

Scandals: Sports Edition

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Entertainment

Midnight Facts for Insomniacs

Podcast Transcript

(Note: transcript consists of
episode outline)

Duncan, apparently I don't look like my voice. According to listeners, anyway. We've heard this recently because people are seeing us for the first time on livestreams and on Instagram and I'm not sure how to interpret it because I kinda like my voice, I didn't in the beginning but now I think it's pleasant and if my face is unlike my voice that makes me think my face must be something other than pleasant: but hey, you can find out for yourself on our Instagram we have a bunch of clips of us doing livestreams and after midnight episodes, and you can also be part of those livestreams and our upcoming livestream mailbag episode by joining our Patreon @patreon.com/mffi for as little as three dollars a month. And if you DO visit our Instagram or Patreon, tell me why I don't look like my voice. What were you picturing? My life experiences and romantic track record I guess

have led me to believe that I am not an unattractive person...I'm talking about body count here. But maybe I have overcome my facial deficiencies with sheer charisma, who knows. And btw totally unrelated but don't forget to leave reviews, insomniacs, our download numbers are growing but we haven't seen any reviews for a while so if you haven't left a review on Apple or Spotify or preferable both...you can borrow someone's iPhone and bust out a quick five stars. And don't forget about the upcoming mailbag episode, you can join discord to ask a question in the mailbag channel or join patreon to actually participate in real time.

Ok, so there was a little controversy about this episode. As usual one of the insomniacs in the discord proposed this topic, I believe the username was CthulusCrypt, and my research minion llamatrauma added it to the biweekly poll, and of course the discord community voted—and by the way for any new listeners that's how we choose topics so feel free to join our free discord community and jump into the action. But that's when things went slightly sideways. And I'm going to take the mature route, I'm going to go ahead and be the bigger man in this situation, and blame llamatrauma. It was her fault, she misinterpreted. No, I don't

really know exactly what happened but how it all shook out was that the insomniacs voted for a third installment of our scandals series. We've covered music scandals and movie scandals and in this case they voted for gaming scandals. But that is not the topic we're going to discuss today. For two reasons. one is that I interpreted the original topic differently, and second and most importantly, I don't wanna. I'm just not feeling an hour-long chat about videogame scandals right now, because I had interpreted that suggestion to be about sports scandals, which is something that I find really fascinating and fun and there are some ridiculous sports scandals out there that we ARE going to cover today. And I don't know if I am wrong, only the wise CthuluCrypt knows what was in their heart, other than apparently darkness and evil, based on the name, but ultimately it doesn't matter because like Eric Cartman, I do what I want. But I promise this, I will give you guys a gaming-scandals episode eventually. Just not today. And also I know we did an episode about sports recently, strange and unusual sports, so it's a little weird to be doing another sports themed episode so soon, but that one was fun and I think this one will be too. So we're going with it. Sorry, not sorry.

And btw, the vote was a tie, so I already know what our next episode topic will be. And if you drop into our discord "vote" so you will you. As long as you are not Duncan.

Rosie Ruiz

Back in 1980, a previously unknown marathon runner named Rosie Ruiz shocked the nation by winning the women's title in the 26-mile Boston marathon with an incredible finish time of only two hours, 31 minutes and 56 seconds, the third fastest time ever recorded by a female marathon runner. Her victory was a historic achievement...not of athleticism, but of sneakiness. Perhaps the most impressive element of her win was that anyone believed it was legit, and that she got away with the farce for as long as she did. Questions were raised in the days immediately following her victory...questions that probably should have been raised immediately after she stumbled from the crowd and joined the race a half mile back from the finish line.

A Cuban immigrant who had been working as a secretary at the time of her win, Ruiz was interviewed after the race by previous winner Kathrine Switzer. When asked about her marathon experience Ruiz claimed that she had run the 1979 New York marathon in two hours

and 56 minutes, which would indicate that she had shaved 25 minutes off of her best finish time over the course of only a year, a dubious claim that clearly raised suspicions in the mind of interviewer Katherine Switzer.

