SHOULD WE ADMIRE ATHLETES?

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Abstract: I defend the view that the admirability of sporting achievements is a function of their difficulty and the value of their aim. I present an argument by Tännsjö that purports to show that athletes should not be admired. According to Tännsjö, admiring elite athletes commits us to having contempt for failures; I show that my view does not have this implication. My view entails that although athletes can deserve admiration, existing practices of admiring sports heroes are importantly flawed, as they either (i) involve admiring people for things that are beyond their control or (ii) commit us to having contempt for the unskilled. On my view, negative feelings towards competitors are justified only when they exert insufficient effort or aim at the wrong goals.

Our practices of sports fandom raise some interesting and troubling ethical questions. Many sports fans *admire* their sporting heroes for their abilities and accomplishments. Does this make sense? Do athletes deserve praise and admiration for being good at sports? I will put forward a view about admirability that entails that sporting achievements can be admirable, but also calls into question common practices of admiring star athletes.

Admiration is just one part of being a fan. We can be fans just by *enjoying* sporting events. Fans of perennially losing teams might not admire the team's relatively unskilled players, but they can still enjoy various aspects of fanhood, such as attending games, heckling the players, and commiserating with other fans. In this chapter I put those enjoyments to one side and focus on the appropriateness of admiration.

1. CONTROL

To say that someone is admirable is to say they *deserve* admiration, or they are *worthy* of it. There is no question that people do in fact admire athletes; the question is whether that admiration is appropriate. This raises a general question: what can make someone worthy of admiration?

Let's begin with a plausible principle concerning the relevance of *control* to what we deserve. According to this principle, nobody deserves praise or blame for an outcome if they had no control over it.[1] So for example, if someone knocks me out and drops my unconscious body onto my neighbor's flowers, my neighbor cannot rightfully blame *me* for the squashed flowers. Although it was my body that squashed them, I had no control over what happened. I was merely unlucky. Perhaps they can blame the person who knocked me out, if that person had control over what they were doing. The same goes for admiration: nobody can deserve admiration for something over which they had no control (Persson, 2005, p. 73).

According to an extreme view, nobody has the slightest bit of control over anything. Everything that happens is determined by previous events, and there is nothing anybody could do to make things go otherwise; we are just like cogs in a great machine. If this is true, then it seems nobody can deserve praise or blame for anything, including athletic achievements. Ultimately, nobody is responsible for their athletic abilities, or any other abilities they have. An individual's abilities are the result of genetics and upbringing, neither of which the individual is responsible for. So you can't be praiseworthy; nor can you be blameworthy. It is luck that you have the genetic makeup and the parents that you have, and you can't be praiseworthy or blameworthy for the circumstances that you lucked into.

[1] See e.g. Nelkin 2019 for critical discussion of this principle.

In response, you might think: but athletes train hard to become good at their sports! Surely they are responsible for that at least! Saying they are "lucky" makes it sound like they just won a game of chance. But why do they train hard? Because their genetics or their upbringing made them the kind of person that will train hard, and they had no control over their genetics or upbringing, so they cannot be responsible for what results from it either, like having a good work ethic. They won the "natural lottery."[2]

If this view were true, it wouldn't mean that you can't appreciate or enjoy sporting achievements. You can enjoy them in something like the way you enjoy a sunset, as a beautiful thing that happens sometimes. You just can't rightfully *admire* anyone for such achievements.

Few of us can accept this extreme view. It commits us to thinking that we can't admire a moral saint for her generosity, and that we can't condemn a heinous killer for his brutality. How exactly to account for the possibility of genuine praiseworthiness is difficult, and leads us into questions about freedom of the will. We can't solve such problems here. I am not suggesting that the argument should be dismissed, but for the purposes of this chapter, let's suppose, in accord with common sense, that it is at least possible for us to have some control over some outcomes, so we are sometimes worthy of praise or admiration. (If you disagree with this supposition, then you can consider the rest of the chapter as having a conditional conclusion: if anyone can be admirable, athletes can be.) We can now ask whether sporting ability or achievement is the sort of thing that could make someone praiseworthy or admirable.

