



Sports Writing Exemplars Favorites from the WtW Archive

Animal Athletes in the Great White North **By Autumn Finch**

In 1897, the Two Harbors Iron News ran a story about a man named John Beargrease, declaring “there is probably no more reliable carrier in the land, there are but few harder routes”.

Beargrease was the son of an Anishinabe chief in Beaver Bay, a small town on the north shore of Lake Superior. He carried mail, by dogsled, up and down the shore of the great lake, a job that was always demanding and often dangerous. According to Daniel Lancaster's biography of the famed musher, throughout Beargrease's tenure as mail carrier, he fought dense fog, frigid, dark nights, and terrifying water crossings that haunt even the best modern mushers of the region. Today, mushers young and old brave that same challenging route, hoping to capture some of that Beargrease magic.

As large, pillowy flakes fall from the grey sky, landing on the perked ears and stained snouts of the dogs, the scene appears to be quite magical. It's currently five degrees above zero, with an expected high of just 15.

A young musher hooks her frayed gangline to a four wheeler, and the dogs begin to wail with excitement. She punches her snow brake down into the frosty ground as the ATV pulls back against the power of six enthusiastic huskies. The team begins their dicey slide across the ice, the lean muscles of the dogs dragging a 500 pound vehicle, a loaded sled, and five handlers effortlessly. As the sled approaches the starting line, the four wheeler disconnects and the team lunges forward. The musher hollers a command and the dogs come to a reluctant halt. Competing with the roar of the anxious animal athletes, the loudspeaker hints at the team's identity: “...Jamie...Finland...on your marks... GO!” The team hears their cue and bounds down the trail, into the frozen wilderness.



Mushers and spectators from around the world come to the Beargrease witness the raw power of a sled dog team tearing through the forest. The event is something of a sled dog Superbowl, attracting athletes, fans, and volunteers from as close as Two Harbors and as far as France. The gravel pit of the race's outset seems to be nearly as chaotic as Beargrease's 1800s era route must have been. Steamy breath rises from the thousands of bodies, human and otherwise, and colorful booties speckle the snow for hours after the race, as handlers and volunteers stow them in jacket pockets and pickup beds.

As the hours after the start turned into days, the mushers and their teams wove their way through pine forests, over frozen lakes and streams, across roads packed over with snow, and eventually rest at a small bar outside of Duluth. A small crowd gathered at the finish line, mostly family and friends of the racers there to pick them up and bring them home. It had warmed up since the race's beginning, a balmy 20 degrees, and some handlers stood in jeans and t-shirts advertising dog food. Someone's HAM radio buzzed to life, declaring that the first team should finish at any moment. The congregation of onlookers quieted, listening for the glide of a sled or the panting of a husky. Only the crackling of the fire was audible, until, without so much as a whisper, a pack of dogs came into view. Their tongues were out, steamy breath melting the snow from their fur. They must have been tired, but they certainly didn't show it. Smooth, powerful muscles flexed as they ran, hauling a weary musher who kicked his foot in the snow as they approached the line. The team had spent more than 30 hours in the cold, running a historic route that stretched to the Canadian border and back. More than 100 years after John Beargrease's mail carrying days, there are still but few harder routes.

A Championship Weekend **By eleiker**

The sun continues to set over the horizon as the team is presented with their trophy for the third year in a row. Everyone has been in the heat for hours, but no one cares; the smiles on the player's faces, the energy of all the students, it all makes it worth it. Who cares about sunburnt cheeks and growling stomachs when your school's soccer team has just one it's third consecutive state title?

This season, even more than the past two, has been one for the AMHS boys soccer record



books. And Saturday was the perfect end to the season.

After a slow start Friday evening during the semi-final game against Cedarcrest, junior midfielder Sam Johnson was happy to start things off with a bang in the championship. Every single student was on their feet screaming, cheering, and singing the fight song. "To get things started in such a big game gave us all the momentum. Throughout the entire state tournament, we've scored first, and in the semi-final that didn't happen, so it was good to get back to our style of play," he said. His goal came within the first 3 minutes after kickoff, a beauty from inside the right corner of the box.

The next goal came shortly after from senior Jensen Crisler. What everyone thought was going to be a close game, was already looking like it could be a blowout.

