

## METAPHORICAL AND EXAGGERATED EXPRESSIONS IN BASKETBALL ARTICLES

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The chief objective of this paper is to introduce exaggerated expressions and the ways in which they are used. There are many metaphors and exaggerations found in Japanese sports articles, especially in various sports newspapers these days. The same is quite true, or even more so, in English sports articles. To draw their readers' attention, sportswriters have a tendency to make their sentences as exciting as possible by using intriguing, humorous, or even giddy expressions with articulate and colorful words. This trend undeniably exists in basketball articles all at the pro, college, and prep levels.

Basketball was invented by Dr. James Naismith on a cold December day in 1891, when students at the Young Men's Christian Association school (now Springfield College) in Springfield, Massachusetts were looking for something to bridge the sports gap between the fall football season and the spring baseball season. The purposes of the invention of the game were to sustain athletic interest in indoor activity during the long New England winter months and to restore order in physical education classes of very competitive yet bored young men. Thus basketball was born in America and therefore is nicknamed "America's Sport."

Compared with football and baseball, the other two major sports in the United States, basketball has fewer players on one team and the distance between the players and the spectators in the game is much closer, which creates an exciting atmosphere. These facts make it possible for the spectators to see the players more closely. Because all the players must be constantly involved in the flow of the game in basketball, the performance of each player can be closely checked. The fact that each team can field only five players on the court at one time leads to the possibility that one single dominant player can turn the game around and make his team an instant championship contender. Yet basketball is a team sport and requires team-oriented players. In order to be competitive, each team needs players of various physiques: tall, husky, and small yet mobile. It is a quick man's game as

well as a tall man's game. Therefore, individual skills and team orientation must be harmoniously integrated.

Fans want to not only read the results of the game, but also to know about the players' performances and about the players themselves. Television coverage of the game has become increasingly popular and has made it possible for fans to see the players' facial expressions so that they too may vicariously experience, in the words of a well-known sports announcer, 'the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.' Consequently, in order to provide the fans with the information they want, sportswriters scrutinize and evaluate each player in a variety of phases of the game, as to their characters, personalities, performances, and playing styles, regardless of whether he is a star, a team leader, or playing a supporting role. It appears that sports writers feel it their mission to make their sentences as sensational as possible. In this paper the author tries to exemplify it by selecting and introducing metaphorical and exaggerated expressions. In order to specify the source of the sample, an abbreviation is given in the parenthesis following each sample. The formal names of the abbreviations used in this paper are as follows: *BD*: *Basketball Digest*, *BT*: *Basketball Times*, *BW*: *Basketball Weekly*, *PSS*: *Pacific Stars & Stripes*, *SI*: *Sports Illustrated*, *SN*: *Sporting News*, *SS*: *Street & Smith's Basketball Yearbook*.

The author used the original phrases from the sources although they sometimes contain some grammatical errors regarding prepositions and articles.

## I

Even the name of a team and the nickname of a city or a state convey some cultural content. The following are a few examples: the name of a team: Boston Celtics (ethnicity), Houston Rockets (industry), Philadelphia 76ers (history); the name of a city: Alamo City (San Antonio), Beantown (Boston), Big Apple (New York); the name of a state: Bluegrass State (Kentucky), Hoosier State (Indiana), Keystone State (Pennsylvania).

In the sense of the above, this section introduces broad-sensed culture-related expressions. Through these examples covering a wide range of cultural categories, the ideas which ordinary Americans take for granted can be recognized to some extent.

1. POLITICS

- a. more tools than Watergate burglars (*BT* May 24 '86 p.5) The player has a lot of strategies, talent, means, and skills.
- b. Tkachenko defends like a one-man, 7'2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" Iron Curtain. (*SI* May 28 '84 p.68) The Soviet center Vladimir Tkachenko's massive body is mentioned. Eastern bloc countries are said to be behind the iron curtain.
- c. UCLA, the FDR of college ball, was wrapping up its seventh straight title and ninth in 10 years, . . . , (*SI* Nov. 26 '84 p.35) UCLA's reign in college basketball is compared to President Roosevelt, who served four terms in the White House.

2. ECONOMICS

- a. "It's his responsibility to go to the boards. Rebounding is hard work. It's the free enterprise system under there and he has to go get it." (*PSS* May 30 '85 p.26) Everything is up for grabs and it means there is an equal opportunity to get it.
- b. Price control was simple enough for Duke (*SI* Mar. 17 '86 p.22) Duke University stopped Georgia Tech's ace Mark Price.

