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The disappearance of the gentleman athlete, or What is the value of sports anyway?

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Quad 136

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The Disappearance of the Gentleman Athlete, or What is the Value of Sports Anyway?

In *The New Criterion* author Emily Esfahani Smith laments the disappearance of the gentleman athlete, as epitomized by Princeton hockey player Hobey Baker.

In her article she also references a recent controversial *Atlantic* article by Amanda Ripley entitled, “The Case Against High-School Sports.” The articles, taken together, focus on the worst in sports, either at the professional level in Smith’s case or in certain obsessive high school environments in Ripley’s case.

Much of the athletic activity in this country takes place in leagues for youngsters, in schools, in intramurals and at the varsity level in small colleges. Almost all to good effect. I could name dozens of gentleman athletes, past and present, from MIAC teams alone, and one of the most striking things to me as I talk to alumni of Saint John’s University is the significant learning that they attribute to their athletic endeavors. Of course, as in all things, winning can be over-emphasized, but on net there is little doubt in my mind that athletic endeavors are great for young people and can build character and teach valuable life lessons.

The learning that takes place in gyms, on playing fields and on courts is an important and powerful compliment to learning in the classroom, at all levels of education.



Photo: Erik Ternsjö, SJU '17

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