



# Youth 81

FEBRUARY

Would You Like to Be a  
**PRO ATHLETE?**  
By Herbert W. Armstrong

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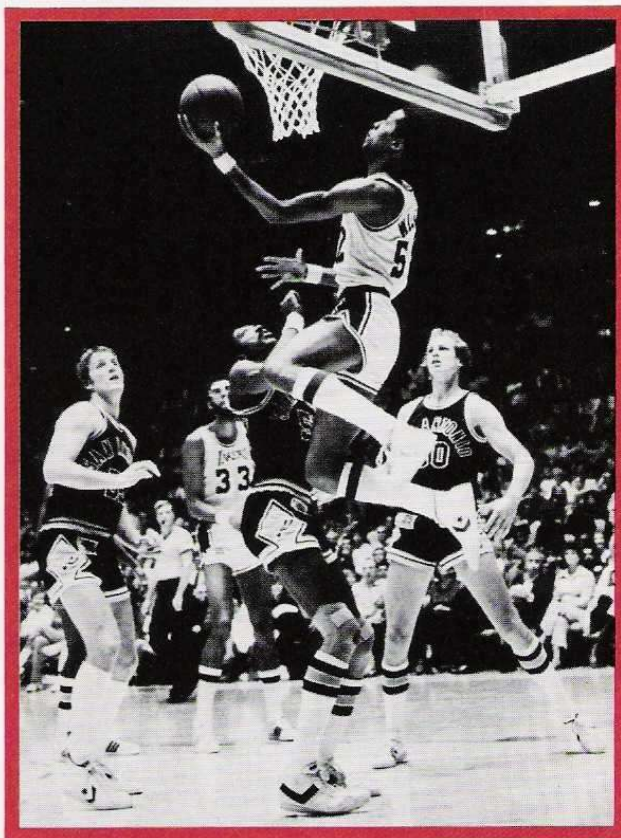
*Many high school boys look at the glamour of becoming a pro athlete — some make a million dollars or two the first three years. But read here what happens after that three, five or seven years!*

By Herbert W. Armstrong

**M**ANY GUYS IN junior high and high school find they are real good in basketball, football or some other sport. They become excited over the glamour of being a pro. They hear of the million-dollar salaries some “big-name” pros get for their first one to three years’ playing on one of the big pro teams.

“Oh, boy! What big guys they are!” they think. The girls swarm around them for autographs. They are **BIG NAMES**, big shots.

Many big-name colleges and universities are taking advantage of kids who think that way. Even in the big universities, sports have become **BIG BUSINESS!** Now maybe you didn’t know much about that. But it costs lots of money to build huge stadiums seating 60,000 to 100,000 fans at a big football game. It costs big money to send basketball teams — a squad of at least 11 or more besides coaches, assistant coaches, trainers and managers — to other schools sometimes



clear across the country. The universities charge big admission prices to see games. In a season this may run into millions of dollars. Most people don’t think about it, but sports is **BIG BUSINESS** in big universities, and the university president and athletic director are good businessmen — and they are after that “almighty dollar.”

So what do they do? To make more money — draw bigger crowds — sell

more admission tickets — they must win more and more games.

So they employ at big salaries some guys the public doesn’t hear much about — trained scouts. These scouts visit high schools all over the country. They attend important high school games. They spy out the **BEST ATHLETES** — the guys who have natural physical ability to play better than others. Then they talk privately to these best athletes and to their parents. They tempt them with the idea of becoming a big-money pro if they make a big name for themselves in college.

Now the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the association of the big athletic universities, has very strict rules about paying any money to college basketball, baseball or football players. But these scouts have been finding ways to offer fellows who are fine athletes with their bodies, but dim-brains with their minds, a way to go to college and take easy courses such as “basket weaving,” that will be easy for them, or even enroll for courses and then skip classes altogether, and still “graduate,” so they may become pros. Also

Photo courtesy LA Lakers

they manage an under-the-table way to pay these men money while in college without being caught — or, in many cases, they slip money regularly and secretly to the parents of the athlete, and try to keep it quiet. In the last year five of the “Pac 10” universities of the West Coast have been CAUGHT at this kind of cheating game against the NCAA rules, and were made ineligible for playing in bowl games at the end of the 1980-81 football season. But now what about the “big-name” PRO athlete?