3. MILITARY

- a. Marquette counted on its "aircraft carrier," 6-10 Jerome Whitehead, (*BW* Dec. 26 '80 p.2) In Marquette University system everything is built around the center player, who is 6'10".
- b. Marques Johnson exploded out of the pack like a Nike missile to ram home an offensive rebound. (*BW* Dec. 26 '80 p.20) Johnson's jumping explosiveness is compared to a Nike missile.
- c. Michigan's General Grant is Secretary of Defense (*BW* Mar. 25 '85 p.22) Gary Grant is the best defensive player on the Michigan team. In the latter part of the Civil War, Grant was considered the offensive general while Lee the defensive general.
- d. pro body plus range and accuracy of an MX missile equal orbital career in time (*BT* May 25 '85 p.3) This means the durability of the player. His shooting is as accurate as an MX missile. An MX missile is more accurate than a Nike.
- e. making life like Tripoli for foes in paint (*BT* May 24 '86 p.5) This player gives trouble to his opponents under the board. The phrase reminds us of a Marine hymn: from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli we will fight our country's battle on the air and land and sea.

- f. Reggie Miller, the 6'7" junior with ICBM range, hit an 18-foot jumper to give the Bruins a win. (*SI* Mar. 10 '86 p. 88) Miller's shooting accuracy is compared to an ICBM, which is a long range missile.

#### 4. RESOURCES

- a. Sam Bowie, a tall cedar tree from Lebanon, Pa. (*BW* Jan. 7 '82 p. 11) He is 7'1" tall and compared to a cedar tree. The reason of the comparison is that the national flag of Lebanon has a cedar tree in it. He happens to be from the town of Lebanon, Pennsylvania.
- b. a good place to shop for tall timber (*BW* Dec. 23 '82 p. 17) This area has a lot of tall players.
- c. Wilmington has some tall timber in the persons of seniors (*BW* Jan. 20 '83 p. 13)
- d. he is that urgently sought giant oak who . . . (*BT* Dec. 30 '85 p. 24) His height is compared to an oak tree.

#### 5. SCIENCE

- a. the top-notch white hoopster has joined the Endangered Species list (*BW* Jan. 3 '84 p. 6) This means the overwhelming domination by black players in basketball.

#### 6. LITERATURE

- a. Only 6-feet tall and with a cherubic face that has "sweet and innocent" written all over it, Mark Price looks more like an extra on the set of a high school production of "Tom Sawyer" than the most dangerous weapon in the Atlantic Coast Conference's well-stocked arsenal of basketball talent. (*SN* '85-'86 p. 5) Mark Price is compared to an All American kind of boy as well as a good player.
- b. . . . , who was a Cinderella player (*BW* Jan. 15 '81 p. 21) This means that nobody had expected the player to become that good.
- c. He's definitely the Rip Van Winkle of the year in the state. (*BW* Feb. 10 '86 p. 22) He is a sleeper and late bloomer and has potential.
- d. The young man and the sea (*SI* Jan. 16 '84 p. 86) Hemingway's "The old man and the sea" is parodied. The player is a star in San Diego, which is located on the Pacific Ocean.
- e. The Son Has Also Risen (*SI* Feb. 20 '84 p. 30) The University of Nevada, Las Vegas famous coach Jerry Tarkanian's son, Danny, has become a star player and Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises" is parodied.

7. RELIGION

- a. Pittsburgh's Sultan of Swat (*SN* '85-'86 p.132) He is the leader of shot blocking, and the word for a Moslem king, Sultan, is used.
- b. several rookies getting a quick baptism in varsity warfare (*BW* Dec. 5 '80 p.17) The freshmen are getting an experience of playing in the varsity team.
- c. Larry Bird is a more effective ballplayer this year than he was last season, and last season he was clearly the best player in the league. This phenomenon of nature is as rare as a nudist in downtown Mecca. (*BT* Feb. 28 '85 p.2) Bird's performance is peerless. Mecca is one of the last places where one could find a nudist because of strict rules of Islam, prohibiting the exposure of skin.
- d. Michael Cooper was a dervish. (*PSS* May 25 '86 p.15) A dervish is an Islamic monk. A whirling dervish is moving fast, so the player's mobility and speed causes chaos to his opponents.
- e. A young man with a mission (*SI* Feb. 27 '84 p.46) Devin Durrant is a star player at BYU, which is affiliated with Mormon Church. Many young Mormons go on a 2-year mission, therefore the phrase above is used.

8. ENTERTAINMENT

- a. highly creative, super penetrator and dishes to free mate like Vegas dealer (*BT* May 25 '85 p.3) The player's position is a guard and his passing ability is superb and compared to a dealer in Las Vegas.

