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COM 205
NYT Articles: ESPN-Louisville

Takeaways:

Within the "At Louisville, Athletic Boom is Rooted in ESPN Partnership" article by Eder, Sandomir, and Miller, Athletic Director Tom Jurich said, "If it wasn't for ESPN, we would be a fraction of what we are today... they were willing to take a chance on us." The language that Jurich uses to describe the relationship between ESPN and Louisville exists beyond that of a business partnership. Another way to describe it could be in terms of salvation. Since Louisville was so willing to play during the week, ESPN decided to make them into what the article calls a "powerhouse". However, the type of salvation that Jurich is talking about has larger implications evident further in the article when English Professor Tom Byers is interviewed and conveys his worries about football eclipsing other aspects of the university, a perfectly reasonable fear. Is it enough that the athletic department is sending money back to the university? While the athletics department is almost paying for itself, the type of salvation that ESPN provides to those it chooses to save is just that; a choice which divides the university campus into football vs academics which cannot fairly compete. Salvation only comes to football and not necessarily the university as a whole, especially considering the mold issue in some residence halls on the campus. Another striking comparison that the article makes is located at the very end of the reading which calls what happened to Louisville "magical", especially considering the pride of having "The Ville, the Best College Sports Town in America". This idea of "magic" is similar to Real's "Super Bowl: Mythic Spectacle" and the idea that the "heroic archetype" creates a magical potion for success once recognized by ESPN (Real, 33). The layers of magic which surrounds Louisville's heroic rise in exposure is reminiscent of a classic Disney animated film in which ESPN, a Disney product, is the medium by which Cinderella becomes a princess the same way that Louisville, with the beginnings of a small college, began the hero's journey to national recognition.

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Residual Questions:

1. The first article "College Football's Most Dominant Player? It's the ESPN" briefly discusses the switch that college football on television made from the NCAA because of a Supreme Court ruling that "freed universities and conferences to negotiate their own TV deals". However, is ESPN operating today against what that ruling is supposed to stand for? Mr. Ben-Hanan's one job is to schedule the programming which universities fight to get exposure during. How is this different from how the NCAA was operating?

Good Q.

2. The first article in the series also mentions how ESPN is no longer taking part in the documentary called "Frontline" on concussions in the NFL. It is interesting that the tables are turned in this decision since it is ^{the} NFL pressuring ESPN rather than ESPN making decisions for their own benefit. What would have been the repercussions if ESPN had continued with the "Frontline" documentary? Is there a worry that the NFL could have decided to broadcast all with Fox 1 Sports if ESPN had moved forward with collaboration? My guess? One group w/in ESPN worked with Frontline for

journalistic purposes. The NFL convinced another group, headed by ESPN's execs, that it would be in ESPN's best interests not to damage their own product - pro football games broadcast on ESPN. Thus, the suits shut it down, and the journalists went home crying.