According to one more moderate view, we should admire athletes, not for *who they are* (which is something for which they are not responsible), but rather for *what they*

[2] For a recent defense of this line of argument in a sporting context, see Persson (2005, pp. 77-80). This line of argument has a long history; for more context and possible responses, see O'Connor and Franklin 2020 and Nelkin 2019.

achieve. We have control over what we do, not who we are. But this view is hard to maintain. There is no sharp line between who we are and what we do. Sometimes, *being a certain way*, such as being strong or skilled, is the very thing we are trying to achieve. Athletes may train hard in order to make their bodies have certain features. Those features are both the things they achieve and also part of who they are. If we have control over anything, we have control over both what we do and who we are.

Supposing that we do have some control over things, we shouldn't think that control is all or nothing. Control comes in degrees. There are things we have no control over, such as the genetic makeup we were born with. There are things we seem to have a great deal of control over, like whether to throw a fastball or a curveball. Then there are lots of cases that fall somewhere in between; they are a combination of control and luck. If you get no credit for something over which you had no control, then it would make sense to say that you get *more* credit for something the more control you have over it. For example, a good professional baseball player gets a hit not much more than 30% of the time. When he does get a hit, it is often in part due to swinging the bat hard in a certain area of the strike zone, which is something he has control over. But it is usually at least in part due to things he has little control over, such as where the ball goes after he hits it. And it is usually due in part to things he has no control at all over: where the fielders are and how they react, mistakes by umpires, interference by fans, gusts of wind, and so on. The amount of praise the hitter deserves seems to vary depending on how much those lucky factors determine the outcome, which would explain why, for example, Derek Jeter gets (or should get) comparatively less praise for his famous fan- and umpire-aided home run in the 1996 playoffs against the Orioles than for some of his other achievements.

This would explain why people are more inclined to praise athletes than winners of games of chance. If I win at roulette, I won't be praised very much, only envied,

because I have no control over where the ball lands. I have control over the placing of the bet, but I can do nothing to make it the case that the bet wins. On the other hand, when Roger Federer wins a tennis match, it is the result of years of training and preparation. Federer doesn't have complete control over whether he wins, but he has much more control than the roulette winner. Many cases lie between these. Some sports, like basketball, are simply easier if one is taller. Nobody has control over how tall they are. So while a winning basketball player has control over the bodily movements required to win the game, they don't have control over a factor that plays a large role in determining whether they win. In many sports, excellence is highly dependent on parental resources; the best athletes in sports like tennis or golf often have been trained intensively from an early age, something that is not possible for many parents to afford. These factors would all seem to affect the extent to which we should praise someone for their excellence in a sport. To the extent that one's success in sports is the result of things outside one's control, one deserves less praise for one's sporting achievement.

2. ACHIEVEMENT, VALUE, AND ADMIRABILITY

A lot of work has been done to understand the nature and value of achievement. In this section I will explain some common and plausible views about achievement. I don't accept these views, but many philosophers do. I'll show that even if we accept these ideas, they do not carry over perfectly to the case of admirability. The best view about the admirability of achievement will be different from the best view about the value of achievement, but will have some features in common.

According to the views of "achievementists," we can broadly divide the components of an achievement into two parts. First there are facts about what the person was doing: how much effort was the person expending? How difficult was it to

do what she was doing? How complex was the activity?[3] Second, there are facts about the goal that the person was aiming at: what was achieved? Was it something good or bad? (Hurka, 2006, p. 233)

When a person achieves something, the value of the achievement is determined by these two kinds of facts. The better the goal is, the more valuable the achievement; the more effort it took to achieve the goal, the better the achievement is. If two people expend the same amount of effort into achieving their goals, but one has the goal of curing a disease while the other has the goal of counting blades of grass, the disease-curing achievement is better than the grass-counting achievement. Likewise, compare the value of successfully solving a simple math problem when it is done by a grown adult or a three-year-old. On the view we are considering, the child's achievement is more valuable than the adult's.

While achievement is good, failure is bad. If someone expends a lot of effort trying to achieve something, but they fail, this is worse than if they had not expended that effort. This seems to be because they have more invested in the outcome (Portmore, 2007, pp. 6-8). Just consider what a misfortune it can be when someone fails at their life's work. This is an important feature of the view to which I will return shortly.