Rosie Interview

Audio Recording ·
11.9 MB



So to what do you attribute your victory? Do you credit your leg strength? " People keep asking me about legs, what are these legs of which you speak?" I love the interviewer throwing shade, the "mystery woman winner — we missed her at all our checkpoints." go figure. She was not fooled. The mystery of the mystery woman was solved within a week. First, it turned out Rosie had lied about the New York race, she had bailed on the New York marathon after the first 10 miles claiming an injury, then hopped on the subway and cruised to the finish, where she was assigned an incorrect time by a clueless volunteer. And while there is certainly no law against having a criminal history while being a fast runner— in fact maybe it makes sense that those two things would be related—Rosie's history of grand larceny, embezzlement, and forgery

did raise a few eyebrows among reporters. Analysis of more than 10,000 checkpoint photos as well as eyewitness accounts soon confirmed what everyone suspected: Rosie had jumped out of the crowd somewhere between a half mile to a mile from the finish line, and cruised to victory on fresh legs and sheer audacity.

MarathonWitness

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Audio Recording ...



This was a victory of chutzpah if nothing else. Rosie passed away from cancer in 2019 and I'm almost tempted to give her props simply for being an agent of chaos and boldly effing the man...and maybe I would, if it wasn't for Canadian runner Jacqueline Gareau, who ACTUALLY won the race and was deprived of her moment in the spotlight. You work your ass off, you put in the hours, and then some scammer blows by you in the last stretch of the race, what a soul crushing experience.

Black socks

The most iconic sports scandal in history was one of the first that ever

became a media phenomenon. The Chicago White Sox made it to the World Series in 1919, just two years after winning a championship. The owner of the White Sox was the notorious penny pincher Charles Comiskey, who himself had been a player so you'd think he would have had more sympathy and been more generous but some people are just trash humans. Comiskey was able to take advantage of the fact that there was no players' union at the time, and in fact there were a bunch of rules that made playing baseball a lot like being an indentured servant. Baseball contracts had what was known as the "reserve clause," which forbid players from switching teams unless they were expressly released by the team owner. So they had essentially no leverage to bargain for wages. The reserve clause was technically illegal because it violated the Sherman antitrust act of 1890, and also logic and human decency. The Sherman act had been put in place to prevent employers from colluding, fixing prices/wages and otherwise disadvantaging their workers. But by the early 1900s baseball was already considered a storied American pastime, it was the only major national sport of the era, and so Congress decided that it was in the best interest of the nation to make sure that it remained profitable for the team owners. in

order to exempt baseball from this rule, baseball was officially categorized as "an amusement," rather than a form of interstate commerce. It's amusing to starve your workers, I guess. The reserve clause would remain in place until the last few days of 1975. That is crazy.

Now the reserve clause might have been beneficial for the owners, but it contributed to resentment among the players and made them much more susceptible to the lure of making a quick buck through game fixing. For anyone who doesn't know, fixing a game or throwing a game means that you intentionally try to lose. You are pre-determining the outcome of the game, which allows gamblers to make large and safe bets because they know who will win, and then the players get a percentage of those winnings. Some of the players might even place a few bets themselves, anonymously or through intermediaries. Throwing an occasional game can be very tempting for players who are upset with ownership, or feel that they are not earning a fair wage. After all, it's tough to prove that a player is committing errors on purpose, i mean everyone has a bad day, so it probably feels like a low-risk strategy to make some easy money. *Extremely* easy money, because you don't even really have to try. You

have to try *not* to try. Turns out it's a lot harder to be good at a sport than it is to be bad at a sport, so making money for sucking must be tempting. At least it would be for me. There's only one thing stopping me from throwing a World Series. Pesky talent. If I were good at a sport I would throw so many games, that's like playing a sport and also taking a vacation at the same time. However, throwing a baseball game is not as easy or uncomplicated as it seems. First, some acting is required. You can't make it obvious that you're throwing the game, because that's a crime. And if you just sit down on the field and refuse to play, the GM is going to replace you, so you have to act like you're making an effort while in reality making an effort to do poorly despite looking like you're making a genuine effort. The effort math is complicated. Also, baseball is one of the more challenging sports to fix, because individual players can rarely determine the outcome of a game on their own.. .In a solo sport like tennis one player can successfully throw a game because it's an individual contest and whether you win or lose is up to how you play. But a team sport like baseball is different. If the team is extremely talented, one player doing a bad job probably isn't going to be able to swing the results one way or the other. To reliably and

successfully fix a game, you need at least a couple of key players—or a whole bunch of mediocre players—to be in on the swindle. A typical baseball team has 26 players, but only eight can be on the field at once, and those players can be substituted or rotated out if they're tanking. In the case of the 1919 White Sox, there were two factions, the so-called "clean socks" who were not in on the fix and some of them probably didn't even know it was happening, and then the eight players who would end up being known as the black Sox, led by the menacing first baseman Charles Arnold "Chick" Gandil.

