



VOLUME 7  
NUMBER 3  
SUMMER 1998

# THE ATHLETE'S VIEW

## CORNER

ATHLETE'S

The trainer gives me a leg up in the paddock. Once I'm mounted, the groom takes the horse by the bridle and leads it out to the track.

When we first get out there, I'm not concentrating on the race at all. I talk with the exercise rider or look at the tote board to see how much time we have to warm up.

Mostly, it's just chatting with the exercise rider or pony person. We talk about what's going on with them, or if something interesting is going on with me, we'll talk about that.

At this point, we're looking to get the horse warmed up. There are things you can sense from the horse as you're warming up. I check to see how the horse is hitting the ground, is it bouncing on its toes or lifeless, does it jog to the gate or just walk with its head down. When things are right, I can sense that the horse is anxious to run. Horses have moods, just like people.

By now, there's only a couple of minutes before we move into the starting gate. As I approach the gate, I go over in my mind what the trainer told me, what the race looked like on the racing form, how I expect the race to set up, what I want to do with my horse.

All this could go right out the window the first jump out of the gate, but you go in with a plan and hope that happens. If something else happens, you improvise.

Once we get close to the starting gate, I'm anxious to get in there and get racing, just like the horse. I

## Sport as a Calling and the Role of Professional Sports Teams

*Editor's Note: This is the first of a two-part series on professional sports teams in America. This first part is on the current positioning of professional teams. The second part, which will appear in the fall issue of The Athlete's View, will be on how professional sports teams can become as important to a community as its educational, religious, artistic, and health care institutions.*

America is considered to be a sports-crazed nation. Author Joyce Carol Oates refers to sport as *America's religion*.

For a country that is known around the world for its many freedoms, why do so many Americans freely choose to attend in person or watch on television professional sporting events? What is it about professional sports that calls to us?

As has been previously documented in *The Athlete's View*, sport is a discipline that engages its participants fully—physically, mentally, spiritually. Further, in order to make it and stay in professional sports, the athletes must continuously work at honing their skills. If they slack off in their efforts, there are always others there, ready to take their places. So being a professional athlete includes, among other things, *continuously* striving for excellence in a balanced and integrated physical, mental, spiritual way.

This concept was known to the ancient Greeks as *areté* ('are-uh-tay'). During the 7th and 6th centuries B.C., those who lived the *areté* way were the most revered because they were believed to be fulfilled by their integrated and balanced body/mind/spirit lifestyle. This included the athletes, more so than the politicians, physicians, poets, etc.,

because the athletes' lifestyle included physical as well as mental and spiritual discipline. What about philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle? They, too, were athletes. All three were accomplished wrestlers.

Despite the fact that a minute fraction of one percent of us will ever be professional athletes, the great majority of Americans who have participated in sports at whatever levels know something very profound that the pros know today and the ancient Greeks knew centuries ago. Participating in sports engages us totally. Participating in sports fulfills us. Participating in sports is bliss. Participating in sports is joy. Participating in sports is a calling.

Current television baseball analyst and former San Francisco Giants catcher Bob Brenly once said, "You can talk about money, about notoriety, but the reason 99 percent of us play pro ball is for the feeling you get at the end of a game, like that, a feeling that . . . I don't know. You couldn't pay enough money for that feeling."

When we wholeheartedly participate in sports, we are fully alive. When we are hitting a ball, completing a pass, or sinking a shot, we are connected. When we are running miles at a time, gliding down a snow-covered mountain slope, or cycling great distances, we are flowing.

Participating in sports engages us totally. Participating in sports fulfills us. Participating in sports is bliss. Participating in sports is joy. Participating in sports is a calling.



Russell Baze

SEE CORNER, INSIDE

SEE SPORT AS CALLING, INSIDE

## Message from the Director...

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, "Never trust a thought you came upon sitting down. The muscles must be in celebration with the mind." I'm reminded of Nietzsche's quote for two reasons. First, because I'm sitting at the computer, fantasizing about hiking on this glorious summer day.

I'm also reminded of the quote as I reflect on a letter from Jan Austin. Over the past year, Jan has used principles and activities adapted from the PASS class with her fourth graders at Edna Maguire Elementary School in Mill Valley, CA.