John Johnston (that’s not his real name) had been a big-time defensive player on the New York Knicks basketball team. He had made big money, but he spent it as fast as he made it — sometimes faster. Now he is retired — an “OLD MAN” physically, as a pro. His life’s career is now behind him. He has his second wife and a family of five children to support. And his “fabulous salary” is all gone — spent on high living. John never learned to even read. He can’t read a newspaper. When he lived high and took girls to fancy restaurants, the girl always had to read the menu for him. In his athletic career he never had to learn even to think for himself. The coaches, the team management and, after marriage, his wife, did the thinking for him. In college and pro sports he had a lot of free time on his hands — although it was high-pressure work during practice and games. But John never learned to use his MIND!

And now, although he remained a pro longer than many, he is retired — an OLD MAN and only 32 years old!

One of the greatest names in sports was Joe Louis — the famous “Brown Bomber.” Many still think Joe Louis was the GREATEST fighter who ever fought in a prize ring! But with Joe it was “come easy, go easy.” He spent all his money. You can see Joe now any time. He is at the entrance inside of the famous “Caesar’s Palace” hotel in Las Vegas. They provide Joe with a room and board just for being there to shake hands and greet people who remember what a “GREAT” athlete he was.

Fellows and girls who read *Youth 81*, think about this! You are NOT living in GOD’S world! You are living in SATAN’S world. When you get to Ambassador College you will learn the TRUE VALUES. Satan has blinded

his world with FALSE VALUES of life. Satan wants youths to think that the greatest thing in life is COMPETITION and SPORTS. Satan is a great DECEIVER and he has deceived this whole world. Now WHAT does GOD say about sports? Not much. Just this little sentence: “Bodily exercise profiteth little” (I Tim. 4:8). Other translations word it “only a little.”

Our physical bodies do need some exercise, but not the overabundance many athletes give them.

To some young men of high school age, a pro athlete is looked upon as the greatest of men. Another prizefighter knew this, and got into many sports-page headlines, bragging, “I am the



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GREATEST!” I mean Muhammad Ali. Many thought *he* was the greatest fighter of all time. But after his last fight at Las Vegas, Oct. 2, 1980, Ali was only 38. But he was *finished!* His brain had been a punching bag for quite a while. Next morning newspaper headlines on sports pages said, “Ali’s Last Hurrah Is Without Any Cheer.” Another, “The Ballad of Muhammad Ali: A Sad Song at the End.” Another, “Ali’s Last Hurrah Nothing to Cheer About.” Another, “Ali Grows Old, and It Hurts.” One newspaper story spoke of Ali as “the relic he is, a three-time champion now blasted with antiquity.” AN OLD MAN, only 38.

May I give you a comparison? God raised me up to be His apostle, and to teach you His TRUTHS and give you wisdom. I am not 38 like Ali — I’m just a real YOUNG man compared to him — but I’m past 88! And I’m still running STRONG in what God called

me to do — and doing more work now than when I was 28 or 38!

God sent me to be an example for you who are growing into mature manhood and womanhood. Sure, I’ve had bodily exercise — A LITTLE! But not the over-amount of a professional athlete. I did play tennis occasionally, but never like a pro who plays all the time. In eighth grade and high school I skated up the river about three miles to school. I did some roller skating. In high school I ran the mile, but I only trained in my second year, and then my best time was 5 minutes flat on the Drake University track. At age 12 to 14 I played football part of the time, and my nose bone was bent over a little lopsided by being kicked in the face.

Yes, even though I didn’t really know God then, I think He kept me from going too far into sports. If Jesus were to be on earth today, as He was more than 1,950 years ago, you may be sure HE WOULD NOT GO INTO PRO SPORTS — AND PROBABLY NO SPORTS AT ALL. Especially where there is the kind of COMPETITION people seem FOOLISHLY to believe in today — where you “GET” the “ecstasy of winning” and the “AGONY of defeat.” In Christ’s world tomorrow, we won’t have the kind of sports COMPETITION where the other guy, the other girl or the other TEAM has to SUFFER the “AGONY OF DEFEAT.” God doesn’t want any of us to have to suffer “AGONY” or cause an opponent to suffer “AGONY”!

Competition that is HOSTILE competition, where you try to BEAT the opponent and try to cause the other to LOSE, is Satan the devil’s kind of competition. In God’s Church we just don’t have that kind of competition.

Jesus taught us to LOVE our neighbors — the other guys — as much as we love ourselves.

Satan has the whole world BLINDED! Turn to II Corinthians 4:4 and read that for yourself!

Fellows and girls, I am not an “old man” and never expect to be. When God gives us everlasting life, we shall never grow old. Pro athletes grow “old” because their bodies wear out, and they never use their MINDS! My mind is BETTER now, in my 89th year, than when I was 21 — and getting BETTER all the time. Follow my example and ENJOY LIFE — FOREVER! □