Here's Gandil explaining his version of how it all started, a.k.a. blaming someone else, his bookie Joseph "sport" Sullivan.

"As I recall, we were four games in front the final week of the season, and it looked pretty certain that the pennant was ours. I was kind of surprised when Sullivan suggested that we get a "syndicate" together of seven or eight players to throw the Series to Cincinnati. As I say, I never figured the guy as a fixer but just one who played for the percentages. The idea of taking seven or eight people in on the plot scared me. I said to Sullivan it wouldn't work. He answered, 'Don't be silly. It's been pulled before and it can be again.' He had a persuasive manner which he

backed up with a lot of cash. He said he was willing to pay \$10,000 each to all the players we brought in on the deal. Considering our skimpy salaries, \$10,000 was quite a chunk, and he knew it." Gandil may have been lying about the details but he certainly wasn't lying about the significance of the payout... An average yearly salary even among the highest paid players on the team was around \$2500. Btw Inflation is crazy. it's so interesting to me that an amount of money is meaningless, a million dollars is only a lot because we've decided it is and the economy is good. It could be worth pennies tomorrow. So sleep well, insomniacs, all of our savings accounts are totally secure and will definitely last is through the remainder of our lives.

On September 21, Chick Gandil hosted a meeting in his New York hotel room among potential conspirators, including star pitcher lefty Williams and also Buck Weaver, the only player who would be punished despite never receiving any money. He turned down the payout but kept quiet about the plan, and so he would be banned from baseball along with the others for life. As it turned out, Weaver might have been one of the only conspirators actually capable of keeping his mouth shut, because a backup player on the team named Fred McMullin found out about the

scheme and threatened to blow up everyone's spot if he wasn't let in on the payout. So he also got a cut, despite being useless to the plot. I would wanna be that guy. "It is true that I cannot meaningfully contribute to this scheme but on the other hand I would like some money.

If you don't give me money no one gets money. So where do we go from here."

Now obviously as a result of all the flapping mouths word quickly hit the streets; before the series commenced, rumors began circulating among gamblers and the media that a fix was in. Just days before the first game of the series, bets on the Red Sox to win poured in and caused the odds to tilt in their favor, which must have severely pissed off the gambling syndicate that was behind the scheme because suddenly their potential payout had dropped precipitously. This syndicate btw was led by Arnold Rothstein, nicknamed "the brain," who was head of New York City's Jewish mafia. And I was two days ago years old when I learned that there was a Jewish mafia.

Now even though seven or eight conspirators had signed on (and we will soon address the fact that I can only give a ballpark figure, rim shot) it was still going to be a tough

scheme to pull off because as mentioned, baseball players rotate throughout the games of the series, and even within individual games. And there were more than twice as many players who weren't in on the scheme. The crooked contingent included many of the most important and pivotal players, but there was the previously referenced group of strait-laced players who would become known as the clean socks, most of whom weren't even approached because the conspirators knew they wouldn't be on board. Perhaps the most important of those was starting pitcher Red Faber. But when Faber came down with the flu right before the series started, the likelihood of being able to pull off the fix had suddenly skyrocketed and the conspirators went all in.

In the first game of the series, on the second pitch, crooked pitcher Eddie Cocotte hit the batter in the back, which was the signal to the gambling syndicate that the fix was a go.

