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I've been rambling in my column for the last several weeks – not unusual perhaps as constant deadlines combine with PTSD in creating this confusing brain-warp I am subjected to daily. Trying to focus more narrowly is of little use when one is also assaulted with other stories on similar topics from around the country. Making sense of it all is almost a full-time job, one that has served more than one career, I'm sure.

One of those careers is that of a well-known political writer, David Halberstam, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist for his early work in Vietnam. His favorite job though was as a sports writer, which he inserted into his more 'serious' life and in his book, *Everything They Had*, a collection of his best sport-related articles over five decades, where he explains his love of sports of all kinds in several different ways.

One story is about meeting with James Carville – a huge power figure in the time of Bill Clinton – and discovering that at this posh Washington, D.C. New Years Eve party, the subject was not about politics. It was instead about a backup catcher for the 1949 Boston Red Sox, Matt Batts, who was from the same town as Carville. The 40-minute conversation never touched on any political statement or question and in the words of Halberstam was made more enjoyable because 'He did not have to spin me and I didn't have to spin him.'

Years later, at a dinner in New York City crowded with top political people and media stars, and other wealthy and accomplished men and women, Halberstam allowed the other guests their ego-time before dropping his bombshell, very casually, into the conversation. He announced to the assembled guests that the next day he would be flying to Islamorada, Florida to interview Ted Williams, perhaps the best hitter in Major League Baseball. All eyes turned to him

immediately, making him think of Tom Sawyer, who had sublet his chores – which they willingly paid for – to his friends in the Mark Twain classic novel.

Now, I am not a writer even close to the equal of Halberstam, or Twain. My work is very provincial, though I have interviewed some major figures, but always after their careers are over: David Thompson and Marv Levy to name a couple.

Sports is not always about these legendary men and women. There is a lot of talk and words used in discussing local boys and girls having good seasons or good high school careers. That is my ‘beat.’

Then we hear the other stories, too: players attacking other players, coaches, referees, and fans physically; the inherent dangers of football vs soccer vs baseball vs basketball; irate parents storming the field during and after games; out-of-control coaches; and too many other tales, good and bad – that seem to take up a lot of time and space.

Are sports – or any athletic endeavor – meaningful in America? Whether you like them or not, the answer has to be a resounding YES!

For almost 100 years, America has blossomed into a country in love with athletic competition of all sorts. Aside from the top money earners, various splinter contests have emerged like American Ninja that capture the imaginations of many. Extreme sports also draw large crowds and a growing interest among the more athletic, sometimes with little in the way of payout.

Meaningful is a word not defined as being important to everyone, but it is the correct word in this case. And this subject is important, it seems, to almost everyone. At some point, we all have a ‘need’ to see what we or others can do, regardless of size, muscle-mass, speed, or even intelligence. Americans like to compete in almost everything they do, even if they are reluctant to admit it.

Well, another weekend has passed, and another Homecoming as well. Hope you enjoyed all the festivities as I did, despite the outcome of the game. I’ll be back at it again this Saturday at

the Route 66 Bike Race and maybe I'll see you there, too.