

Sports... The guys are heavily into the NBA and enjoy football... baseball is a distant 3rd although there was plenty of enthusiasm for the World Series but that was before we got our "central" TV in the dining room. Hockey also shows little support which is interesting as that has been the major sport at Miami in recent years. Each sport has its own place in the hearts and minds of this generation...

College football has an interesting twist. Even though Miami has won their division of the MAC, there is little interest in their games. This may be in part because of the mid-week scheduling adopted by the MAC to get ESPN TV coverage or the general separation between sports and the student body. But their successful season has generated very little interest.

Instead the House "adopts" a college team every season and this year it happens to be LSU... don't ask me why, but that's their team. Most of the guys have LSU shirts and they get a lot more excited about their games than others... even Ohio State! Now while I consider this a crime against nature (O-H-I-O) I have to respect their passion for their adopted team.

Football Sundays will find the troops around our dining room TV with the Browns fans hopeful, the Bengals fans suffering and the few who support remote teams remaining quiet unless their team is on the tube. There is a pretty universal dislike for the Patriots but there is respect for them too! Of course Fantasy Football is big... many of the mealtime discussions will be around who has what player and who they need to have a big game on Monday night.

I've been known to dabble in fantasy sports myself, but the focus on it by this generation is fascinating. Sometimes it seems to be more about stats than being a fan. Now I'm a fairly hardcore Cleveland fan... love the Indians, suffer with the Browns and thank goodness for the Cavs bringing a Championship to long suffering Cleveland. But for the guys, the investment (including some sports betting) is more about their choices than the teams.

This applies even more to basketball. In the NBA, they seem to be more interested in the player than the team. Here the SportsCenter highlight reels take center stage and the debates over who is the best player, who made the best shot and who will make the playoffs get pretty involved. They know I'm a Cleveland fan so one day they asked how I felt about LeBron James. I tried to explain that my feelings were pretty complex. I took my friend Jimmy to a playoff game against the Celtics early in LeBron's career (at \$ 125 per ticket btw)... and he quit on the court. Yes, they were going to lose, but quitting is never acceptable. So I was not one of those who was upset when he left although the way he did it reflected the same level of immaturity that the Celtics game brought out.

On the other hand, LeBron grew up and came back to lead Cleveland to it's first championship since 1964. Make no mistake... it does not happen but for his force of will. And since then his commitment to Akron in the school that he built and the investment in the kids in that community is an example that all athletes would do well to copy. So I respect the man, his basketball skills and his willingness to give back... and I thank him for that championship.

Of course this led to a long discussion comparing LeBron to Michael Jordan, who is the greatest player, etc. I couldn't help but discuss the way the game has gone from a team sport (as you still see in most college basketball) to one dominated by the highlight reel dunks, endless 3 point attempts, and selfish stat watching. Just like the old fart I am, I bemoaned the end of the "Magic / Bird" battles, players like Havlicek who would do it all and the passing, screens and teamwork that made basketball a great sport.

And then I went to watch an Intramural game between the House "A" and "B" teams. It was obvious that "B" was outmatched... most of the "A" team had played high school ball and there were some pretty well-developed individual skills on display. But in a 40 minute game, I saw maybe 4 screens and not many more "set plays" than that. It was street ball and the referees were awful and totally disinterested... can't blame them. After the game, I asked one of the guys who I knew had played high school ball "What would your coach think of that game?" His reply... "He wouldn't be happy... we would all be running extra sprints."

In the final analysis I have come to the realization that they know the highlights (thanks ESPN SportsCenter) but they don't know the games. Hard to tell if this is generational or societal... the impact of available data and games of chance makes a more personal impact than supporting a team. And maybe that's the point... for my generation, supporting the team was personal. Now it seems that it's all personal, all about what's in it for them... a bit of a generalization but there's some reality there.