And it might have been a little too successful right out the gate. The White Sox lost the first game 9 to 1. So they were doing a great job of intentionally losing but maybe not a great job of looking like they weren't intentionally losing. they made the second game a little bit

closer, losing 4 to 2. And whether it was because of heroic efforts by the clean socks or to avoid accusations, Chicago won game three via a score of 3 to 0. They lost game four two to nothing, and at that point the gambling syndicate, feeling good about the direction this was heading, coughed up 20K for the players to divide up among themselves as a show of good faith. And When Chicago lost game five by a score of 5 to 0, it seemed like a done deal. The Reds were now up 4 to 1 in the best of 9 series, just one win away from the championship.

but around this time the Jewish mafia began getting a little wishy-washy on their \$10,000-per-player promise. The agreed-upon payout suddenly dropped by half, to 5k. The conspirators would later claim that at that point they rebelled, and began genuinely attempting to win the series, and the white sox did dominate the next two games. But if the players' story is true, it was too little too late...or maybe they had a change of heart when the mafia reportedly made them an offer they couldn't refuse. There is a commonly cited tale indicating that a large and unfriendly individual visited Lefty Williams the night before game eight to give him a little reminder of the deal. Lefty was the starting pitcher for what would prove to be the final game of the

series, and the White Sox lost game eight decisively by a score of 10 to 5.

Now there is a glaring hole in the story, and anyone who knows about the scandal or has seen the mainstream movie about it titled *Eight Men Out*, is cursing my name right now. There was one pivotal element that we haven't talked about, and it's difficult to discuss because there's so much blurring between legend and reality. It's hard to know what's true about shoeless Joe Jackson. Played in the film by the almost equally legendary John Cusack, I'm a huge fan, shoeless Joe was an enigma. He was one of the greatest baseball players of all time, an icon among young fans, but he allegedly admitted to participating in the scheme when he testified in front of a grand jury on September 28, 1920—and there is evidence that he was paid and kept the money. But if shoeless Joe attempted to underperform in the World series, he failed spectacularly at his efforts to fail. When it comes to attempting to perform poorly, this was the poorest attempted poor performance that I've ever seen. shoeless Joe set a World Series record with with 12 base hits—a record that wouldn't be broken for around 40 years—and he led all players with a batting average of .375. He committed no errors. The

other seven players would eventually acknowledge that Jackson didn't attend any of the conspiratorial meetings. A commonly accepted version of events is that Jackson had in fact attempted to set up a meeting with general manager Charles Comiskey in order to spill the beans about the scheme but was rebuffed, and Another common tale is that he initially refused to take the money and Lefty Williams eventually tossed it on his hotel room floor and walked out. However there's no way of knowing for sure what Shoeless Joe would have said in that meeting with Comiskey, since it never happened, and there weren't any \$5000 donations to charity around that time so if the hotel room confrontation actually occurred, apparently Jackson wasn't so broken up about the scandal that he didn't ultimately keep the money. His supposed confession to the grand jury might have been the result of pressure by his lawyer who convinced him to sign an immunity agreement that required an admission of guilt, and the lawyer may have even plied him on the day of the confession with whiskey, according to legend. This becomes slightly more believable when you find out that the lawyer, Alfred Austrian, had been appointed by the white Sox organization when shoeless Joe was unable to afford

his own representation. So his lawyer was appointed by the organization that was accusing him of fixing the series. And I guess maybe the fact that he couldn't afford a lawyer is evidence that he didn't keep the money? Although it would've been pretty stupid to bust out \$5000 for a lawyer while publicly professing your innocence, so who knows.

Ultimately, based solely on evidence I don't understand how anyone could believe that a this guy was guilty, and certainly there wasn't enough evidence to convict. The standard for conviction is beyond a reasonable doubt... any reasonable person would have some doubts. In 1993 a statistical organization analyzed the entire season and concluded that Jackson's performance was consistent all year, there's just no evidence you can point to that actually indicates any wrongdoing. However, the black Sox scandal led directly to the creation of the position of a baseball commissioner, and the first commissioner, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, came out swinging. Even though all of the players were eventually acquitted by a jury, Landis decreed "no player that throws a ballgame; no player that undertakes or promises to throw a ballgame; no player that sits in a

conference with a bunch of crooked players and gamblers where the ways and means of throwing games are planned and discussed and does not promptly tell his club about it, will ever play professional baseball" *No player who looks in the direction of a guy who heard about this scheme from a friend of a friend of an ex gf will ever come within fifty miles of a baseball game again.* And none of them ever did play again. Including Buck Weaver, who rejected the money, and shoeless Joe, who maybe ditto. And if you've ever wondered where the phrase "say it ain't so" came from, it wasn't Weezer, but was instead a misrepresentation of a quote that was erroneously attributed to a young boy who supposedly confronted Joe outside of the courthouse. Say it ain't so, Joe. And it wasn't so, and neither was that story, because the quote actually comes from the title of an article in the Chicago daily news.

