

On "Jock Mentality"

"Simplicity of Character Is No Hindrance to Subtlety of Intellect"

It has long been accepted that many athletes, if not most, have little to confer on the nonathletic world when they are out of their milieu. This may have been truer decades ago than it is today; however, one notes glimmers of hope that things might be changing. I have often observed athletes, when off the field (or off the court, or out of the ring, whatever the milieu), are what our young people today would term "air heads." They exhibit difficulty counting beyond 20 without the use of any appendages other than fingers and toes. This is known as "jock mentality." Lest we hasten to brand only athletes with this appellation, think of the movie stars, the TV figures, and those infernal rock stars who come off as having the same mentality. To carry it further, look about our own environment. How many surgeons do we know who, once out of the operating room, are just "blah"? How many pathologists, outside the laboratory, or how many of our colleagues in *any* of the specialties do we know who, away from their arena, seem to be "ciphers"? Particularly, how many professors, out of the classroom (and many times in the classroom), can't hit the floor with their hats?

Let me hasten to caution, however, that we should be careful in painting all "jocks" (athletes, performers, professors, etc.) with the same brush. There comes to mind a personal experience with one of the greatest boxers of all times, in my opinion, Joe Louis. Back in the early 60s when I was a smoker, I was seated in the smoking section of an airplane when Joe came on board and sat in the first row with his wife. The entire crew came one by one to greet him and shake his hand, and I was sitting just a few rows back, thrilled to see one of my idols in the flesh. The plane took off and Mr. Louis decided to have a cigarette and came back into our section and took the only seat left open—next to mine! We chatted and somehow got on the subject of civil rights (remember, this was before civil rights became a reality). In the course of conversation, Joe told me of his being asked by a major civil rights enthusiast what he was doing for

the movement and his reply—which I'll never forget—was, "I'm behavin' myself."

The profundity of the simple statement brings to mind the Ciceronian, "What is true, simple, and sincere is most congenial to man's nature." I always urge our young physicians to maintain their competence by keeping up their education; to be accessible or to see that someone is available in their absence; to deport themselves as exemplary persons in the community; to lead decent lives; to care about and for their patients. This all sums up to the simplistic but timeless categorical imperative iterated by Joe Louis, "Behave yourselves." By "behaving ourselves" we won't need placards, propaganda, or public relations firms, for things will go our way—over time—if we "behave ourselves." Thanks, Joe Louis.

More recently, Dr. Robert Avant, current president of the American Board of Family Practice, and I spent a most pleasant and enlightening couple of hours with the baseball superstar, Dave Winfield. Winfield is a zealot in trying to help youngsters shun drugs. He has created a foundation devoted to do all it can to eradicate what has become the number one problem in our country today. What really impressed us, in addition to Winfield's dedication, was his articulateness, brightness, use of the language, general demeanor, and his affability. In my residing in a university for decades, I have yet to meet a Ph.D. with any combination of these qualities—especially affability.

We hope to establish a partnership with Dave Winfield and try to get family physicians who care about the drug problem to work with us and the Winfield Foundation, as well as the community as a whole.

Would that so many others with the affluence and education dedicate themselves as Winfield has. We hope to work closely with him and get our people involved in every community where there is a Diplomat of this Board. Again, we learn from an athlete there is more to life than being wealthy and talented. No jock mentality here! It is called *caritas*. Thanks, Dave; you're a superstar twice over!

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