korea." Here's how it began:

A prim, young woman with a high forehead and hair half-swept back quietly gazes at the throngs of people pushing for a glimpse of her, a faint smile on her lips and eyelids low as four bodyguards jostle around her.

The Reuters piece ends this way: "Her big smiles and relaxed manner left a largely positive impression on the South Korean public. But her sometimes aloof expression and high-tilted chin also spoke of someone who sees herself 'of royalty' and 'above anyone else,' leadership experts and some critics said." Thank goodness for the experts.

Kim Jong Un could not have anticipated more glowing coverage for his sister, for the robot-like cheerleaders he sent alongside her, or for his transparent attempt to drive a wedge between South Korea and its democratic allies. "North Korea has emerged as the early favorite to grab one of the Winter Olympics' most important medals: the diplomatic gold," wrote Soyoung Kim and James Pearson of Reuters, who called Pence "one of the loneliest figures at the opening event." Quoting on background "a senior diplomatic source close to North Korea," Will Ripley of CNN wrote an article headlined, "Pence's Olympic trip a 'missed opportunity' for North Korea diplomacy." But who was Ripley's source? Dennis Rodman?

What most disturbed me was the difference in coverage of Kim Yo Jong and Fred Warmbier, whose son Otto died last year after being tortured and held captive in North Korea. Fred Warmbier accompanied Pence to the Olympics as a reminder of the North's inhumanity and menace. Journalists ignored, dismissed, and even criticized this grieving man. Among many examples of thoughtlessness and callousness was a *Politico* tweet that read: "Fred Warmbier criticizes North Korean Olympic spirit." He must have missed Kim's freckles.

Washington Post columnist Christine Emba asked: "Is Otto Warmbier a symbol, or a prop?" You see, Emba wrote, "Otto's father may want his son to be a symbol. But the nature of his escort risks turning him into a prop." Why? Well, because "symbols stand for something" while "props are used by someone." And "the Trump administration, which hosted Warmbier, is made up of shameless instrumentalizers who have made clear that they stand for very little." So there you go. We should be skeptical of Fred Warmbier because Trump.

Emba's not all wrong. There were a lot of props and tools at the Olympics. You could find them in the press box.

Ester Ledecka wins surprise gold medal. She's a snowboarder and borrowed skis for a slalom event which she won. She did the interview with her googles on. And why you ask? Because she did not expect to place well, so before the event she didn't put on any make up. You can't make it up!