Minnesota Vikings boat party scandal

2005, Lake Minnetonka. And I'm not saying that I chose this particular sports scandal because I wanted an excuse to keep saying Minnetonka, but I'm also not saying that I didn't do that. triple negatives ftw.

October 6, 2005. This scandal started with a 911 call; a woman who lived on Lake Minnetonka (woot) reported that seven black men were urinating on her front yard. When she yelled at them one of the men said "it's just water." Which...not true. And not really the point, I think she was more upset that seven giant men had their wangs flopped out and were defiling her grass. It was the principle of the thing.

That call would be the first falling domino of a chain reaction leading to public reveal of the infamous Minnesota Vikings sex party. Quarterback Duante Culpepper, cornerback Fred Smoot, and 15 other members of the Minnesota Vikings football team had gathered on lake Minnetonka along with approximately 100 imported prostitutes—these ladies of the night were flown in from Florida and Georgia to perform elaborate sex acts on two houseboats. The sex acts took place ON the house boats, the house boats were not recipients of the sex acts, to clarify. 100 prostitutes for 17 football players sounds like a lot, like I realize these are big guys but still. That's like 5 1/2 prostitutes per player. Greedy, Jesus. Save some prostitutes for the rest of us. 5 and a half is a scary number of prostitutes. I get a little creeped out by the idea of dividing up

prostitutes...it's not great when there are decimals involved. This was a Jeffrey Dahmer sex party. However as I understand it there were only 17 football players but a lot of other male participants. These guys had entourages. I guess my biggest issue with all of this is why couldn't you just employ some local strippers. Minnesota, the state that pays your salaries, doesn't have strip clubs? Or they're just not up to your standards? Minnesota listeners, why do your strip clubs suck? And Minnesota Vikings, Whatever happened to supporting your local sex economy? Hometown titties. Show some Minnesota pride, rather than showing your massive penises to old ladies.

According to Attorney Stephen Doyle witnesses claimed that the party included "Masturbation, oral sex, woman on man, woman on woman, toys, middle of the floor, middle of the couches, middle of the room." that's very geometrically specific. Middle of the couch, not to either side. I guess that makes sense, we mentioned these are big guys, you don't want some type of teeter totter situation, girls being ejected out the windows, stripper defenestration left and right. Middle of the floor, middle of the room, that makes sense too, these were houseboats, and you basically had a

herd of cows having sex on a small floating platform, got to keep it centered. No off-axis banging.

Other details,, the attorney claimed that the cleaning crew found "used [condoms](#), [K-Y Jelly](#), Handi Wipes, wrappers for [sex toys](#)" and said "it was just incredible how it was left. Never in the history of this group of people have they ever had anything like this." I'm actually surprised at how responsible that seems. Hand wipes and condoms, this was a surprisingly safety-oriented group of degenerate scumbags.

Investigations indicates that the purported ringleader was the aforementioned Fred Smoot, he had rented the houseboats and arranged transportation for the strippers. And he also took the lead when it came to pure debauchery, at one point he is alleged to have utilized a double-headed dildo on a pair of women who were prone on the floor. Meanwhile Bryant McKinnie performed oral sex on a woman on the bar, an act that Fred Smoot would later describe in a Reddit "ask me anything" thread as "runnin through the okra patch." I don't have an explanation for that, and it skeeves me out, but I couldn't deprive you of that detail. McKinney and a few other men were also witnessed *receiving* oral sex while sitting in some deck chairs, and that

seems fair. There was giving and receiving, it was an equal opportunity sex party.

Another player who was confirmed to have been on the boat, running back Mewelde Moore, denied that he was involved in the hedonism; he was quoted as saying "Sex? What are you talking about? Is that what – man, that's crazy. Sex? Come on. Look man, I'm engaged so... none of that. Thing about that... that – that put me in trouble." so he definitely had some sex. spoken like a man who cheated rampantly on his fiancé.