With more than 30 years experience in public education in roles of teacher in kindergarten through sixth grade and as principal at both the elementary and middle school levels, Jan writes, "In my years as an educator, I have never encountered instructional strategies that so simply and profoundly meet the physical and spiritual needs of students within the academic context of the public school."

Jan describes her class, including four students with English as a second language and others who are shy, as blossoming with self-confidence. Students have discovered unity, focus, and appreciation for each other.

A grant from the San Francisco Giants Community Fund helped support the 1997-98 pilot-test of PASS at the elementary level. Many people have praised PASS, and recommended we offer the concepts and practices at a younger age. We're pleased to be moving in that direction.

Speaking of moving, I'm about to do just that. But first, a word of thanks to the S.F. Giants, to all the sponsors and volunteers who made the 1997 ASI Golf Classic a success, and to the Bothin Foundation which recently made a generous grant to upgrade our computer equipment and software. Along with the ASI Board of Directors, we sincerely

appreciate your investment in our efforts to reunite body, mind, and spirit; muscles celebrating with the mind. And now I'm off for that hike!

*Susan Kirsch is the Executive Director of the American Sports Institute.*



A few of Pacific Bell's guests watch the sun break out at The Olympic Club.

## Third Annual ASI Golf Classic Bests El Niño

Despite the best efforts of El Niño, the ASI Golf Classic was a great success, raising nearly \$75,000 for improving education through the study and practice of sport.

Held on Monday, April 13, at The Olympic Club in San Francisco, host to the prestigious U.S. Open, 148 golfers enjoyed a mostly beautiful afternoon on the Lake Course and carried the spirit of the day into the Dinner and Awards Banquet in the evening, highlighted by a silent and spirited live auction.

### Thanks to Our Sponsors

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**Others**—Coors Brewing Company, Pepsi-Cola, Graphic Arts Management, Lexus of Serramonte, Magnussen Buick, SportsTravel Magazine, Strokes Golf Franchising, Shell Development, and Arica Wines

### Special Thanks

**Celebrity Guests**—Sandy Alderson, Oakland A's; Wayne Freedman and Pete Giddings, KGO-TV; and Rich Walcoff, KGO-Radio

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**Volunteer Coordinator**—Becky Hughes

**Committee and Volunteers**—Laura Arth, Diana Bartram, Pinoo Bindhani, Ron Boose, Rob Carey, June Carr, Natalie Callahan, Maria Cunningham, Matt Dockstader, John Friedman, Melissa Furbeck, Ron Greene, Allan Hitchcock, Judy Kirkpatrick, Marie Love, Susie and Mike Montgelas, Jamel Perkins, Kevin Pon, Howie Pruitt, Lori Puccinelli, Dennis Sakarai, Wade Schlueter, Robert Shaw, Nate Smith, Liz Susman, Greg Tomita, Bill Watson, Bob Wilmot, and Gail Wood.



## THE ATHLETE'S VIEW

Published by the American Sports Institute  
P.O. Box 1837, Mill Valley, CA 94942  
(415) 383-5750 • Fax (415) 383-5785  
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## 'Throw Like a Girl' to Take on a New Meaning

What better way to get young girls excited about joining the world of sports than through a video documentary portraying real girls who love playing team sports.

I had the unique experience of producing a very successful children's video entitled *BABYMUGS!* which sold over 500,000 copies after we were interviewed on *Oprah* and *Dateline NBC*, and appeared in *PEOPLE Magazine*. In search of a topic for my next production, my close friend Ann suggested we focus on the benefits team sports can bring to preadolescent girls.

We did our research and found statistics that proved our premise was right on target. A study released in May, 1998, by the Women's Sports Foundation concluded that girls who play high school sports delay becoming sexually active and are less likely to get pregnant than those who don't. So we chose a title for our production—*Throw Like a Girl*.

As a companion to the documentary, Ann and I are writing a book with the same title that we hope will inspire and coach girls as they experience firsthand playing on a team. Already, we've interviewed dozens of active girls, several professional women whose lives were profoundly influenced by playing team sports as well as

noted women athletes such as Cammie Granato, Dot Richardson, and Gabrielle Reece.