As Hurka points out, this view of achievement has important implications for the value of sporting achievement. Sporting excellence often involves performing very difficult actions, and training very hard and very long to do them. This makes sporting achievements or excellences valuable to some degree. But we also value achievements for the value of their goals, and on this measure sporting achievements do not fare as

[3] These questions are related, but distinct. Different achievementists take different factors to be relevant. For just a few examples, see Keller (2004) for effort; see Hurka (2006) for difficulty and complexity; see Bradford (2015) for difficulty. Portmore (2007) argues that self-sacrifice is what matters, not these other things. In this paper I am not concerned to make heavy weather over these distinctions.

well. An excellent tennis player is very good at hitting a tennis ball with a racket very hard and making it land on certain spots on the ground. There is no inherent value in there being a ball that does this. This is true of every sport. The goal of most sports is something inherently worthless, like getting a ball to go into a hole or through a net. Achieving these sorts of goals has some value, but not as much as achievements with valuable goals, like bettering people's lives, promoting justice or knowledge, or creating or preserving beauty. (Hurka, 2006, pp. 233-234)

Now let us return to admirability. A simple way to adapt this view about the value of achievement to the question of admirability would be to say that more valuable achievements are more admirable. This has some initial plausibility. Those who invest a lot of effort into an achievement do seem more admirable than those who don't. And those who direct their efforts at valuable goals do seem more admirable than those who direct their efforts at worthless or evil goals.

Where this simple view goes wrong is in cases of failure. If you think achievements are good, it is nature to think that failures are bad. But failures are not *contemptible* simply for being failures. When someone tries hard to do something good, but they fail, we do not think them worthy of hate or scorn, even if we think it is very bad that they failed. Value and admirability seem to come apart here.

My proposal, then, is that admirability is a function of the effort expended and the value of the goal aimed at, and (unlike value) not at all a function of whether the goal is achieved. This view retains some of the implications of the achievementist view about value. Athletic achievements are admirable due to the amount of effort required to achieve them and the difficulty of achieving them, but due to the triviality of the goals of sports, athletic achievements are generally less admirable, other things equal, than achieving valuable moral, social, or aesthetic goals. We should admire star athletes, but not as much those who achieve more important goals. The reader can

decide whether our actual practices of admiration accord with these implications; my own view is that they obviously do not. Now of course, some athletes pursue sporting excellence for the sake of a genuinely worthy goal, such as providing for their family or promoting social justice, or even just entertaining people. Given my proposal, those athletes would deserve more admiration than others. And people do in fact tend to admire athletes for pursuing such goals. But in most cases, those goals are not among the constitutive goals of the sport; they are goals that can be pursued in any number of ways having nothing to do with sports at all, and one can play the sport without having any such goals.

When we combine this view with the considerations about control discussed in section 1, we find other ways in which our practices of admiration are questionable. Suppose that athletes are admirable for the achievements that result from their hard work, but are less admirable for achievements to the extent that those achievements are out of their control. Well, as Torbjörn Tännsjö points out, there are many athletes who work just as hard as, if not harder than, the athletes that have become famous (Tännsjö, 1998, p. 30). Consider how few Paralympic athletes are known to the general public, for example, or consider the relative fame of outstanding female basketball players compared to their male counterparts. And consider Tännsjö's fictional example of the person who enters a world class racing competition having never trained and somehow wins simply through their "natural" running ability (Tännsjö, 1998, p. 30). Tännsjö suspects, correctly in my view, that such a person would be regarded as a sports hero. This suggests that our admiration practices in fact track high achievements on an objective scale, and have little to do with the extent to which the athlete worked hard for their achievement. If our admiration tracks objective achievement, it will to some extent track genetic traits like height, or otherwise lucky factors such as family wealth, and will to that extent be inappropriate.

3. TÄNNSJÖ'S REVERSAL TEST

Tännsjö argues that the admiration of sports heroes is "fascistoid" and, therefore, morally wrong (Tännsjö 1998). If Tännsjö's argument succeeds, then the view I have put forward here must be wrong, since my view entails that sporting achievement is admirable (even if our actual practices of admiration fail to track what is deserving of admiration). So I will use the view I have explained in section 2 to explain what I think is wrong with Tännsjö's argument.

