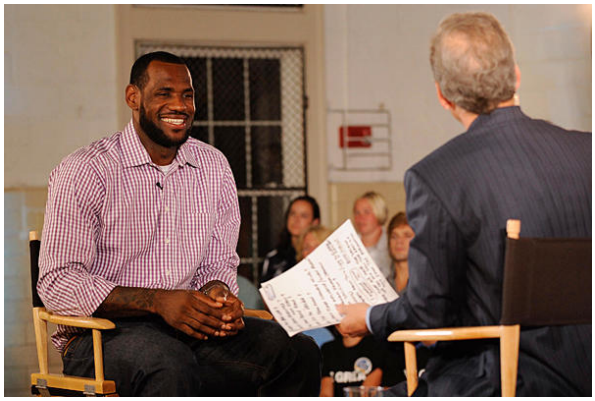


As the world of respectable professional journalism slowly fades away like a diseased, dying rat, it's fascinating to see what takes its place.

Trained, seasoned reporters are substituted for "citizen journalists," another term for primates with opposable thumbs who can summarize the French Revolution in less than 140 characters. Thought-provoking programs focused on intelligent debate are replaced by "personalities" screaming at each other while spewing rage and rhetoric.

And investigative reporting, made famous by Woodward and Bernstein in their historic coverage of the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s, has been replaced by a much prettier and easier-to-understand aspect of our culture: "movies."

ESPN, always a leader in the field (except when it comes to March Madness – oopsy, Bristol, didn't see much of you last week), eagerly jumped on board this gravy train, turning itself into a bona fide Universal Studios of the 1930s over the past few years, even adopting the subsidiary "ESPN Films." (For just a second, consider the news equivalent of "CNN Films" and you'll begin to conceptualize the potential conflicts.)

As disgusting, manipulative, and cocksure as ESPN is in most of what it does, its recent "30 for 30" documentary series was remarkably well-done, primarily because the network turned to proven, independent directors to create the documentaries and more or less stayed the hell out of the creative process.

Its "fictionalized" movies, on the other hand are, shall we say, less respected. The wildly bloated

The Bronx is Burning four years ago took a wonderful book about the socioeconomic climate of New York City in the 1970s combined with the drama of 1977 Yankees, and turned it into a self-glorifying eight-episode miniseries (equaling the epic *Roots*, by the way) primarily focusing on what incredible assholes Reggie Jackson, George Steinbrenner, and Billy Martin truly were.

Tom Sizemore's portrayal of Pete Rose in *Hustle* in 2004 was just weird, and other curiously unnecessary films such as *A Season on the Brink* and ill-conceived series such as *Playmakers* and *Tilt* have been, at best, unremarkable.

So clearly, it's only a matter of time before The Worldwide Dealer in Sports turns its attention to the greatest sports drama to take place during the limited memory span of anyone willing to watch *SportsCenter* five times in a row on a Wednesday morning: LeBron James' heart-wrenching "Decision" in the summer of 2010.

And here's the bad news, guys. I'm afraid the following should be read as a scroll in yellow text marching up a black screen:

Little did we know as we tried to survive this miserable sports year that the GALACTIC ESPN EMPIRE has already secretly begun construction on a new "Decision" project even more powerful than the first dreaded "Decision" telecast – a manipulative vehicle with enough power to destroy the truth behind the entire story. When completed, the film will spell certain doom for the small band of Cleveland fans struggling to restore respect to their city.

Striking from a hidden base, Cleveland spies have managed to steal the secret plans to ESPN's ultimate project, LEBRON: THE MOVIE, and below they are published for the first time.

ESPN Films Presents

LEBRON: THE MOVIE

“The Decision” Was Only Part of the Decision...

CAST

LeBron James played by Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson

The perfect fit: a muscular, dim-witted meathead capable of “acting” for up to three minutes at a stretch.

