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Bulla Bulla

Ken Briggs | Jul. 27, 2014 NCR Today

In case you haven't seen it, the cover story on the latest Notre Dame alumni magazine is "Why We Love Sports." The cover illustration shows a football stadium full of hoopla over a game in progress. Really. Who wudda thought?

The story is pristine fall foliage and hard cider. Need I remind you why we're nuts about athletic competition? The tribal chumminess, the crackling air solidarity, the thrill of battle, the distractions from the daily grind, the love of the home team, the taste of the gods? This account will refresh any thrill-of-victory-agony-of-defeat forgetfulness. Here in the confines of mother alumnus, we rise above our ordinary selves and belong to the ages. If you're not already thankful enough for the benevolence that urges us on, drink from this cup of blessings.

No story tells the whole story, of course, and so it is with this one. It might occur to you that in real life the rapture of fandom is tainted just a tad by the lure of money enriching the coffers of dearest alma mater for the collective ego of its following. You might have to play "spoil sport" by reminding your die hard fellow loyalists that love of hating the other has animated many a pep rally and fourth quarter. Then, despite yourself, you may recall that the youngsters who bang heads on their way to victory could well lose their minds this side of 50 and agonize from vertebrae that never thereafter worked right.

So long as we keep our eyes on the bigger picture, however, we needn't let these twinges of "negativity" ruin the fun and the intimations of immortality in Wordsworth's words. Man up and enjoy it. Do you think for a moment that those imperial Romans got all upset at the suggestion that those carefully recruited gladiators might suffer permanent injury? Of course not. Who believes those diagnoses anyway? Maybe other kids, but not ours. And aren't 18 year olds capable of deciding for themselves anyway?

So fight on, keepers of our flames. If enthusiasm should flag, remember that there's a whole good-will "gaming" industry to lend a major hand in keeping television revenues soaring and that there will always be plenty of volunteers to do our bidding at whatever cost.

But back to the reveries.

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