The documentary will have an emphasis on drama, profiling several, true-life stories of both preteen girls and adult women. Expressing themselves in the language of today's young teens, these girls will tell us what it means for them to push their bodies on behalf of their teammates, how their families have reacted or participated in their sport of choice, and how they cope with the physical challenges, from injuries to improved fitness.

Successful women will provide living proof that by playing team sports, girls can give themselves a jump start in accomplishing meaningful goals in adulthood.

Coaches and parents will bear witness to the dramatic, positive shaping sports has provided for girls.

We believe that every girl needs to know that she has the abilities and opportunities to join a team. *Throw Like a Girl* will give its audience of girls encouragement and fill them with excitement as they become aware of the possibilities that sports has to offer.

Girls already involved with sports will come away with a strong sense of justification, a true understanding of why they persevere in the sport

of their choice. And for the audience of parents, *Throw Like a Girl* will show them how the world of sports can provide the cornerstone that can set their daughters up for success.

We believe that most any body type can compete on a baseball field or basketball court. When a girl realizes she can hit a home run or kick a soccer ball into the goal, she becomes proud of what her body can do, no matter its size or perceived imperfections.

Our aim in producing *Throw Like a Girl* is to show girls as having stature and worthiness in a discipline normally dominated by boys and men. Without remarking on the male aspect of sports, *Throw Like a Girl* will focus exclusively on the female role that has gained respect as it has flourished in these final years of the 20th century.

By the film's ending credits, parents and girls will perceive an old saying with new meaning—*throw like a girl* will no longer be a negative put-down. It will be something to strive for.



Shelley Frost is a children's media producer and author.

## New Administrative Coordinator at ASI

The next time you call ASI, you're likely to reach Zach Van Doren. Zach joins the ASI staff as Administrative Coordinator in charge of ASI's website, office operations, and as editor of *The Athlete's View*.

Zach graduated from the University of Colorado, Boulder in 1996, majoring in history and Spanish. In 1995, he traveled to Spain where he spent 18 months studying Spanish literature.

Zach's special interests include international affairs and surfing. Next time you call, ask about the waves.

## PASS Teacher Training Program Completes Seventh Summer Session

The PASS Teacher Training Program recently completed its seventh summer of training teachers to present the *Promoting Achievement in School through Sport* program at their middle and high schools.

PASS trainer Pete Donoff led the eight trainees through the rigorous, three-week summer training. The teachers experienced every aspect of the PASS program, from creating a PASS learning environment in their classrooms and presenting lessons, to conducting evening get-together sessions with parents and guardians, to

learning how to recruit students.

The group included three teachers from San Francisco (Danny Camacho and Lisa Lopez, McAteer High School and Kevin Adams, Galileo High School); two teachers from Marin County (Don Ricco, Hill Middle School in Novato and O.J. Mitchell, Bayside/Martin Luther King School in Sausalito); and one teacher each from Oakland (Darlene Miller, Fremont High School), Long Beach (Jeff Harper, Franklin Middle School), and Chicago (Edie Gonzalzes, Lindblom Technical High School).

## SPORT AS A CALLING CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

When we are turning in the air, hovering over a crossbar, or poised above a net, we are floating. Through sport, we connect, we flow, we float. We are alive.

The reason we watch the pros is because they connect, they flow, they float like no one else can. We, too, can do these things, just not as well. But we know what the pros know. The professional athletes show us what the species is capable of doing. They take us to levels most of us have a sense of but, for whatever reasons, cannot manifest.

Professional athletes play for professional sports teams. How then do the professional teams position themselves in their respective communities and in America, in general? Do these teams focus on being fully alive? Do they emphasize connecting? Do they promote flowing? Do they pay tribute to floating? Do they espouse an *areté* way of life throughout the entire organization?

Unfortunately, the answer is no. What the athletes know and feel, what we who have participated in sports know and feel, is not what American professional sports teams are about. Without passing judgement on them, currently, professional teams are about winning, losing, and money. This is their focus. This is what they emphasize. This is their way of being.