Tännsjö's basic thought is that admiring winners involves contempt for losers. But we can understand this thought in different ways, as shown by this passage:

> If we are insincere in our admiration, and we often are, we cannot *help* but feel contempt for the losers. We would be *inconsistent* if we did not feel any kind of contempt for the losers, once we sincerely admire the winner. (Tännsjö, 1998, p. 26)

These two sentences express importantly different ideas. The first sentence concerns what people *actually think* about losing competitors. The second concerns what it is *rational* for people to think about them. These two thoughts hang together only to the extent that people are consistent, but we are of course not always consistent. It is possible that we don't actually feel contempt for losers, even though we are somehow committed to such contempt in virtue of having other attitudes. While commentators have focused on the first of these thoughts, and Tännsjö's discussion often focuses on how we in fact feel about athletes, I think the more interesting and plausible argument is based on the second.[4]

[4] Holowchak, for example, focuses on the first statement when he says "we seldom show contempt for all nonwinners… contempt is too strong a word for the painful disappointment all fans experience when the athletes and teams that they love fail to win it all" (Holowchak, 2005, p. 100). Likewise, Tamburrini focuses on the first sentence when he says: "no matter how contemptuous, the public's attitude towards these athletes does not seem directly related to admiring excellence. Such a complete lack of valuable qualities results on its own in negative reactions" (Tamburrini, 1998, p. 43). Here Tamburrini is clearly

As I'll interpret it, Tännsjö's argument goes something like this: admiring athletes involves admiring someone for their strength; admiring someone for their strength rationally requires having contempt for weakness; contempt for weakness is a central characteristic of fascism; we shouldn't be fascists; so we should not admire athletes. Debating the nature of fascism, and what is wrong about fascism, is important, but this is not the best venue for such a debate. So I would like to consider a version of Tännsjö's argument that does not directly appeal to fascism at all. The argument goes like this: admiring athletes involves admiring people for their strength; admiring strength rationally requires contempt for weakness; contempt for weakness is wrong; therefore it is inappropriate to admire athletes. We could formulate the argument also in terms of achievements rather than traits: winning is not admirable, because to think so would require thinking that losing is contemptible, so we should not admire the winners of sporting events.

To explain Tännsjö's argument, let us start with the first premise: admiring athletes involves admiring strength. Here it is important to understand what Tännsjö means by "strength." He does not here mean simply the ability to lift or move heavy things. Strength, for Tännsjö, might involve other kinds of physical excellence, such as speed, balance, coordination, or flexibility. These are all different kinds of strengths or excellences.

The reason Tännsjö thinks strength is not admirable is that admiring someone for being strong commits us to having contempt for weakness. It is this contempt that Tännsjö thinks is the core of fascism; but again, let us focus on the claim itself rather than the fascism connection. Granting that we should not hate the weak, why should

talking about how people in fact treat the losers, not how they ought to. And Tamburrini provides no reason to think hatred of the inept would be unjustified.

we think that admiring the strong requires us to hate the weak? Why should admiring the winners require us to hate the losers? Here is what Tännsjö says:

> But our value terms are comparative. So if we see a person as especially valuable, because of his excellence, and if the excellence is a manifestation of strength (in a very literal sense), then this must mean that other people, who do not win the fair competition, those who are comparatively weak, are *less* valuable. The most natural feeling associated with this value judgement is—contempt. (Tännsjö, 1998, p. 27)

Tännsjö's conclusion here is stronger than he is entitled to. As Persson points out, less excellent does not equal contemptible (Persson, 2005, pp. 71-72). Nothing in the nature of admiration and contempt requires us to have contempt for all but the best. We could just as easily run the argument in the opposite direction: if we see a person as especially disvaluable because of their weakness, then this must mean that other people, who are comparatively strong, are more valuable; the feeling associated with this value judgment is admiration; thus, we should admire all but the very weakest. This argument has just as much plausibility as Tännsjö's.

Nevertheless, we can construct a plausible argument from Tännsjö's basic materials. Admiration comes in degrees: we admire one person more than another. The same goes for admirability; someone can be more admirable, deserving of higher praise, than another. If strength is grounds for admirability, then someone who is stronger than another is thereby more admirable; or, to put it another way, the person who is weaker is less admirable.

We can also agree with Tännsjö that admirability and contempt lie on the same spectrum.[5] As we admire someone less and less, our feeling turns at some point from

[5] Some might think 'contempt' is not the right word here; perhaps pity is the attitude that lies on this spectrum. I don't mean to take a strong stand about which negative attitude we should focus on here.

admiration to contempt. Since we've established that it is appropriate to admire someone less for being weaker, it is natural to think that someone could be so weak that contempt would be appropriate. Compare how our attitudes operate in the related domain of moral excellence.[6] Moral excellence or virtue is admirable, and the more virtuous you are, the more admirable you are; but if someone is admirable for being excellent on that scale, wouldn't they also be contemptible for rating poorly on that scale? Indeed, that is how we often think of the morally vicious: people deserve contempt for being cowardly, dishonest or cruel.