9. INCIDENT

- a. 58-57 in a three overtime titanic (*BW* Mar. 12 '84 p.6) The game was close and neither team gave up. The game is compared to Titanic, which was supposed to be non-sinkable.

10. OTHER SPORTS

- a. Barry Sonnenberg, who "has the mobility of a 6-footer, the intensity of a Pete Rose and the academic promise of a four-point student." (*BW* Dec. 12 '80 p.19) His concentration of fighting spirit is compared to that of Pete Rose, the all-time career total hits leader in baseball.
- b. Superb defender and team man, see the court and runs it like a Derby winner . . . (*BW* Feb. 18 '82 p.3) The player's speed and quickness are like those of Kentucky Derby winner.
- c. a pair of bowling ball guards, 5-9 and 5-7 (*BW* Mar. 12 '84 p.6) These

two players are short and stocky, so the word "bowl" is used in order to express their low passes.

- d. 2,300 career points, many from home run range or longer (*BT* May 24 '86 p. 4) This indicates his long shooting range.
- e. He can make pressure free throws, a must for great quarterback (*BT* May 24 '86 p. 5) Even under pressure he is poised. This asset is required of a quarterback in football, who is supposed to be the leader on the team.
- f. "It's the Indianapolis 500, with two teams testing each other's endurance in a 48-minute race." (*PSS* May 27 '85 p. 25)

## 11. GAMES

- a. He is like a great chess player. He's always thinking two or three moves down the line. (*SN* '85-'86 p. 134) He is good at his strategy and thinks ahead.
- b. Magic Johnson is a king on the chessboard. (*BT* May 25 '85 p. 15) This means the highest piece of the game. If you capture him, you win.
- c. He sees the floor as if the game were being played in slow motion on a chessboard. (*BT* Apr. 10 '86 p. 23)

## 12. SHOW BUSINESS

- a. Hunter "has the quickest feet since Fred Astaire." (*BW* Feb. 18 '82 p. 3) Hunter's flamboyant footwork is compared to that of great Fred Astaire.
- b. He combines Fred Astaire's fluidity and footwork, Mikhail Baryshnikov's hang time and Bob Fosse's cerebral choreography. (*BT* May 24 '86 p. 4) Astaire is a musical superstar, Baryshnikov is a ballet dancer and became famous in the movie "Turning Point" and Fosse is the choreographer for the movie "All That's Jazz."
- c. He is one of Motown's best kept secrets since The Supremes. (*BT* May 24 '86 p. 5) He is from Detroit, which is called Motown. Motown is also the name of the record label, which is very famous for black musicians. The Supremes were among them.
- d. He runs show like Tony winner. (*BT* May 24 '86 p. 5) This means his live performance on the basketball court is just great. Tony is the name of the prize awarded to the best musical star, as Oscar is for the best movie, Emmy is for the best TV show, and Grammy is for the best song.

- e. Cousy was to ball movement what Jane Russell was to curves. (*BD* Feb. '86 p.55) Bob Cousy was a wizard for passing the ball, and his ball handling beauty is compared to that of actress Jane Russell's voluptuous body. Both are attractive.
  - f. "It was a great win for the off-Broadway guys against the prime-time guys." (*PSS* Mar. 16 '86 p.7) This simply means an upset victory. A small school team beat a powerhouse team. Off-Broadway has a smaller audience than Broadway.
  - g. Jackson was a thriller in the finale. (*SI* Mar. 19 '84 p.24) The player's name happens to be Michael Jackson. He was great and thrilling in the finals, so singer Michael Jackson's big hit album "Thriller" is used for his performance.
  - h. Is Kansas-bound Danny Manning really "the greatest swingman since Benny Goodman?" (*SI* Jul. 23 '84 p.82) Manning will be attending Kansas and he is regarded as the best high school swing player. His greatness is compared to that of clarinetist Benny Goodman, king of swing.
13. MOVIES
- a. . . ." said the Wildcats' Italian Stallion of a coach. (*BW* May 20 '85 p.8) Villanova University coach Rollie Massimino is an Italian descendant and he is macho and good looking, so the movie "Rocky"'s main character's nickname Italian Stallion is used.
  - b. The scout named him "The Terminator." (*BT* May 25 '85 p.2) The player is a gamer and can win a game at his will, so the word terminator is used.
  - c. He Bo Dereked his way to slam-dunk contest victories in DC and Dallas. (*BT* May 25 '85 p.4) The judges in the dunk contest gave his artistic performance a perfect ten, so the star actress's name in the movie "Ten" is used as a verb.
  - d. He is touted as one of the nation's greatest marksmen and shot more bankers than Bonnie & Clyde (*BT* May 25 '85 p. 4) He is good at making bank shots, making use of glassboard, when he shoots, so the names of the main characters of a famous movie "Bonnie & Clyde" is aptly used. They rob banks and shoots bankers in the movie.
  - e. SUPER STAR WARS (*SI* Jun. 4 '84 front page) This is a headline. In the title deciding game, each team has a super player, who is touted as the best player in the league. They fight out to find out who is really

the best. In the war there is supposed to be either winner or loser. The famous movie "Star Wars" is hinted in the headline.

