

KEEPING SPORTS IN PERSPECTIVE

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I would like to share with my colleagues an excellent May 13th article by Steve Politi of The Star Ledger entitled "Spygate Shouldn't Concern Congress." It emphasizes the importance of Congress remaining focused on critical national issues such as the economy, healthcare, education and the war.

[From the Star-Ledger, May 13, 2008]

SPYGATE SHOULDN'T CONCERN CONGRESS

(By Steve Politi)

If Congress really wanted to make a difference in our lives, it could hold hearings on how to make our most annoying sports storylines go away. Start with the endless debate over Joba Chamberlain and his eighth-inning celebrations, then move to Roger Clemens' creepy personal life.

Then, and only then, should Washington tackle "Spygate," which has dragged on through an entire season and has the legs to make it to training camp. No matter what Roger Goodell declares today after meeting with fired Patriots video assistant Matt Walsh, the NFL commissioner can't get rid of this one himself.

Arlen Specter will see to that. The Pennsylvania senator plans to meet with Walsh this afternoon, and it's hard to believe he'll emerge from their conversation and tell the world that the matter is settled. Which means, sometime in the near future, Bill Belichick could be packing his hoodie for a trip to Washington and another unnecessary sports-related hearing.

Specter is another politician who has figured out that the quickest path to easy publicity—and to getting noticed by his football-loving constituency—is to take on a sports issue. Why settle for C-SPAN when you can get on ESPN and a few hundred sports radio stations, too?

Congress can make an impact on a sports issue occasionally, as it did with steroids in baseball. Without those early hearings, Major League Baseball would have continued to take its time cleaning up the sport and Mark McGwire might have a bust in Coopers-town.

But what, exactly, would society gain from a hearing into the Spygate mess? Is it to set an example for kids who might steal signals at their Pop Warner games? To distract us from rising gas prices, the struggling economy and the million or so more important issues?

"Congress has a legitimate reason to conduct hearings on any number of issues in sports," said Stephen Ross, director of Penn State's Institute for Sports Law Policy. "The question is, what are they looking at? Steroids is a legitimate public problem. Whether a mass on Roger Clemens' butt is evidence of steroid use is not."

Specter insisted recently that "we have a right to have honest football games," but the Founding Fathers must have forgotten to include that with life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. NFL games should be fair, of course, but the responsibility for keeping them that way belongs to the NFL.

Goodell fined Belichick, who was caught taping signals at the season opener against the Jets last fall, \$500,000 and docked the team a draft pick. He should have suspended Belichick, too, to send a message that even the league's most successful coach is not above the rules.

But Goodell is the one who should make that decision. Walsh apparently will arrive at the NFL offices in New York today without a smoking gun—reports from February that Walsh had taped the St. Louis Rams' walk-through before the 2002 Super Bowl were false.

Walsh did turn over eight tapes made from 2000 to 2002, which further confirms what we already know: Belichick is a cheater. He has been scolded and embarrassed, his legacy as a coach tarnished forever. Do another eight examples make it more tarnished?

No one can ever say for sure what impact taping signals had on the Patriots dynasty. The answer is probably more than the NFL wants to admit, and less than the posse chasing after Belichick with the torches thinks. Dragging the coach and commissioner to Capitol Hill won't clear up a thing.

"If the sole focus of the hearing is, 'What did Belichick do and when did he do it?' I agree it's hard to see the need," Ross said. "Whether it becomes the football equivalent of a discussion of Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes, well, that remains to be seen."

It is hard to believe that Specter's motives are pure. Beyond the usual grandstanding for the cameras, his secondlargest political contributor is Comcast, which is battling the NFL over fees for the NFL Network. Tops on the list? Comcast's Washington lobbying firm.

Soaring cable bills! Now there's a good topic for a Congressional hearing. We love a good conspiracy, but the only way Spygate resembles Watergate is how long it has dominated the news. Bill Belichick is not Richard Nixon. He shouldn't be heading to Washington.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise today to enter into the RECORD votes I would have cast had I been present for rollcall votes 306 through 316. I was absent on Tuesday, May 13th and part of the day Wednesday April 14th due to personal reasons.

If I were present I would have voted, "yea" on rollcall vote 306, "yea" on rollcall vote 307, "yea" on rollcall vote 308, "nay" on rollcall vote 309, "nay" on rollcall vote 310, "nay" on rollcall vote 311, "yea" on rollcall vote 312, "yea" on rollcall vote 313, "yea" on rollcall vote 314, "yea" on rollcall vote 315, "yea" on rollcall vote 316, and "nay" on rollcall vote 317.

HONORING PFC WILBUR J. (WEB) FENBERT FOR BEING NAMED 2008 VETERAN OF THE YEAR

HON. JIM JORDAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I am honored to commend to the House the distinguished service of PFC Wilbur J. (Web) Fenbert to the United States of America during World War II. PFC Fenbert will receive Veteran of the Year honors at an Armed Forces Day celebration breakfast this weekend.

During his time in the military, Web served in the 4th Armored Division which was the spearhead of the 3rd Army as it pushed into German territory. Web was an ambulance driver and moved casualties to field hospitals. In 1944, on Christmas Day, his division moved into Bastogne, and casualties had to be evacuated to the field hospital in Chaumont. Web bravely made seven trips through German artillery shell fire as he carried 22 wounded soldiers to the hospital.

Web's closest call was in a combat offensive called Task Force Baum while involved in a mission to liberate the concentration camp at Hanneburg, Germany. The camp was sixty miles behind German lines. Web picked up five casualties from a battle at Schweinhaim and took them back to the field hospital. Once there, he was ordered not to return. Although the Task Force reached Hanneburg, they ran into a Panzer Division on their return. All Task Force members were either killed or taken as prisoners of war.

Web has many war memories. One is of seeing General Patton and General Eisenhower directing traffic at a crossroads outside Bastogne. Another memory is of liberating POW camps such as Moosburg. He said that Buchenwald was the worst. Web said, "I'll never forget the stench or the heinous scene." Web was also at Foshenbroke, Germany, where General Patton was killed, and he attended the funeral.

At the end of the war, Web turned in his ambulance which had 29 shell holes and said, "I wasn't even scratched."

RECOGNIZING THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF J. MICHAEL DURNIL DURING HIS TENURE AT ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognize the significant contributions of J. Michael Durnil, Ph.D., to Roosevelt University. Dr. Durnil will leave Roosevelt University, where he has devoted his talents and energies for the last 15 years, for the newly created position of Senior Vice President for GLADD, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation in Los Angeles.

Throughout his career at Roosevelt, Dr. Durnil has been a staunch advocate for students, especially those who are the first in their family to attend Roosevelt, a protector and promoter of the university's image, reputation, and history as an institution of higher education founded on the principles of social justice and academic excellence, and a devoted cheerleader for Roosevelt University at both the Chicago and Schaumburg campuses.

During his time at Roosevelt, Dr. Durnil rose quickly through the ranks, beginning as Dean of Students, serving as the Campus Executive Officer for the Schaumburg campus, and eventually being promoted to Vice President for Administration and Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees. In spring 2004, he was honored as an American Council on Education Fellow, a highly prestigious appointment made