The Scandal would alternately become known as the love boat scandal or the Smoot scandal. "Smoot" makes it sound even filthier than it was. Like a dirty sanchez...I'm going to get in the bathtub and I want you to give me a full smoot scandal.

The event would become national news, resulting in humiliation for the Vikings organization and all of the individual players involved. Four of them were charged with misdemeanors, and coach Mike Tice was fired shortly thereafter, probably for other reasons as well but at least in part due to the fallout from the scandal. He didn't even get any oral sex, he should have at least took a run through the okra patch on the boat if he was going to

suffer the consequences. If there's a moral to the story it can only be, always attend the sex party because you're probably going to get fired regardless. that is the only possible lesson that can be learned from this story.

Danny Almonte

Now we're heading back to baseball; in the last baseball scandal we saw how a few bad apples could be undermine the accomplishments of an entire team, and we learned that because baseball is the consummate team sport, it takes more than one crooked player to swing the results one way or the other. I was very clear about the fact that no single player can win or lose a baseball game and carry or tank an entire team on their own. That wasn't true. Or at least, it's only true for the major leagues. It turns out that little league baseball isn't quite the same

The Little League World Series takes place every summer in Williamsport Pennsylvania, and in 2001 the sports world was buzzing about a young pitching phenom from the Dominican Republic who was playing for New York's Bronx Baby-Bombers, named Danny Almonte Rojas.

He was already 5 foot eight at 12 years old and capable of throwing a

78 mph fastball. Since pitchers usually add about 20 mph to their pitching speed in the intervening years between Little League and the major leagues, his 78 mph pitches were the equivalent over 100 miles an hour if you extrapolate to his future potential. I watched clips of his games, this kid was throwing heat. In fact he pitched the first perfect game in Little League World Series history, a game against Florida; that means he didn't allow a single base hit. In all he struck out 62 off 72 batters, another record, allowing only 10 of his opponents to make contact with the ball.

It was a historic accomplishment, and suddenly there was even more hype and publicity around this hugely talented and genuinely just huge 12 year old. Almonte was skinny but he towered over most of the other kids. but the additional scrutiny as a result of his success would end up being his downfall. The Bronx baby-bombers didn't actually win the championship... there's a weird rule that if you have pitched in the previous game, you cannot pitch in the next one, i'm assuming it's to save these kids' arms? Pitching is brutal on the body. So Danny was actually ineligible to pitch in the championship game and his team lost by a score of 8 to 2. However they were then eligible to compete for third place and with Danny

pitching they won.

Intrepid reporters quickly uncovered the fact that Danny's birth certificate was fake, and they found his real one indicating that he was 14, two years older than the cutoff. His parents appear to have been the primary perpetrators of the scheme, hoping to raise Fanny's metaphorical stature in the eyes of the media by taking advantage of his physical stature. A couple of years difference may not seem like much, but the years between 12 and 14 are especially pivotal in the maturation process of a human. That's typically when many of us hit puberty and get a major growth spurt, lots of other spurts are happening too, it's a volatile and explosive time.

To be fair, I think I need to acknowledge that when I was 14 years old there's no way I could have thrown a 78 mph fastball. I can't do that now, there's no age at which I was or will be as talented as this 14 year old kid. That's the same issue when it comes to doping...you can complain about Barry Bonds but all the steroids in the world aren't going to make any of us normies able to crush a baseball into the stratosphere. If it were that easy— if there were a shot that could imbue talent—we'd be a nation of jacked uber-athletes. So

yes, Danny Almonte was two years older than he was allowed to be but he was also a an absolute badass stud of an athlete at 14 years old, and I'm sure he was a freakish athlete two years earlier as well and it wasn't really his fault that his parents lied about his birth year. It's crazy to me that this kid gets all this blame, he was 14, he wasn't capable of masterminding a scheme. He was just kind of getting away with some shit because nobody did their homework. Blame the media. The lamestream media... it's fake news! No. Moving on.