Goals continued to be made minutes after each other; Matt Williams, the Wildcat's leading scorer, netted two and Crisler added another before half. 5-0 at halftime in a championship game? Sure, the team's good, but that wasn't what anyone was expecting. The second half continued in similar fashion; Williams, Crisler, and Diego Rios all added goals to the scoreboard for the Wildcats. Every single rostered player stepped on the field, again unusual in a state title game, and at the end, Coach Bartley returned all his starters to the field to finish their season together.

That was the beauty of Saturday's game. Seeing the core group of players who have grown together over the past 3 years finish their careers at Murphy, seeing the new talent that the team has for the upcoming seasons, and seeing all of us, as an Archbishop Murphy family, celebrating with each other.

"It's been a really awesome experience getting to play alongside the guys I did for the past few seasons and getting to lift the trophy with them one last time," Williams, who was one of the team's three captains this year, commented. For him, yesterday marked the last time he'll play competitive soccer, as he does not plan to continue playing in college. "It's still a bitter pill to swallow, but I don't think I'd want to end my career any differently," he told me.

After this championship weekend, other players are also looking towards the future. "Even though we have a ton of seniors leaving, I still have 100% confidence that we will be state contenders next year," sophomore goal keeper Daniel Mycroft believes. Johnson, one of



next year's captains, however, knows that next year will be a whole new team. "It's gonna be on myself and the other upperclassmen to bring the younger guys up to speed," he said.

There's no doubt next year will be different. But for now, basking in the glory of 3 state titles is enough to focus on.

Premier League Players or Drunkards with a deathwish? By Fidgetsally

Football is a widely popular sport across the globe, so it comes as no surprise that players often find their private lives hitting the headlines. However, one of the most talked about issues within in the sport at the moment is alcohol. Alcohol has long been associated with football - excessive drinking was common among many players in the 70s, 80s and 90s, and more recently there have been many incidents involving players drink-driving. So when do clubs plan to crack down on their alcohol policies?

Whilst it's unrealistic to expect footballers to never drink, they are generally advised to steer clear of booze. Not only does immoderate consumption of alcohol damage their reputation, but their health and overall performance. A lousy game shouldn't just anger managers and season-ticket holders, but parents too! Many children look up to players as their idols, and if they are encouraging extravagant nights out with limitless drinking - what message are they sending to their impressionable young fans? Being in the spotlight comes with many responsibilities, and although it is difficult for those with large fan bases to do or say anything without getting analysed by the media, some stars do not fully appreciate how influential they really are. Of course, the odd night out on the town can be excused - everybody needs a break sometimes and remaining at your physical peak requires a lot of dedication - but getting papped down the pub every Tuesday evening is not being a good role model!

And the bad examples do not stop there! Many footballers have been caught breaking the law whilst on drunken nights out - most recently Wayne Rooney. This national star has a global reputation, with 253 goals (making him the top goal scorer of all time), five premier league titles under his belt, and a tendency to drink-drive. The father of three was arrested



in the early hours of the morning on the 30th August after being caught driving whilst intoxicated, but was released on bail. If convicted, he could be fined, banned from driving for a year or even face up to 6 months in jail.

He is not the only player to be caught seeing double behind the wheel, as the likes of Yaya Toure, James Gray and Stephane Sessegnon have all been charged with the offence. Notable former Arsenal player and now popular TV pundit Paul Merson has experienced his fair share of drunken disasters. Whilst he has had a long and successful career, he has battled with substance abuse and alcoholism throughout it. His personal life has suffered from his addictions as his first marriage crumbled under the pressure of his recovery - in 2011 he was even involved in a car crash which was a result of his drink-driving! He is obviously a skilled and passionate player - he won the FA and League cups in the 90s whilst at Arsenal and received Young Player Of They Year in 1989, but imagine how well he could have done if he would have had access to the help he needed to deal with the problem and remained sober.

Top players earn tremendous amounts of money and do not work long hours, and this mix of boredom and fortune can have some deadly repercussions. Addictions, to alcohol especially, are the result of negligence of the issue by (particularly British) clubs according to UMIST psychologist Professor Carey Cooper.

"Quite a lot of football players have this problem," Prof Cooper explained. "They are young lads, they get very, very big bucks at a very young age and their private lives are exposed to the media.