- f. The World According To Garf . . . And Others (*SI* Aug. 27 '84 p. 71) The most famous scouting guru of high school basketball Howard Garfinkel's family name is abbreviated to match a movie title "The World According To Garp." He evaluates high school players in his basketball camps.
- g. Ralph had the right stuff, as the Rockets bounced back in Game 3. (*SI* Jun. 9 '86 p. 19) Houston Rockets' Ralph Sampson's performance and shooting were brilliant and a dunk shot is also called a stuff. Houston is the site of NASA, so the movie "Right Stuff" is hinted, in which the lives of astronauts are depicted.

#### 14. TELEVISION

- a. J.R. has nothing on this Ewing. (*BW* Dec. 5 '80 p. 14) Patric Ewing is one of the best players in the nation, and so even J.R. Ewing, the main character in the famous TV drama "Dallas" and notoriously powerful in his business, would be no better than this player.
- b. Heeeeere's Johnny (*BW* Jan. 15 '81 p. 12) Coach Johnny Orr became head coach at Iowa State University. The long lasting TV night show "Johnny Carson Show"'s opening greeting is used to welcome him.
- c. Sherrod is called a "Star Trek rebounder." (*BW* Feb. 12 '81 p. 18) He is a good rebounder and has tremendous jumping ability, so the TV space series title "Star Trek" is used.
- d. Local fans expected Wilkins to arrive with an "S" emblazoned on his chest. (*BW* Jan. 27 '83 p. 14) He was such a coveted player and his jumping and dunking ability led his fans to expect his performances to be as great as those of Superman's.
- e. faster than a speeding bullet and confident enough to take Superman one-on-one (*BT* May 25 '85 p. 4) The player's quickness and speed are described in a part of the TV drama "Superman"'s famous opening phrase.
- f. McAdoo was the Lone Ranger, not Tonto. (*PSS* May 2 '85 p. 24) Bob McAdoo is now playing a supporting role in his current superstar filled team, but before being traded he used to be the star on his former team. TV drama "Lone Ranger"'s main character and supporting one are mentioned.
- g. This Bird, It's Plain, Is Really Superman (*SI* May 21 '84 p. 40) Larry



Bird, many say, is the best player ever. The phrase is a parody of TV drama "Superman"'s opening one: It's a bird, it's a plane, it's Superman! "Plain" is used instead of "obvious."

- h. Lee, the 5'6" Seoul Train (*SI* Apr. 8 '85 p. 95) Eun Jung Lee was born in Seoul and she is speedy and a powerful scorer, so TV music program title "Soul Train" is parodied.
- i. A dunkless 50 points for Wilkins is like Moonlighting without a glimpse of Cybill Shepherd's legs. It's just not supposed to happen. (*SI* Apr. 28 '86 p. 31) Dominique Wilkins' trade mark is dunk shots. The leading actress of TV program "Moonlighting" is Cybill Shepherd, whose legs, the sportswriter apparently thinks, are beautiful. The dunks and the legs both are essence in the phrase.

#### 15. SONGS

- a. The Sweet 16 (*BW* Mar. 31 '86 p. 12) The teams advancing to the semi-finals, the quarter-finals, and semi-quarter-finals are called the final 4, elite 8, and sweet 16 respectively. Sweet 16 derived from a song title and an expression of "sweet 16 and never been kissed."
- b. future may be down the road, but it's paved with yellow Brick at Louisville (*BT* May 25 '85 p. 3) This expression hints a song title "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" and also the story of "Wizard of Oz." Following the yellow brick road, you can get home. Louisville's future is green.
- c. Walker guided the Cats back to their old Kentucky home. (*SI* Mar. 26 '84 p. 21) The University of Kentucky star forward Walker's performance took his team to the final 4 site, which is their own cozy home court.
- d. Long, tall Salley had 15 points. (*SI* Mar. 18 '85 p. 22) The title of one of the Beatles songs, "Long, Tall Salley," is parodied.