2000 paralympics

One of the reasons I like this week's topic is because it's largely inconsequential. At the risk of being disrespectful to the few people who have were dramatically affected by Barry Bonds getting a little too swole, there aren't many sports scandals that matter in the grand scheme. A few gamblers lose some money, a few athletes get cheated out of their rightful victories, a generation of impressionable young fans have their innocence stripped away and their faith in justice and decency irreparably shattered, standard insignificant stuff. But this one is in a different league, so to speak. It wasn't just shady, it was genuinely evil. Maybe I'm exaggerating but you can decide for

yourself.

The 2000 summer Paralympic Games took place in Sydney Australia. Now the Paralympics are a little bit different from the special Olympics. The special Olympics is specifically for athletes with intellectual impairments, while the paralympics was initially limited to people with a broad range of *physical* disabilities. But in the late 1990s the Paralympic games expanded the disability categories to include intellectual as well. And this was a little bit of a challenging concept for me to tackle, because at first glance it might seem like having a mental impairment wouldn't affect your ability to play a physical sport, But if you think about it, every sport requires mental acuity. You have to make decisions with split second timing, you have to have spacial awareness and an understanding of all of the rules and complexities of the game and be able to apply them in real time. in fact, I'm a basketball fan and there's a term that you will often hear being used to measure an athlete's prowess: basketball IQ. And keep in mind, it's not like you had athletes with physical disabilities competing against athletes with intellectual ones. There were separate categories, and separate competitions; the 2000 summer Paralympic Games included an entire basketball

tournament specifically for intellectually disabled athletes. One of those athletes was Ramón "Ray" Torres, who was chosen captain of the Spanish team. immediately upon arriving in Sydney and meeting his teammates, he told his sister on a phone call home, "what's strange is that, you know, they're not strange." that might sound a little insulting but first, just to clarify it is a direct quote from Ray, but also it makes sense because in my experience, anything that sets you apart and makes you feel different is something that you are especially attuned to. You can detect it in other people. I have legitimate diagnosed OCD and it does impact my life in very significant ways, and I tend to have a sense of when other people are afflicted with anxiety disorders. I'm not always correct, but I'm correct more often than not. So Ray felt that the other players seemed strangely not strange; in fact, there was only one other player that he found himself bonding with: Juan Barreja. Juan and Ray became friends and companions while the other players essentially shunned them, and refused to socialize. However, despite the lack of team chemistry and the seeming acrimony on the court, the Spanish team went undefeated and beat Russia for the championship. It was a proud moment for Juan and Ray,

But Ray couldn't help noticing after the championship that while he and Juan were excited and reveling in the attention, their teammates were laying low, wearing dark glasses and avoiding the media.

But the other players' attempts to stay under the radar would be unsuccessful, because a photo of the winning team was published in a Spanish newspaper, and many friends and acquaintances of the players back home in Spain were shocked to find that their long-time coworkers (or teammates on semi-professional basketball squads) suddenly identified as intellectually disabled. As you've probably guessed, Juan and Ray were the only players on the team with actual disabilities.

This is a crazy story, because there's yet another big plot twist. It turns out that one of the players who was not disabled was actually an undercover reporter named Carlos Ribagorda, and after winning the gold medal he flew back to Spain and published a blockbuster story alleging that seven of his nine teammates had not actually undergone any testing to verify that they had an IQ below 75. Rather, their credentials had been faked and manufactured in an elaborate scheme involving team doctors and psychiatrists and the players

themselves all under the direction of mastermind Fernando Martin Vicente president of the Spanish Sports Federation for People with Intellectual Disability (Feddi) and vice-president of the Spanish Paralympic Committee. Which is wild because Vicente was responsible for allowing athletes with intellectual disabilities into the Paralympics in the first place, and has a daughter with an intellectual disability.

The scandal had been a long time in the making. A previous coach who had been with the team from 1996 to 1998 witnessed and described the beginning of the process. He recalled how the team showed up to world championships in Brazil to find they had four new mystery players.

“One of them was an engineer, another one was working the financial department of a famous radio [station] another one was the manager of a department store, and the other one was in the third year of university”

He reported to the Paralympic federation but he had no proof and nothing was done, so he resigned. Two years later, all of the players with intellectual disabilities had been squeezed out except for Juan and Ray.