In this way, we can see how having great admiration for elite athletes – and, of course, less admiration for the less great athletes – might commit us to having contempt for those who are inept at sports (even if it doesn't, as Tännsjö thinks, commit us to having contempt for the second-place finisher). This is a commitment nobody wants to have, whether it is fascistoid or not. But it seems like the commitment follows just from the nature of admiration and contempt. If there is a feature that makes someone admirable, then there is some related feature that makes someone contemptible. This is the core of Tännsjö's objection to admiring sports heroes, and is untouched by extant criticisms of Tännsjö. We might put the main point in the following way. If you think some feature makes someone admirable, then you must ask: would having the opposite trait make someone contemptible? If the answer is no, then you should rethink your position on admirability. Call this "Tännsjö's reversal test."

It is important to reiterate that we do not need to interpret Tännsjö's argument as saying that we in fact do hate those who are bad at sports, though Tännsjö does think we do. Being bad at sports can lead to ridicule or contempt in some settings, as most who endured American physical education classes can attest to. Even making a single

[6] Tännsjö says we should reject the very idea of moral excellence (1998, p. 28), so he would not accept this argument.

mistake can lead to outpourings of hatred, as we see in the case of Bill Buckner, whose error in the 1986 World Series ended up forcing him to move his family thousands of miles from Boston. But most sensible people do not hate anyone for being bad at sports. The interest of Tännsjö's reversal test is that it seems like such hatred would be justified by the same reasons that justify admiring those who are successful at sports. This is the point that commentators on Tännsjö have often overlooked.

To see how easy it is to adopt a view with problematic implications about contempt, recall the simple view of admiration for valuable achievement presented in section 2. According to that view, the better an achievement is, the more admirable one is for achieving it. That view seems to have the problematic implication pointed out by Tännsjö. If the value of an achievement determines how admirable it is, and failures have negative value, then, according to Tännsjö's reversal test, sports failures deserve contempt. Different views of the disvalue of failure will yield different views about the degree of contempt deserved. For example, you might think a failure is not as bad when the intended goal is less important; since sports have meaningless goals, those failures might be less bad.[7] Nevertheless, since failures are bad, some degree of contempt is warranted.

Tännsjö's argument is very controversial. It is not quite as extreme as the view that nobody has control over anything, because it is consistent with some people being admirable. But it does seem to very sharply limit the extent of admirability. Almost nobody could be worthy of admiration if his argument were sound: not athletes, not musicians, not scientists. To respond to this argument, we need a view that entails that it is appropriate to admire sports heroes but not appropriate to hate the inept and the losers.

[7] Thanks to Anne Osborne for discussion of this point.

The view I sketched in section 2 is just such a view. We must deny that success is a proper basis for admiration. Failures can be just as admirable as successes. The basis for admiration is exerting oneself towards a worthy goal. So failure is not a reason for contempt. But if we accept Tännsjö's reversal test, there will be some reason for contempt even if my view is true. The reasons for contempt must have to do with either insufficient exertion of effort or having a bad goal.

What would count as an insufficient exertion of effort? This depends in part on the goal. If one's goal is worthless, then exerting no effort to achieve it does not seem like a bad thing. Since sports have worthless goals, not trying to achieve them wouldn't be contemptible. This doesn't mean that when your teammate passes you the basketball you shouldn't try to catch it. Your goal in playing a sport is never merely to achieve the worthless goal of putting the ball in a certain spot. The goal is also to cooperate, have an enjoyable competition, develop skills, and so on. It's hard to enjoy a sport or develop skills if your opponent refuses to try. So refusing to put forth effort when competing in a sport makes one worthy of some measure of ill feeling.[8] It is poor sportsmanship.

One might also have an unworthy goal in competing in a sport. Some athletes want to win in order to make their opponent feel bad or to get revenge on an enemy. Those are bad goals. Some ill-feeling towards athletes who compete for such reasons is warranted.[9]

[8] This ill-feeling need not, contrary to what Tannsjo and Holowchak say, require treating the person as less than a full human being (Tännsjö, 1998, p. 27; Holowchak, 2005, p. 102). More argument would be needed to establish that strong claim. I will just note here that when we have ill-feeling toward the morally vicious, we do not necessarily treat them as less than a person; the same goes for ill-feelings towards exhibitions of poor sportsmanship such as failing to compete.