#### 16. COMMERCIALS

- a. 'Miller Time' in Bluegrass State (*BW* Apr. 2 '84 p. 15) This expression is Miller Beer Company's commercial message, meaning "After a day's work, have a happy time with Miller beer." The player's name is Henry Miller and it's his time to shine in the Bluegrass State, which is Kentucky.
- b. "Anthony's the Ivory Soap jump shooter," said Wooten. "His shot is 99 and nine-tenths pure." (*BW* Mar. 31 '86 p. 2) He is a pure shooter, in fact the purest you can get.

- c. He plays every game like it's for a Michelob Lite. (*BT* May 24 '86 p. 5)  
In the commercial message, people do anything for Michelob Lite beer.  
So he does his best all the time on the court.

## 17. PRODUCTS

- a. The scout calls Blab "the most talked about German import since the VW." (*BW* Jan. 8 '81 p. 18) There was a trend at one time for German players to be recruited to play college ball in America, and Blab was one of them and heralded as one of the best.
- b. He gets out on break with the best wheels since Mercedes. (*BT* May 25 '85 p. 4) His speed on the fast break is great and his legs are compared to Mercedes.
- c. "America's Guard" has better mind than Minolta (*BT* May 25 '85 p. 2)  
He is a good, smart guard player and his court awareness and savvy is great. This expression hints the trade friction between the U.S. and Japan.
- d. Terry Mills—this year's Panasonic cornerman just slightly ahead of his time!—the epitome of a finesse forward. (*BT* May 24 '86 p. 4) This phrase means Mills is innovative and has some newness. Japanese electric companies such as Panasonic, JVC, and SONY are considered innovative and killing America's industry.
- e. quintessential power-forward cleaned glass both ends like Windex (*BT* May 24 '86 p. 5) The word glass means the backboard made of plexiglass. The player gets all the rebounds both on offensive and defensive boards. The name of the glass cleaner product is used.
- f. some of his rebounding scuffles record 8.2 Richter scale but Timex pivot takes a licking and keeps on ticking . . . (*BT* May 24 '86 p. 7) Licking means beating up. The message from Timex says you can bang as hard as you want, but it keeps correct time. The player is durable and his timing is good.

## 18. SCHOOL

- a. The late-blooming pivot was responsible for more rejects than the Harvard Law School. (*BT* May 25 '85 p. 3) Harvard University is one of the most difficult schools to enter and many applicants are rejected. The player's ability to block shots is compared to Harvard's high standard of admission.

19. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

- a. They fell one game short of magna cum laude in basketball. (*PSS* Apr. 3 '86 p. 7) The phrase means the team was defeated in the finals. With one more victory, they could have won the championships. Suma cum laude and magna cum laude are awarded to the academically best students.

20. GENIUS & HERO

- a. Questions we never bother to ask. Such as, who taught Caruso how to sing? Who gave Zorro his fencing lessons? Who showed Superman how to leap off tall building without tripping over his cape? And just who tutored Akeem Olajuwon in the fine art of slam dunking? (*hoop* '85 p. 22)
- b. "artistry in the paint: The Rembrandt of Rebound" (*BT* May 24 '86 p. 5) The player's name is Larry Rembert and his family name is similar in pronunciation and spelling to the great Dutch artist Rembrandt. This player is strong in the paint, the area in the foul line.
- c. Painting word pictures that have made him the Michelangelo of basketball broadcasters, Chick Hearn is the enduring voice of the Lakers. (*SI* Apr. 2 '84 p. 79) Hearn is the L.A. Lakers' play by play announcer.
- d. A penetrating guard "gets into the paint like Picasso." (*SI* Aug. 27 '84 p. 82) This player's performance in the paint, near the basket, is great and is compared to Picasso.

21. BUILDING

- a. He is this year's Empire State Building with muscles. (*BT* May 25 '85 p. 2) He is one of the tallest and he is also husky.
- b. The Leaning Tower of Pizza (*SI* Mar. 12 '84 p. 58) Auburn University center Charles Barkley leans aggressively against his opponents when positioning under the board. He eats a lot of pizza, so the Leaning Tower of Pisa is parodied.
- c. Heck, he's discovered more guards than . . . "than Buckingham Palace." (*SI* Aug. 27 '84 p. 82) The scout has discovered a lot of guard players.

22. AMUSEMENT CENTER

- a. The scout gave a colorful description when he penned that Polee "makes the baseline his personal Disneyland." (*BW* Dec. 5 '80 p. 16) Polee performs around the baseline area as he owns it as his playground

and can do whatever he wants to.

### 23. HIGH SOCIETY

- a. The camp was like sending a wealthy beauty to the Debutante Ball. (*BW* May 19 '86 p.15) The summer basketball camp is where blue chip high school players from the entire U.S. meet and play against each other. In a sense it is a debut for them.