It took 13 years to resolve the legal disputes and finalize the trial in which Fernando Martin Vicente was found fully responsible and fined \$7000. Cool. I'm sure he paid the fine immediately by running out to his car and digging the money out of his seat cushions. No one else would end up being punished, although it was literally impossible for Vicente to have acted alone, and oh by the way there were six not-disabled players on the team who decided they were going to whoop a bunch of mentally handicapped athletes for some money and a free trip to Australia, yet none of them were meaningfully punished. many of the players would claim they'd been given the impression that they didn't need to have a mental handicap to play, and that they would be helping raise the profile of the sport, a dubious claim if I've ever heard one. You're not wearing dark glasses and avoiding the media because you're super proud of your charitable acts.

As a result of the scandal, all of the basketball players who competed on the championship team were stripped of their medals, including Juan and Ray, and athletes with intellectual disabilities were barred from competing in the next two cycles, the Athens and Beijing Paralympics. And this is where these scandals have real impact,

and why this one is so evil, Ray and Juan were innocent victims in this, as were all of the other athletes that lost to the Spanish team including the Russian team who probably would have won. And think of all the athletes who were disqualified from competing for the next eight years when they were in their prime. Now this is all kind of a touchy subject but part of the reason given for banning athletes with intellectual disabilities from the games is that it's just incredibly difficult to prove or disprove whether someone has an intellectual disability. The Paralympics had been simpler before, if someone is missing an arm that's relatively easy to verify. But if a person can hold a job and drive a car but struggles academically or doesn't do well on IQ tests, is that person mentally deficient or just proficient in specific areas and deficient in others, like most of us? It's also very easy to purposely bomb an IQ test. Which has always been my excuse. It's surprisingly not hard to get answers wrong. so I do understand how this is a thorny issue for the Paralympic organization, because there is a spectrum of mental disability and it's very hard to tell someone, "maybe you have *some* mental challenges but we don't think that you are impaired enough to

compete in these games"... you're basically saying, you're not smart, but just slightly too smart to play basketball for us. it's just a weird situation to be in. I guess you run into that a little bit with the traditional Paralympics, like how much of your body has to be missing, I'm not kidding, like if you have two fingers missing you're not going to qualify for the Paralympics. But what if one guy is a full arm amputees and another guy has a decent- sized stump...see this stuff is really hard to talk about, but these are some of the genuine questions that you have to ask to try to make things fair. it's just so much more difficult with mental impairment. Just throwing this out there but there were tons more accusations that year implicating other teams in being guilty of the same shenanigans, but none of *them* were investigated. Most people who are versed in the scandal believe that this type of cheating was widespread, in an effort to raise the profile of the games.

I listened to a radio series from the BBC-/it was actually hosted by an athlete with intellectual disabilities who, as a result of the scandal, was barred from competing during the peak years of his career as a swimmer—and he talked about the fact that many people like him were locked out of one of the most

pivotal and transcendent experiences of their lives because of these selfish bastards. and I'm sure you'll understand now why I chose this one for the finale, because it is the saddest and most depressing story from this topic and thus it was the appropriate note for us to end on. Like I said, most of these scandals were lighthearted and inconsequential, but I was thrilled to find one that could compete, so to speak, with some of the rock-bottom endings we've had lately.

By the way, you'll notice a glaring omission here, we didn't talk about doping scandals. That's because there are so many of them that they deserve their own episode. We'll cover Lance Armstrong and Barry bonds and the whole swollen-headed , juiced up testosterone crew in the future, I'm looking forward to that one. But we'll wait a while, I'll give you a break from sports...for at least couple weeks.

We have a new maniac! Woot-woop! We need an airhorn effect. We probably have one.

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I like that, what a classic name, feels British: "Oscar Watkins I presume,"

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Just Alex. Not a lot we can do with that, smart guy this Alex.

And a minion, Connor Shackleton, who I believe was already a patron, we've had a lot of returning patrons recently because Patreon's been acting funky so if you randomly got booted out of Patreon it had nothing to do with us, and we

absolutely love to have you back. I know it happened to Nathan and a couple other people. So we apologize on behalf of Patreon and also we'll talk about this in a future episode but you can now link your Patreon to Spotify and listen to your Patreon feed in the Spotify app.

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