All of this raises one question - are clubs doing anything to prevent this sort of behaviour? After these events they are quick to say that they do not tolerate excessive drinking and that players are dealt with internally - but what does that mean? A firm talking to by the manager is clearly not helping as they are tackling the issue too early on. Maybe if more preventative measures are taken by clubs, rather than dealing with the situation after it has happened, the industry would begin to make some progress. And perhaps, rather than spending millions on players and kits, clubs should be putting more time and effort into educating their players about the effects of alcohol consumption and supporting those struggling with a drinking problem. Clubs should be held responsible for providing players with the assistance they need to deal with alcoholism, after all - they can't expect the number of alcohol related incidents to decrease within the industry if they do not seek a



solution for the problem. The failure to address the issue of alcoholism within the sport should be taken seriously and tells us that clubs don't seem to care about their players, however they should, as it's not only the reputation of the club that is at risk, but of the whole sport that is hanging in the balance.

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Uneven representation of East Africans runners in the Media

By Fang Yiyang

The East Africans have been a dominant force in the sport of athletics, especially in the track events. Having won numerous world and Olympic events and a near monopoly on world records, it is undeniable that they are a force to reckon with. But for most spectators, they remain just that: Africans. A singular, homogeneous group of talented athletes, with a stranglehold on medals that media favorites from Western countries try to crack.

One reason for this could simply because there is such a large number of Kenyan and Ethiopian runners that fans find it hard to keep track. One year we have Asbel Kiprop and Elijah Manangoi going 1-2 in the World Championships 1500m, 2 years later we have Manangoi and Timothy Cheruiyot doing the same. As a result, the dominance of East African becomes routine and spectators stop bothering to find out more about the individual athletes—it does not matter who wins, for they all belong to the same country.

An extreme case can also be seen when Ugandan Moses Kipsiro was once referred to as 'the Kenyan' during a race commentary. This only demonstrates the mainstream media and general public's lack of understanding of the East Africans, to the point that citizenships



do not matter and each African runner becomes a faceless individual representing his entire region.

To be fair, the uneven treatment is also due to a language and cultural barrier. It is difficult to connect and identify with someone who speaks poor English. It does not help either that most Africans are shy and reticent. This likely explains why the likes of Paul Chelimo (African American) and Mo Farah (Somalia-born British) receive extensive media coverage. In contrast, Kenyans and Ethiopians usually just fall under the umbrella of 'Eastern Africans' by the mainstream western media.

However, it would be naïve to believe that there is not at least some subtle racial bias in play. Psychologist Adam Waytz of Northwestern University has shown that white people are likelier to attribute to hard work, environment and training as reasons for success of fellow whites. But when Africans succeed, we point to good genes. Thus, when a fellow Caucasian (and to some extent, a US or UK citizen black athlete) succeeds, the media play up the victory much more than when someone from an African nation wins. While we cannot deny that genetics play a part, neither should we neglect the incredible amount of hard work that elite African athletes go through. Just lumping them together as genetically-blessed East Africans, is a lazy way out. Lessons can actually be learnt from the way they live, train and think. Not only that, it also provides us with a glimpse of foreign culture.

Spectators can be forgiven for not caring enough. They hardly have the time, nor usually the means, to do more research into individual athletes. Thus it is unsurprising some level of broad categorizing takes place. But it is disheartening to see the media do the same. Take, for example, after Mo Farah's defeat in the 5000m at the 2017 World Championships. As fans and writers bemoan the defeat of one of the greatest runners of all time, barely any limelight was shone on the man who beat Farah himself, Muktar Edris. Even less on the 3 Ethiopians in the race who all finished within the top 5. The focus was on how the unbeatable Farah got beaten. In contrast, in the men's 1500m at the 2016 Rio Olympics, when American Matthew Centrowitz scored an upset victory against heavy favorite Asbel Kiprop (of Kenya) and defending champion Taoufik Makhloufi, his win was sensationalized and credit given to his training and tactical savvy. This demonstrates the double standard we hold towards African athletes versus Western ones—an American or British victory is sensationalized, while an African win, usually regardless of the individual, is 'business as usual', and only the most dedicated fans really care about their individual



identities.

The mainstream media really does have the power to make African athletes interesting for their audience. A good example would be a National Geographic documentary of Nike's sub-2-hour marathon attempt. Filmmaker Martin Desmond Roe says he did it "to tell these guys' stories from their point of view" and hopes it "can be an opportunity to let these guys talk for themselves and tell their own stories". But too often we simply want them to have stronger personalities, like Usain Bolt or Haile Gebrselassie. But we should question ourselves: are we being too lazy? Why demand them to open up to us, instead of ourselves opening up to them? Ultimately, the root of the problem has to do with our attitudes and laziness. The media roots for their Western athletes, as they are easier to communicate with and pique readers' interests more. Unfortunately, this comes at the cost of neglecting unique, and equally if not more interesting, stories of foreign athletes. Good journalism should not be like this. In a recent article for The Guardian, Michael Crawley makes a good point about how we "know infinitely more about the US and European runners who toil in [the East Africans'] wake" and that "we know next to nothing about them should surprise us". The media has the ability and responsibility to get their hands dirty, do more research, and report on the little-known, though highly accomplished, Africans in an accurate and interesting way.