[9] Michael Jordan seems to be admired by some fans for his revenge-fueled performances, even when the target of his "revenge" did nothing more than have a good game. On my view this is not particularly admirable. See for example: https://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/bulls/last-dance-labradford-smith-knew-michael-jordans-revenge-game-was-coming.

So we can accept the general point of Tännsjö's argument, that admiration requires contempt, without being committed to problematic consequences. There are ways of being worthy of ill-feeling in sport, but they have nothing to do with failure; they involve either competing for bad reasons, or failing to compete at all when one ought to be competing.

If we do accept Tännsjö's reversal test, there are implications we need to keep in mind. I have intentionally omitted certain factors from the account of admirability sketched here. Among them are skill and ingenuity. Admiration often tracks features such as these; we admire Federer, for example, because of the great skill he exhibits, even when he loses. But if we accept the reversal test, and we say that skill is admirable, we would have to say that someone who exhibits a complete lack of skill would be contemptible. That is an unacceptable consequence. I would say the same about ingenuity: lack of ingenuity is not contemptible. So if someone wants to say that skillfulness and ingenuity are admirable, they must reject the reversal test. While the view I've presented here doesn't allow me to say that Federer's skill at tennis is admirable, I can say that the effort he put into developing that skill is admirable. Perhaps that is close enough.

Other responses to Tännsjö have been given. Tamburrini argues that elite athletes have traits with important social value, and therefore are admirable, contrary to Tännsjö (Tamburrini 44-45). Admiring people for having socially valuable traits does seem appropriate, prima facie. But if we accept the reversal test, we are then committed to saying that having socially disvaluable traits makes one contemptible. Here surely it will depend on the details. Being prone to murder people for no reason is a contemptible trait that is socially disvaluable, but are all socially disvaluable traits

contemptible?[10] Furthermore, Tamburrini's claim that "the skills and qualities included in excellence are socially valuable" is clearly an overstatement (1998, p. 44). While it may be true of some of the social skills involved (Tamburrini mentions respect for competitors, for instance), it will not be true of the skills involved in winning a game. There is no social value in hitting a baseball or tennis ball outside of its value in participating in that sport itself. Running fast or lifting heavy things might be slightly more useful, but these days, such abilities have less value than ever. If you want to go fast you are better off driving a car. If you want to lift heavy things there are machines that can do it better than any human. Developing these kinds of abilities might make someone healthier, but that is personal value, not social value. And it is these sport-specific abilities that ground the highest praise from sports fans, not their respect for their competitors.

4. CONCLUSION

The view I have defended here is that athletes can be properly admired for their effort and, in some cases, for aiming at a valuable goal. Athletes are generally less admirable, though, than people who devote similar efforts towards more valuable goals. And they are not properly admired for their skills or strengths, or for winning (though they may be admired for the work they put into those things). This view is consistent with the principle that we are not admirable for what is out of our control, and with Tännsjö's reversal test.

Nothing I've said so far entails that people shouldn't *enjoy* sports, either by participating or watching. Enjoyment and admiration are very different. We can enjoy watching someone perform a difficult sporting feat without having any feeling of admiration for that person. (And note, there is no reversal test for enjoyment. If I enjoy

[10] See e.g. Bradley 2018 for discussion of some objections to such views.

something, I don't have to dislike anything else. Enjoying Federer's skill doesn't require me to be annoyed by anyone else's ineptitude.) Taking this kind of enjoyment is one way of being a sports fan. There are many ways to be a fan, and admiring athletes is just one of those.

I close with a puzzle. Does my view entail that putting up unnecessary obstacles, thus requiring more effort, makes one more admirable? In 1991 Michael Jordan shot and made a free throw with his eyes closed against the Denver Nuggets.[11] There was no competitive reason for him to do that; it was just to mock an opponent. But it made his achievement much more difficult, so more valuable and more admirable.[12] I think this is an important concern for effort-based views such as the view I've defended, and it might be something that we just have to accept.[13]

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[11] https://www.espn.com/video/clip/_/id/28146919.

[12] Bradford seems to accept this implication of her view; see Bradford (2015, Ch. 4). Of course, her view is a view about value, not admirability.

[13] Thanks to Paul Bloomfield, Alycia LaGuardia, Eric Moore, and Anne Osborne for their very helpful comments on previous drafts.

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