### 24. COMPANY

- a. our Prudential Playmaker; everybody gets a piece of the rock! (*BT* May 24 '86 p.5) The player is a playmaking point guard and he is very good at passing. He makes sure that every teammate of his receives his pass. That is why an insurance company is cited. "Piece of the rock" means you are part of the company and you own a piece of it.

### 25. AGENCY

- a. a ravaging rebounder . . . one-man Sanitation Dept. (*BT* May 24 '86 p.7) He gets all the rebounds. He just cleans the glass.

## II

This section basically deals with sportswriters' endeavors to parody the name of a player, coach, or school, or make appealing jokes whenever possible. Through the examples given, the sportswriters' techniques of word-handling could be traced.

### 1. CONNECTED WITH THE NAME OF PLAYER OR COACH

- a. A great leaper, Gary Springer is aptly named. (*SS* '79-'80 p.44)
- b. The scout calls him the "Kareem of the crop" (*BW* Dec. 5 '80 p.14) Kareem Abdal-Jabbar is considered by some the best player ever, so "cream" is replaced by "Kareem."
- c. Kenny "Sky" Walker (*BW* Dec. 23 '82 p.12) In order to express his jumping ability, "sky" is used for his nickname to match his family name.
- d. James Worthy is worthy without an award (*BW* Mar. 31 '83 p.2)
- e. Can Laker Magic cage Boston's Bird? (*BW* Jun. 18 '84 p.4) Magic Johnson vs. Larry Bird is described in a magic show. "Cage" is used instead of "stop" or "contain."

- f. Overflowing Rivers has Irish running for higher ground. (*BW* Jan. 14 '85 p.10) Notre Dame Fighting Irish is led by David Rivers.
- g. Bird flies alone. (*PSS* Apr. 13 '85 p.25) Larry Bird is too good and must be in a different league.
- h. noted cager Michael Cage (*SI* Jan. 16 '84 p.86) "Cager" is used to mean a basketball player.
- i. Walter Berry is now ripening at a J.C. (*SI* Jan. 30 '84 p.48) "Ripen" is used to match "Berry."
- j. Welp means help under the Husky hoop. (*SI* Mar. 12 '84 p.42) Christian Welp is the defensive ace for the University of Washington Huskies.
- k. Driesell's opinion of the MVP is biased. (*SI* Mar. 19 '84 p.70) Coach Driesell thinks his own player Len Bias is the best.
- l. With Birdsong and King mugging him, the Doc rarely had room to operate. (*SI* Apr. 30 '84 p.68) Dr. J (Julius Erving's nickname) could not perform with ease.
- m. Perkins is ready to slam for Uncle Sam. (*SI* Jun. 23 '84 p.18) Sam Perkins was great for the U.S. Olympic team.
- n. Terry is the Bucks' Cummings attraction (*SI* Oct. 29 '84 p.58) Terry Cummings was traded to Milwaukee Bucks and is the star of the team. Therefore "Cummings" is used instead of "coming."
- o. Brooks is a new man on the Knight shift. (*SI* Nov. 26 '84 p.74) Del-Ray Brooks is a rookie on the coach Bobby Knight's rosters.
- p. While father Ed helps man the Jayhawk bench, Danny will be manning the boards. (*SI* Nov. 26 '84 p.130) Ed Manning is an assistant coach and his job is get his players ready, and his son Danny is the star of the team and his job is controlling the boards, that is, getting rebounds.
- q. Wright was the wrong man for the job of stopping Comegys (*SI* Dec. 10 '84 p.20) Brad Wright could not defend his opponent Comegys.
- r. In the heat of the Knight (*SI* Feb. 11 '85 p.160) Indiana University coach Bobby Knight's odd moves are drawing boos from Indiana fans. "Night" in a famous movie title "In the Heat of the Night" is replaced by "Knight."
- s. Jensen was one of Harolds who heralded 'Nova's arrival among the NCAA elite. (*SI* Apr. 1 '85 p.23) Harold Jensen paced and led Villanova University to the NCAA championships. The team has another player whose first name is Harold.
- t. With Kareem dropping bombs, and Larry Spriggs and Magic defending

L.A. airspace, Bird never escaped from his gilded cage. (*SI* Jun. 10 '85 p.22) L.A. Lakers' defense was so good that Boston Celtics' Larry Bird was contained.

- u. English is spoken here. (*SI* Dec. 9 '85 p.57) Alex English is the Denver Nuggets's leading scorer and his presence is felt.
- v. St. John's Walter Berry buried six UCLA shots (*SI* Dec. 23-30 '85 p.144) Berry blocked six shots.
- w. Kenny Smith, North Carolina's penetrating force, found his corridor blocked by Hall. (*SI* Mar. 31 '86 p.22) Jeff Hall planted himself on Kenny Smith's path, guarding him.
- x. Threatt was a threat with 28 points (*SI* May 19 '86 p.46) Sedale Threatt, scoring 28 points, was a big factor.