In conclusion, the portrayal in mainstream media of East African athletes in Track and Field is generally uneven with Western ones and unrepresentative of their nature. Deep down, we cannot deny that some level of racial stereotyping, along with lazy reporting, is responsible for this. Mainstream media, and its audiences, should recognize that these people are diverse and unique individuals, not a homogeneous group. Readers will benefit greatly from learning more about these people and, I believe, over time learn to appreciate it. In an age where 'foreigners' and 'outsiders' are shunned, sport presents us with an excellent opportunity to unite, appreciate and learn more about others. Thus, we ought to strive to go against our bias and start opening up to and understanding these special groups of runners dominating the sport, instead of lamenting on how boring or similar they appear to us.

The sport of track and field was chosen as I take part in it and also because it is incredibly dominated by runners of East African descent. The unevenness in which different groups of runners are viewed is not widely reported but very much worth a discussion.



2 inspirations for this work were:

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Irvine High Remains Hinman Strong **By Harrison Zhang**

Coach Scott Hinman saw each day as a beautiful day to swim.

While at a dual swim meet at Northwood High School on March 29, Hinman collapsed and died of a heart attack on the pool deck. He was 61. Hoag Hospital Irvine confirmed the death following a failed revival attempt on site by an assistant coach.

Hinman, who took a medical leave during the girls water polo season due to a back injury, returned to the pool for the first time at the Lady Vaquero's opening swim meet at Tesoro High School back on March 1.

"He always seemed rejuvenated after being at practice," wife and athletic secretary Barbie Hinman said. "He is out in the sun. He is tired but he has his happy face on. It is what he loved. He liked being on the pool deck. When I brought him to the pool deck for practice, it was motivation for him to come back. It was hard to make him leave the pool. He died doing what he loved."

Hinman earned eight straight Division I titles in the California Interscholastic Federation Southern Section (CIFSS) starting in the 1997 season, and coached seven-time Olympic medalist Amanda Beard and three-time Orange County Swimmer of the Year Courtney Kuehl.

"Hinman was just our real-life superhero," Kuehl said. "He was the only one who never gave up on me, knowing I just needed more direction."

Hinman sparked the spread of girls water polo at the Southern California high school level



— launching the Irvine Southern California Women’s Water Polo Championships, the El Niño Classic and CIF semifinals for Division I through III at the Woollett Aquatics Center.

“He was a pioneer and respected in aquatics, more so in girls water polo,” Irvine High School principal and CIF Southern Section president-elect Monica Colunga said. “As a female, whenever I see someone championing equity, it is inspirational.”

Although Hinman spent most of his time coaching girls aquatics, he also led the annual Vaquero Navy Seals Invitational team, selecting eight boys to train with Navy Seals.

“The biggest thing for me was that he did not care if you were the weakest guy, the strongest guy, the smallest guy, the tallest guy — he believed in you,” Navy Seals Invitational participant and sophomore Jedidiah Wang said. “It did not matter what age or race you were, he believed in you. Sometimes, even if you were not willing to put in the effort, he still put effort into you because he believed you had the potential to be great.”

He is survived by wife Barbie, daughters Crystal and Cory and son and IHS alumnus Chase. “He gets kids to see what they really want,” Barbie Hinman said. “No matter where he went, he saw potential. He was aware of the bigger picture of athletes.”

Hinman is remembered for his drive and tough expectations, for his dry sense of humor and sharp wit, for his passion for the swim and water polo programs and for his love of school and his athletes.

“Hinman had a connection with each swimmer, knew what we needed and what was going on in our personal lives,” varsity swimmer and senior Jojo Kang said. “He was really special to each and every one of us. He’s just a dad and tells us dad jokes.”

Coach Scott Hinman passed away doing what he loved — coaching athletes, mentoring the next generation and spending countless hours by the pool.

“It is always a beautiful day; even when it wasn't,” Barbie Hinman said. “It could be storming and [to him] it is still a beautiful day.”