Even though change is often difficult, what would happen if professional teams changed their focus? What would happen if they still did everything they could to try and win but connecting, flowing, floating, an *areté way of being*, and similar elements were all a part of the teams'

player development, working operations, media relations, and connection with their communities? What if these elements became the operating style or way of being of the teams?

If they chose to operate this way, professional sports teams could become as important, as integral to their communities and the nation as our educational, religious, artistic, and health care institutions; and this could be done without spending large sums of money.

The questions then become: Can the teams do this and stay in business? Just how risky would this type of venture be? Would the teams even want to do this?

To borrow a well-known expression, *If they do this, the people will come*. If the professional teams can create for their fans a sense of connectedness, flow, float, and set the highest standards for an *areté* way of operating, the fans will come, more so than ever before. They will come, win or lose, for the

experience of being totally alive. And they will come because of *areté*.

If the teams can create this type of experience by changing their way of being, the fans will come because, as one former major league player said, "You couldn't pay enough money for that feeling."

But how do the teams make this change? What do they have to do to create this experience for their fans and become as important, as integral to their communities and the nation as our educational, religious, artistic, and health care institutions?

If they chose to operate this way, professional sports teams could become as important, as integral to their communities and the nation as our educational, religious, artistic, and health care institutions.

## ATHLETE'S CORNER CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

used to feel nervous before the start of a race, but I don't feel nervous anymore, just anxious. I'm just thinking, "Let's go, now!"

An assistant starter now takes the horse and leads it into the starting gate. At this moment, I want my horse to stand good, be alert, and look straight down the track so it doesn't stumble coming out of the starting gate. At the same time, I kind of watch so I know when the last horse goes into the gate.

Now I reach up and grab the finger hold on the horse's mane so I don't fall back on its mouth when it breaks. I just want that starting gate to open.

The horse and I are ready, wanting to break. Then, the bell goes off as the gates slam open.

*Russell Baze is one of thoroughbred racing's all-time, leading jockeys, having won over 6,000 races.*

## PASS Profile

Before PASS, I thought I could not be an athlete. PASS teacher Ms. Berkhout has helped me realize that I can be an athlete. PASS has also helped me with my self-esteem. I am very excited every day when I come to class. Athletically, it has helped me in balloon volleyball and in power soccer. I use some of the FAMs in both of these sports.

I would recommend PASS to other students in wheelchairs if they like sports, but I wouldn't recommend it to them if they didn't like sports. People in chairs can gain respect from their able-bodied peers by being active and participating in the class. We have been able to modify the FAM Challenges so I can do most of them.

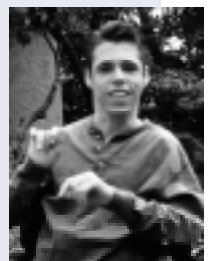
Different students helped me with my assignments in class. Stephanie Harrington took notes for me and helped by being so organized. And Eden Hayes met with me twice a week for a modified PE class. We played balloon volleyball and other sports. His competitive nature helped me to be competitive, also. When playing balloon volleyball with Eden, I felt like a real athlete for the first time because he pushed me hard to excel.

In the future, I will use what I learned in PASS every time I play sports. The FAMs that I learned will help me academically, too. My favorite professional team is the San Francisco 49ers, and I notice when they make use of the FAMs.

*Brendan Walsh recently completed his sophomore year at Tamalpais High School in Mill Valley, CA. He is the first wheelchair athlete to participate in the PASS program. Brendan says that he has been in a wheelchair for as long as he can remember. He has been disabled since birth.*

*In previous years, Brendan attended a special school for handicapped children, but since middle school, he has been mainstreamed. Brendan plays on a wheelchair power soccer team.*

*Brendan and Eden are going to continue working together next year with the modified PE class even though they won't be in the PASS program. In addition, Eden is now exploring career opportunities to work with those who are disabled.*



# PASS®

## I Am An Athlete

I am an athlete

The contrast is highly noticeable. Karen, a petite blond, stands on tiptoes at the microphone to proclaim in a voice that seems bigger than her small frame, "I am an athlete." Douglas, buff and brawny, towers over the podium and booms out the same message, "I am an athlete." Students with African, Asian, Indian, English, and Spanish ancestry all make the same proclamation.