THE NORTH KOREAN CHEERLEADERS

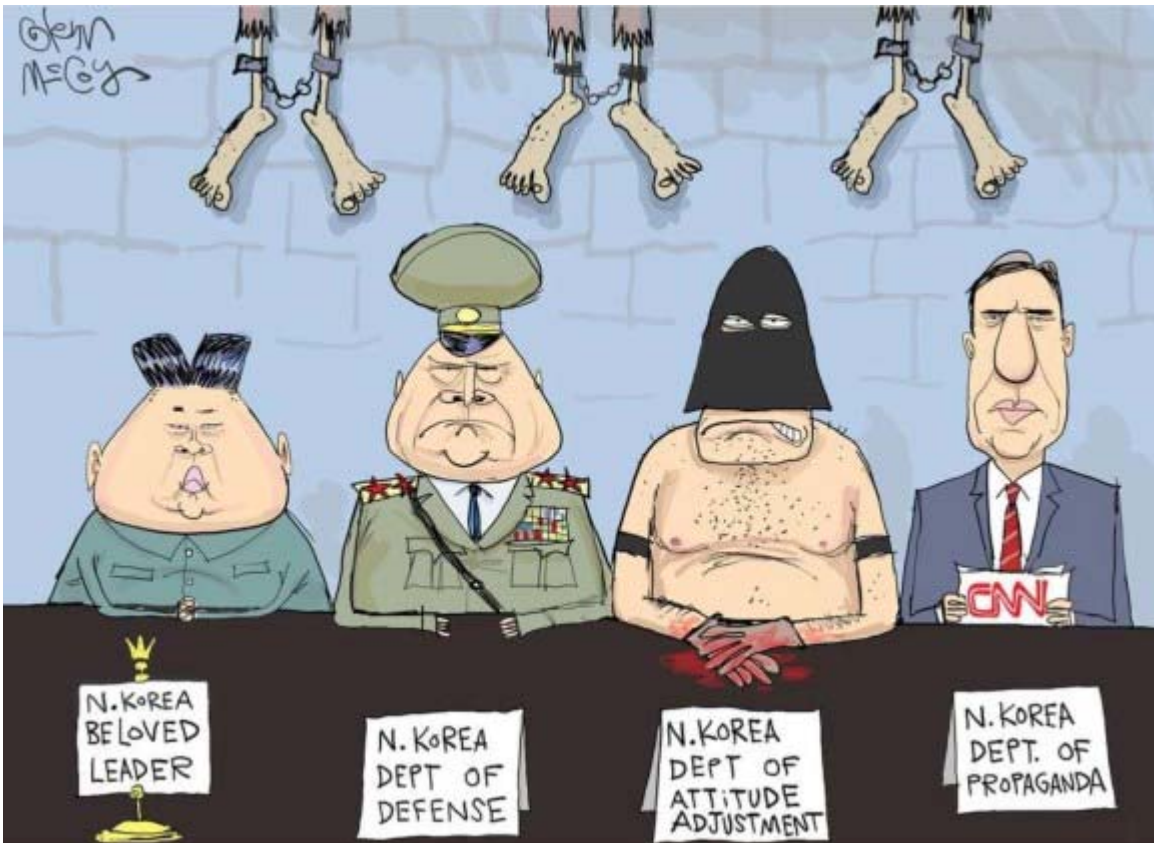


CNN

August 2, 1936



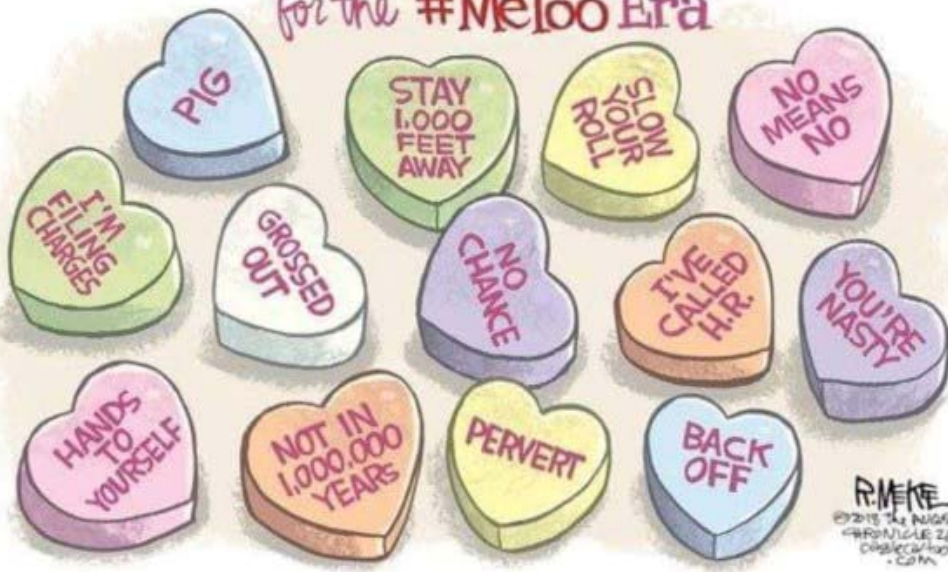
Adolf Hitler is stealing the show at the Berlin Olympics



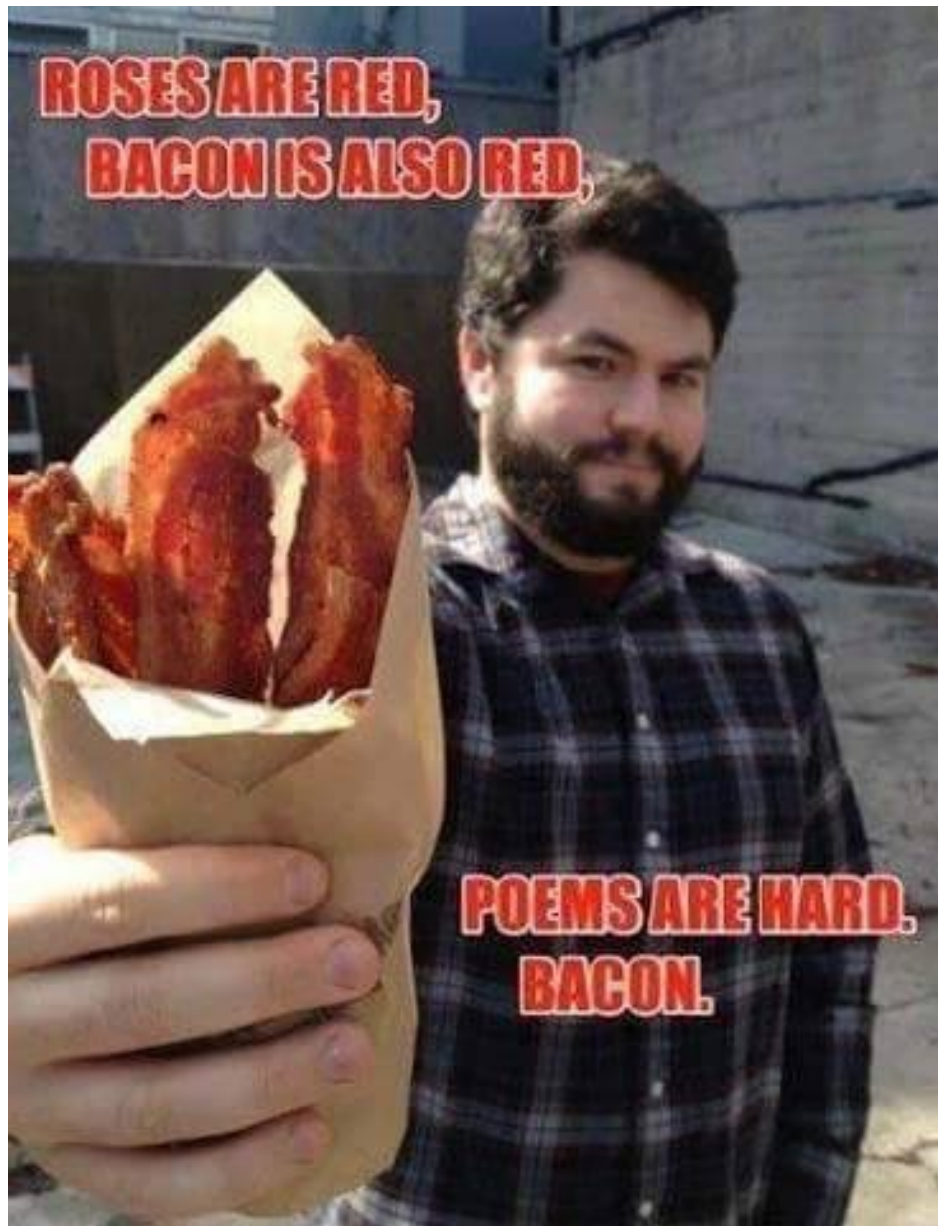
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