

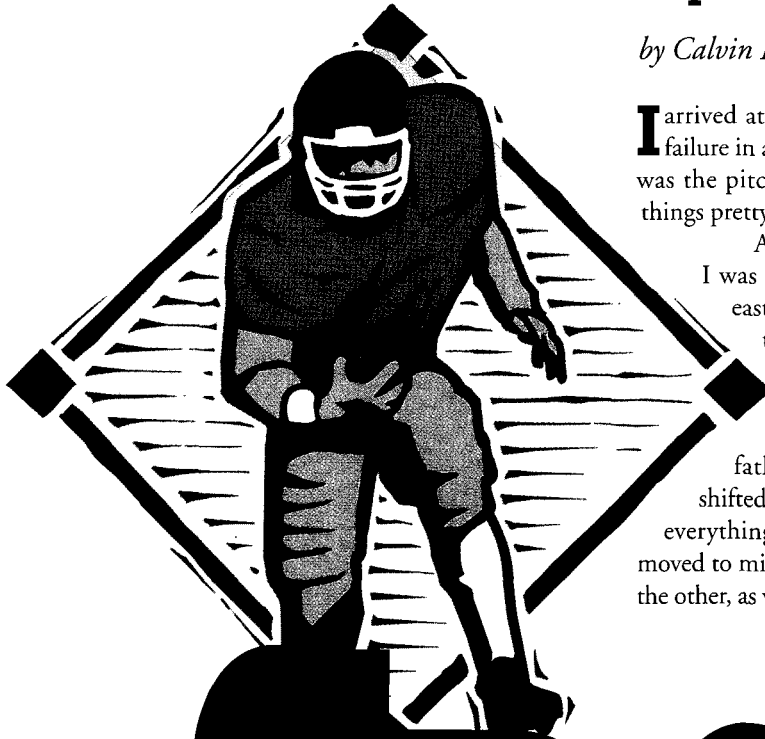
At their best, sports can provide rare and unforgettable glimpses into the human character. To mark the staging of the 1996 Olympic Games, we have assembled a collection of very personal reflections on sport written by a distinguished range of athletes and cultural observers. Collectively, these essays illustrate some of the ways that sports capture our imagination. And also some of the ways they can repel.

Hope

by Calvin Hill

I arrived at Yale in 1965, really never having experienced any failure in athletics. I never lost a football game in high school. I was the pitcher on the baseball team, and a long jumper, and things pretty much always went my way.

As a high school All-American quarterback, I thought I was probably as good at that position as any freshman east of the Mississippi. And then the first day I was on the Yale campus Emmett Dowling walked up to me and said, "Hi, I'm Brian Dowling's father and you're going to be catching balls for my son." At the time I just attributed that to an over-zealous father. But, sure enough, within a week I had been shifted from quarterback. I was used to being the center of everything, and that was traumatic, particularly since I was moved to middle linebacker—literally from one side of the aisle to the other, as we say in Washington. I was also third-string fullback.



SPORT

While that was happening, I was also finding out that I was not the smartest guy in my class. My roommate ended up second in the class, and because I was used to being at or near the top, I was competing with him. We had several courses together and I was studying all the time and he didn't seem to study at all and his grades were better than mine.

I finally found somebody who I was smarter than. I made a point of seeing him at least once a day for the next four years. But for the first few weeks on campus, I was reeling.

And then one day, I was walking to catch the freshman bus. We had a game against Cornell, and I had made a decision that if I didn't get there on time, maybe I wouldn't play football anymore. I could spend that time in the library and at least compete in the classroom. I got there, and sure enough, the bus had gone. So I was moseying back toward Morse and Stiles colleges when all of a sudden out of the athletic office building a head jugged out of the window and hollered, "Did you miss the bus?" I sheepishly said yes. It was Bob Kiphuth, the legendary Yale swimming coach whose teams set many world records—truly one of the great coaches in the history of amateur sports. He yelled, "Wait a minute, I'm going out there."

Now, I couldn't explain to him that I didn't really care if he was going out there or not. So I climbed into his car, and as he drove we chatted and I revealed what was happening to me, emotionally. And when we got to the Yale Bowl, he pulled to the side and talked to me about competition. He related what I was going through to some of the situations he had been in, and said I should never give up, never give up, never give up—that it wasn't a question of being the first to cross the finish line but rather being the best I could be. A few hours later I scored my first touchdown as a Yale running back. And that talk also soon translated into better performance in the classroom.

That's the main thing I took from sports: the idea of competing and never giving up hope. Metaphorically, that's what life's about. Facing a series of challenges and pushing forward one

Wide receiver Steve Largent ran a slant pattern and I drilled him in the hands and stomach. He dropped it.

step at a time, always trying to go in a positive direction, and never giving up hope. Whenever I see athletes in action, whether in the Olympics or the Para-Olympics, my spirits are lifted by those lessons of competition.

When I was at Yale in the late 1960s there was tremendous upheaval and division. And one of the things that was fascinating to me was how all of these people, irrespective of what side they were on on various issues, seemed to rally around the football team. The Greeks, of course, cancelled wars when they held the Olympics. In sociological terms one might say that sports have a totemic function

in getting people of different persuasions to rally around one thing. When George Allen first tried to convince me to come to Washington to play for the Redskins, he said, "You'll be shocked at what happens in this town on Sunday." Bitter opposites all rallying around one team, because it's something they love in common. That I think is very important.

Former Dallas Cowboys running back Calvin Hill is also the father of NBA basketball player Grant Hill. These remarks were spoken at an October 1995 Yale conference.

Control

by Christopher DeMuth

Scuba diving is a deeply pleasurable sport that requires calm discipline. Without mastery of some important skills—proper descents and ascents, buoyancy control, navigating techniques, the ability to recover without alarm from a flooded face mask or lost breathing regulator—an exciting adventure can turn deadly. A diver must always remain under control, even when unexpected problems crop up. Good divers, like good pilots, monitor their instruments constantly, move with steady economy, and understand that virtually any hazard they encounter can be man-

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