## 2. CONNECTED WITH THE NAME OF SCHOOL OR TEAM

- a. Tisdale is Sooner Boomer (*SN* '85-'86 p.8) Wayman Tisdale became the star soon after he became a member of the University of Oklahoma Sooners.
- b. The high-stepping Heels are for real. (*BW* Jan. 7 '82 p.10) The University of North Carolina Tar Heels are a good running fast break team and are really strong.
- c. He took a big bite out of Sandwich by drilling 25 shots. (*BT* Apr. 10 '86 p.21) Sandwich is the name of his opponent team's school.
- d. Sampson and Olajuwon fuel the Rockets. (*SN* Feb. 25 '85 p.18) They paced their team Houston Rockets.
- e. Pistons trip Nets; Rockets soar. (*PSS* Apr. 24 '85 p.25) The Detroit Pistons defeated the New Jersey Nets and the Houston Rockets won.
- f. Lakers keep clipping the Clippers. (*PSS* Jan. 9 '86 p.25) The Lakers dominate the Clippers.
- g. Middies sink Orangemen (*PSS* Mar. 18 '86 p.7) The Navy Midshipmen defeated the University of Syracuse Orangemen. The team is the Navy academy, so "sink" is used.
- h. Duke torpedoes Navy 71-50 (*PSS* Mar. 25 '86 p.7) Duke University defeated the Navy Academy. As the opponent team is Navy, "torpedo" is used.
- i. The Miners are still going at it pick and shovel (*SI* Jan. 16 '84 p.22) The University of Texas, El Paso Miners are doing well. "Pick" is a technique of offensive strategies and typical of a team play.
- j. An Owl worth hooting about (*SI* Feb. 6 '84 p.80) The player is a star

METAPHORICAL AND EXAGGERATED EX-  
PRESSIONS IN BASKETBALL ARTICLES (Chiba)

- of the Temple University Owls. The fans cheer for him. "Hoot" is used instead of "cheer" to match "owl."
- k. Mini-muscleman Reid fired the Boilers from outside with his 14 points (*SI* Mar. 5 '84 p. 25) Reid shone for the University of Purdue Boiler-makers. "Fire" is used instead of "spark" or "pace."
  - l. For the 76ers, it was almost a Net loss (*SI* Apr. 30 '84 p. 66) The New Jersey Nets defeated the Philadelphia 76ers soundly.
  - m. Abdul-Jabbar has almost singlehandedly sunk the Suns. (*SI* May 28 '84 p. 68) As the opponent team is the Phoenix Suns, "sink" is used instead of "beat."
  - n. Robinson's sky hook is the Navy's newest weapon. (*SI* Jan. 28 '85 p. 64) The offensive skill of sky hook is expressed as "weapon" since the team is the Navy Academy.
  - o. Oklahoma will be out of the tournament Sooner than later. (*SI* Mar. 25 '85 p. 38) The Oklahoma University's team name is Sooners, so "sooner than later" is used meaning they can not go further in the tournament.
  - p. Juicy Days For The Orange (*SI* Feb. 10 '86 p. 74) The Syracuse University Orangemen defeated their rival and they are happy and the victory is crucial and fruitful. "Juicy" is used to match "Orange."
  - q. Frederick put pep in Pepperdine. (*SI* Feb. 24 '86 p. 58) "Put pep" is used to mean spark to match the name of the university.
  - r. Ellison, the highest Card in Louisville's hand, ably defended the goal against Houston. (*SI* Mar. 3 '86 p. 28) Pervis Ellison is the defensive ace for the university of Louisville Cardinals. "Card" is used because of the team's nickname.
  - s. And ultimately the Duke Blue Devils had the Midshipmen on deck. (*SI* Mar. 31 '86 p. 25) "Have . . . on deck" is used instead of "beat" because Duke defeated the Navy Academy.
  - t. Getting A Monkey Off Their Bucks (*SI* May 19 '86 p. 42) Milwaukee Bucks defeated Philadelphia 76ers in the playoff and get rid of a long time frustration. "Bucks" is used instead of "back."
  - u. Milwaukee overcame years of playoff frustration by deep-sixing the 76ers. (*SI* May 19 '86 p. 42) "Deep-six" means "sink." The phrase means that Milwaukee's substitute players were better than those of Philadelphia 76ers. The number of the regular players on the court is five. "Deep-sixing" means the bench is deep.

