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## Hazing Undermines Spirit of Sport

*The Ultimate Trip*

By [Archives](#)

Oct 6 2004

Hazing: one of the most hidden, glossed over and unspoken aspects of the sporting world. Veterans deny it, coaches overlook it and the hapless rookies affected by it are sworn to secrecy. It is immoral, illegal, humiliating and antithetical to the spirit of unity and camaraderie commonly associated with sports. It is also absolutely everywhere.

On Tuesday, three University at Buffalo soccer players were suspended from school after a freshman on the team was hospitalized following alcohol hazing incidents. Five senior cheerleaders at a high school in Georgia are currently under criminal investigation for child abuse after details of a hazing incident involving errantly placed bananas came to light. In 1999, the University of Vermont men's hockey team faced criminal charges and had its season cancelled after gruesome reports of sexually-oriented hazing were confirmed by state investigators. Last December, an 18-year old fraternity pledge at Pittsburgh State died after being forced to drink blood as part of a hazing ritual.

According to the Gannett Health Services website, one out of every three Cornell students has experienced hazing of some kind. Hazing incidents have become so prevalent, the university is in the process of establishing a separate website for reporting and counseling. Anti-hazing laws are in place in 43 states -- including New York -- and even minor violators risk expulsion, heavy fines, a criminal record and jail time.

Yet, hazing is still everywhere. A study performed by Alfred University recently concluded at least 80 percent of male college athletes have been hazed. Other contemporary studies place a similar percentage on Greek houses.

Where does the fascination come from? Cheap thrill? Repressed, malicious desire? Why does such an intolerable and primitive practice persist in this supposedly modernized society? Is it strict adherence to tradition and custom? An obtuse and backward eye-for-an-eye mentality? Or are athletes and other groups consumed with the intent to preserve social stratification and insure apprehension and anxiety within their own "team"?

Hazing has no place in sports, no place in the Greek system, no place in clubs and no place in society. When head football coach Jim Knowles '87 arrived for his first season at the helm of the Red, he noticed in the varsity media guide that every freshman had his head shaved in their profile pictures. This season, he abolished the hazing ritual and ordered every player with a shaved-head shot to take new photographs for the guide. Vermont men's hockey coach Mike Gilligan's role in the disastrous incidents of 1999? Investigators uncovered a written directive Gilligan

gave to his players telling them to lie to university officials about their hazing practices.

Hazing is pointless at best and life-threatening at worst, and almost every conceivable negative adjective falls somewhere in between. Rather than create unity or promote bonding, it only serves to alienate, denigrate and disgrace those it affects. The extent of its malevolence can be measured in both the shocking acts it produces and the alarming silence forced upon its victims. Frightening is the willingness - and all too often eagerness -- of athletes and other groups to carry out this morbid practice. Yet, the most appalling feature of this discussion is the overwhelming tendency of administrators, coaches, parents and peers to ignore the practice of hazing and allow it to continue untouched.

Hazing is brutal, unjustifiable, moronic and cultish. End it.

\* \* \* Hold on -- just a few more things to discuss before we all return to our monotonous and unfulfilling lives. Looking back on the baseball regular season, which unforgettable events race to mind? The resident doping community may recall Barry Bonds cracking home run No. 700. Chi-towners might fondly remember Greg Maddux's 300th victory. And yes, who could forget the unceasing Yankees-Red Sox drama, with more plot twists than an episode of Laguna Beach

However, for the four people at Cornell who hail from the Northwest, a small, obscure news brief is destined to be the legacy of 2004. An insignificant, mildly entertaining story involving the lowly Seattle Mariners. Any ideas? No? This year Mariners outfielder Ichiro Suzuki broke George Sisler's 84-year old record for most hits in a single season, finishing with 262. Suzuki's feat failed to garner anything close to the publicity Bonds created while he chased the single season home run record in 2001 -- let alone the nation-wide uproar characterizing Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa's race in 1998. Indeed, Suzuki's bat is being shipped to Cooperstown and the name Ryan Drees will forever hold a place in baseball trivia, but is anyone in America actually paying attention? In Japan, the hype over Suzuki is volcanic -- Ichiro-mania is creating a level of pandemonium not witnessed since Godzilla last defeated MechaGodzilla.

Some argue the reason for the underwhelming press coverage is Suzuki's boring style of play - only 37 of his 262 hits were for extra bases. Others contend play for a last-place team diminished the record's significance. Perhaps no one has a clue who George Sisler is. I think it is largely because Suzuki is Japanese.

Prior to Suzuki's arrival, the only place for an Asian baseball player on a Major League squad was the pitcher's mound. Since his arrival with Seattle, six other Asian position players -- including Yankees slugger Hideki Matsui -- have crossed the Pacific to succeed with MLB clubs. Suzuki was a ground-breaker, and now he has permanently cemented his status and achievement in a Hall of Fame originally established for white guys. In the face of this country's lingering post-Pearl Harbor racism, Suzuki shattered barriers and propelled himself into baseball's elite. Such a monumental occasion cannot be overlooked.

On a side note, recall the 13 consecutive Beirut victories streak mentioned a few weeks ago -- the undisputed record? Call it the former record, because recently new mark was set at 15 straight wins. By a Korean, no less.

\* \* \* Other things to watch out for: NHL players and owners still have not reached a viable solution to end the lockout. Wait, an exceedingly wealthy, corrupt institution is ignoring the wishes of its constituents? Certainly not big news here where Cornell students put up with the same thing every day...Both the Dodgers and the Angels made the playoffs this season, but no one in LA is aware. The

reason? Tappings of "Friends" spin-off "Joey" starring Matt LeBlanc are scheduled for the exact opposite time...If you happen to be blessed with a trip to souther California for fall break, No. 1 USC and No. 7 California square off in the most exciting battle of the college football season at the Coliseum this Saturday... "The O.C." complete season one DVD set arrives in stores on Oct. 26 - another reason to put off the gorge for just a little bit longer.

*Archived article by Kyle Sheahen*

By [Archives](#) at Oct 6 2004 - 7:00

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