Displaying the diversity of the American melting pot, a common thread of interest—sport—holds these students together in mutual respect and appreciation. Their individual athletic endeavors vary. Many students play mainstream sports—football, basketball, baseball, soccer, and track, while others participate in less popular activities—martial arts, polo, hiking, and skateboarding.

At the beginning of the school year, PASS students read *The Athlete's Creed*. At first, some find it confusing, esoteric, or even silly. But today at PASS graduation, after nine months of rigorous, systematic, and comprehensive study, many understand *The Athlete's Creed* as a code of conduct they can live by.

In many ways, *The Athlete's Creed* reflects the essence of what the PASS class is all about. Steeped in the concept of *areté*, the Greek term for *a continuous striving for excellence in a balanced and unified manner that includes body, mind, and spirit*, the PASS curriculum seeks to integrate and validate the physical, along with the mental and spiritual domains.

PASS uses the premise expressed by George Sheehan, noted physician and runner, who wrote, "The mind's first step to self-awareness must be through the body." By encouraging children to be physically oriented and aware, PASS lays the groundwork for being mentally fit.

This is accomplished by focusing on the eight *Fundamentals of Athletic Mastery* (FAMs): concentration, balance, rhythm, flexibility,

power, relaxation, attitude, and instinct.

Students in the PASS class select both an athletic and an academic goal. Since the class is individualized, it easily includes a basketball player's goal to increase her free throw percentage and a weight lifter's goal to increase his bench press. Students discover that the same fundamentals that will lead to athletic

athletes. The PASS teacher encourages them with words from basketball legend Julius Erving who said, "Unless you dare to be great, you can't be and never will be." The theme is underscored with Eleanor Roosevelt's challenge, "You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

Beyond the rigors of language arts, geometry, foreign language, or AP biology, PASS students wrestle with questions of relevance, identity, and values. They explain and seek to apply Confucius's words, "When strict with oneself, one rarely fails." They are reminded of the FAMs, as when John Wooden, former basketball coach at UCLA, observes, "Balance, next to love, is the most important thing in the world."

During the PASS graduation ceremony, parents, siblings, other teachers, and administrators listen to PASS students introduce themselves, reading a quote they interpreted earlier in the year. Sometimes they seem shy or stumble over an unusual word. Most of the time, they stand with strong presence, read with clarity, and radiate an air of confidence they didn't have when the school year began.

Near the end of the graduation ceremony, PASS students walk to the front of the room, accept their certificate of completion and a personalized copy of *The Athlete's Creed*. Students say their name, identify their sport, and say, "I am an athlete." Then the adults gather around a PASS student to read *The Athlete's Creed* in unison. Young and

old, rich and poor, male and female, professional and laborer, employed and unemployed are united, with sport as the common denominator.

For a time, harmony persists. Optimism fills the air. All things seem possible. Perhaps social theorist George Leonard was right when he said, "Athletics can change the way we live and provide the basic guidelines for a lasting transformation of consciousness."

### *The Athlete's Creed*

*I am an athlete.*

*Participating in sports hones my body, mind, and spirit. The athletic experience touches my being. For me, it is a calling.*

*I am an athlete.*

*Winning elates me, yet real victory is less over another person than over myself, over my own perceived limitations. Win or lose, I cherish the athletic experience for its own sake.*

*I am an athlete.*

*The athletic experience sometimes grants me entry into unfamiliar states of consciousness, uncharted dimensions of space and time. Immersed in a world that I cannot easily explain, I may achieve power without effort and grace without premeditation. Rhythm and harmony inform my every move.*

*I am an athlete.*

*I am artist and scientist, explorer and adventurer. I am a student of the bodily arts. Life is my arena. I apply what I learn in the study and practice of sports to every aspect of daily life. On and off the playing field, I live by a code of fairness and honesty.*

*I am an athlete.*

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success will also bring academic success.

Academic goals are as varied as the students. Irene wants to raise her grade point average from a 1.8 to a 2.5 so she can regain eligibility to be a cheerleader. David wants to set a new record and earn a 4.0.

Over the course of the year, students discover that they have a lot in common with each other and with a higher echelon of professionals, including philosophers, scientists, coaches and