

MORE THAN A GAME: WHY ATHLETICS?



Athletics suffuses our culture and influences us from youth rec to professional sports, from elementary school to college, from child to adult, from fan to critic. Eight ideas for why athletics engages us so powerfully:

1. **Social Sustenance:** an accessible context of diverse opportunities for cultivating important elements of identity through relationships and activities now institutionalized by our culture. e.g., adolescent identity formation; fan and civic franchise loyalty.
2. **Joy of Creation:** a Gen 1:31 celebration of motion, precision, beauty, expertise, and mastery that expresses our deep appreciation for God's gift of the body and community.
3. **Synthetic Righteousness:** an artificial Law-based world including codified rules of conduct and an order of priests and judges in which works are rightly rewarded and justice prevails.
4. **Vicarious Living:** a spectator-driven system of socialized behaviors through which a small set of actors enable a large population of observers to participate in rewarding activities via the mirror processes of the brain.
5. **The Capitalist Prevalence:** parallel to capitalism, a manifestation of competition, dominance, and control of the environment, whether as the legacy from Cain and Abel or the African savannah.
6. **Tradition and Ritual:** a social-cultural system imbued with customs, affinities, and activities that link us to family, tribe, and a predictable sequence of socially attaching and binding events (e.g., gatherings, food, seasons, etc.).
7. **Cognitive Complexity:** an intellectually stimulating and challenging system of changing environments which appeals to pattern-seeking and problem-solving reinforced by a reward schedule and pattern completion.
8. **A Life Narrative:** a chronological and teleological theme (usually less or more interlaced with a few others) internalized for meaning and significance about "what's going on in [my] life."