Of course, to better understand the complex, tortured Shakespearean soul that is LeBron James, there will be several flashback scenes from his childhood, including one in which he nobly steals the Cross of Coronado away from a bunch of grave-robbers and leads them on a frantic chase across a circus train in which he falls into a pit of snakes and tames a lion with a whip.

After it’s all over and LeBron is forced to give back the cross, Lou Gehrig, the leader of the

grave-robbers will step forward. Gehrig, played by Alec Baldwin, will take his Yankees cap off his head and place it atop LeBron's.

GEHRIG: You got guts, kid. Wear this whenever you leave the house. And if anybody makes fun of you for wearing it, that means they'll never understand you.

(We flash-forward to LeBron wearing the cap at the Indians-Yankees playoff game in 2007 and now understand that the ever-heartless Cleveland fans just don't get it.)

Another crucial flashback will be one of the most chilling scenes of the movie, taking place on the night the Cavaliers win the 2007 Eastern Conference title. After the game, LeBron returns home to his modest tri-level in Parma and is settling in to watch a Disney movie with his wife and kids when there's a squeal of tires outside and suddenly bricks crash through the front windows.

While the wife and kids cower in the darkness, LeBron pulls several pieces of paper rubber-banded to the bricks and sees they're scribbled with hateful messages.

"No matter how many Basketball Super Bowls you take us to, we'll never love you!"

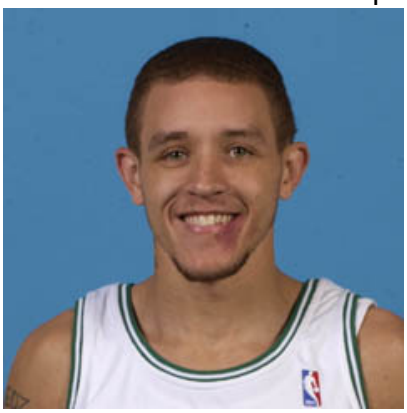
“Boobie and the big white Russian guy won it for us, not you!”

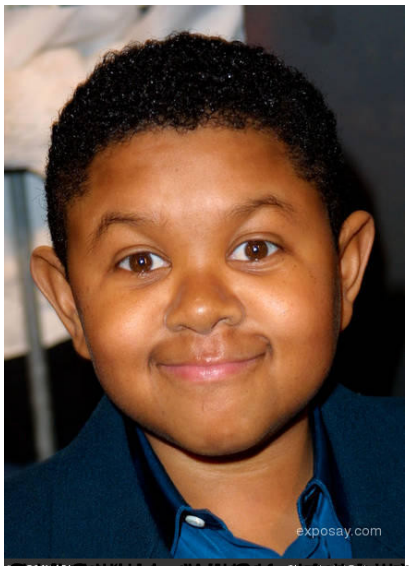
“Go back to Akrun and make some rubber!”

(One tear rolls down LeBron’s innocent cheek.)

Delonte West played by Emmanuel Lewis

Granted, the actor we knew as Webster hasn’t really worked in 20 years, but he’s the natural choice to play the annoyingly short thorn in LeBron’s side and personify the reason LeBron could never carry the Cavs to a title.

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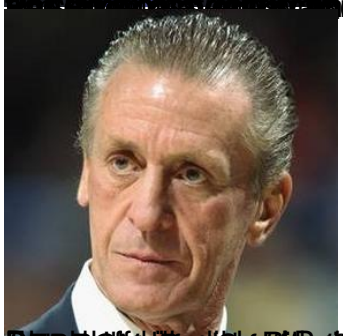

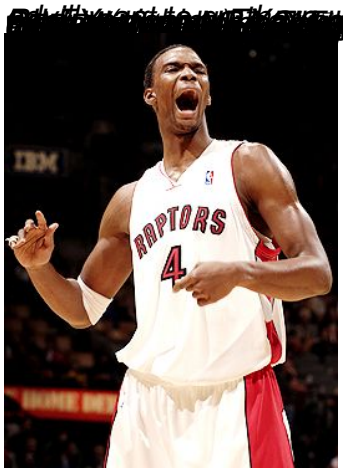
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