

Concours CPGE EPITA-IPSA-ESME 2022

Anglais

Synthesis et short answers

Should You Care About What Athletes Think?

By Jay Caspian Kang 4 October 2021 in the New York Times

Correction of summary: 300 words for 10 points

The article begins with the story of Kyrie Irving, a star NBA basketball player who could not attend a press conference in person because he had not been vaccinated. This created media attention. The author (who is for vaccinations) writes about how famous athletes participate in the national debate about managing covid and vaccinations. He questions the importance of celebrities' opinions about political issues.

The example of Charles Barkley is given. He was a famous NBA player who, in the 1990s, refused the status of role model, saying he is paid only to play basketball. This attitude is different compared to today's athletes.

In the past, players were more protective of their privacy, which the media was trying to exploit. Nowadays, players are more willing to express their views. Their sponsors encourage this. Players now use the media to cultivate their image as a brand. Their views, even political ones, can be part of that image.

George Floyd's death in 2020 resulted in many protests. The NBA and sponsors mobilized to join in the criticism. The author feels that this was perhaps sincere, but it didn't last, proving that it was superficial. He suspects that sponsors are exploiting the media coverage. It showed him the NBA was a bubble, cut off from reality.

One main point: the ambiguity of media coverage. LeBron James promoted his new movie and was outspoken about racism and police brutality but thought vaccinations were off limits.

Then comes the example of Magic Johnson, an NBA superstar who, after testing HIV positive in 1991, actively contributed to fighting this disease. His impact here is undeniable, perhaps because he is more famous than Kyrie Irving or because the cause of HIV was less controversial.

Mr. King concludes that athletes can influence the public but "should not have to." From the public's point of view, people should not assume a celebrity's opinion is more valid than anyone else's.

Correction of conclusion: 200 words for 10 points

Here students are on their own to present their view of the facts, ideas and arguments contained in the article. The best answers show direct references to, or quotes from, the article. Fewer points (maximum 5/10) are awarded to students who merely give their opinion.

Short answers

1. It means that the attention of the media and public is attracted to the most famous person, and that fashionable details such as how a person behaves, or what he is wearing, or which player is appearing, overtakes the political message.
2. Le Bron James indicated that he supports vaccination by stating that he'd been vaccinated, but he did want to promote it, indicating that he does not believe it is an issue of the greatest social or political importance.
3. It is their right to do so. And if the cause is "right," then their actions may be seen as "right". People who disagree with the cause will be more likely to feel that the athlete isn't right. Either way, the public should not take them too seriously. In that case the athletes' actions would be less problematic for people.