### 3. RHYMING AND OTHER POETIC DEVICES

- a. a super leaper (*SS* '82-'83 p. 50)
- b. a couple of towers of power (*BW* Dec. 19 '83 p. 14) two tall, powerful players.
- c. Notre Dame finds that Sluby's a Ruby. (*BW* Feb. 20 '84 p. 5) Notre Dame's Tom Sluby is precious.
- d. Itty-bitty Webb, 5-7 rookie (*BW* Feb. 24 '86 p. 3)
- e. razzle-dazzle point guard David Rivers (*BW* Mar. 24 '86 p. 2)
- f. pedal-to-the-metal hustle (*BT* May 25 '85 p. 3)
- g. He runs (fleetly), jumps (streetly), passes (discreetly), and shoots and makes (deeply). (*BT* May 25 '85 p. 4)
- h. Everybody does ga-ga over the slam, bam, jam dunk shots, . . . (*BT* Feb. 15 '86 p. 7)
- i. quicker than a flic of a bic (*BT* May 24 '86 p. 7)
- j. His performance turned him from a suspect to a prospect. (*BT* Dec. 30 '85 p. 24)
- k. a magnificent swoop to the hoop (*BD* Feb. '86 p. 25)
- l. In front of Laker-likers such as . . . (*PSS* May 25 '86 p. 15) Los Angeles Laker fans.
- m. The Round Mound grabs another rebound. (*SI* Mar. 12 '84 p. 60) Auburn University's rebound deluxe Charles Barkley's nickname is The Round Mound.
- n. Beal wheeled and dealt—15 points and 9 assists. (*SI* Apr. 2 '84 p. 25) Dicky Beal drove to the basket, scoring, and passed to his open teammates, assisting.
- o. A Sky Hook That Was For The Book (*SI* Apr. 16 '84 p. 24) Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's patented sky hook made him the all-time leading scorer. "Record" is replaced by "book."
- p. Richardson was master of the pass and Williams the cleaner of the glass. (*SI* Apr. 30 '84 p. 66) Richardson was the assist man, while Williams the rebounder.
- q. Hero Of A Showdown In Motown (*SI* May 7 '84 p. 26) Bernard King was magnificent in the crucial game in Detroit.
- r. They're hooking and cooking. (*SI* May 28 '84 p. 68) L.A. Lakers were making hook shots and beating the Phoenix Suns.
- s. Up There Where The Air Is Rare (*SI* Mar. 4 '85 p. 34) The height of the players is hinted.
- t. Ainge is a feisty one, whether jawing with Tripucka, getting a gnawing



from Rollins or doing some routine pawing and clawing around. (*SI* Jun. 3 '85 p. 36)

- u. Kareem was the cream of the team. (*SI* Dec. 23-30 '85 p. 77) Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was the best player of the team.
- v. Jerome Richardson, the dilly from Philly (*SI* special '85-'86 p. 90) He is a wonderful player from Philadelphia.

#### 4. PIVOT-WORDS

- a. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Robert Parish will be center of attention. (*BW* Jun. 18 '84 p. 1) Their play will be the key to the game and the position of these players is center.
- b. Getting right to the point (*SI* Jan. 23 '84 p. 53) The player is very pertinent and also his position is point guard.
- c. This Was Some Kind Of Jam Session (*SI* Feb. 6 '84 p. 27) It was a dunk contest and players made dunks in their own styles.
- d. Adams is UNLV's chief from Fort Apache. (*SI* Mar. 26 '84 p. 20) Richie Adams is a leader of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas team. He is from Fort Apache, the Bronx, so "chief" is used to match "Apache."
- e. Freshman Harrington is an air apparent. (*SI* Jan. 21 '85 p. 45) "Heir apparent" becomes "air apparent" to indicate his jumping ability as well as leadership.
- f. In Game 4 Barkley showed Lister and Cummings he was the toughest kid on the block. (*SI* May 13 '85 p. 30) This expression means that he is a great shot-blocker and he is the strongest guy around.

#### 5. INITIAL LETTER ARRANGEMENT

- a. Come see the Dinka Dunker do (*SI* Dec. 10 '84 p. 74) The player is a tall, 7'6", Dinka tribesman from Sudan. No wonder he can dunk.
- b. Dingdong Duel In Dean's Dome (*SI* Jan. 27 '86 p. 22) The Univ. of North Carolina defeated Duke in the new Dean Smith Center. The teams were previously ranked No. 1 and No. 2 respectively.
- c. green, growing Griffith (*BW* Jan. 15 '81 p. 12) The player's name is Darrell Griffith.

#### 6. SPELLING CHANGE

- a. An absolutely dy-no-mite sophomore is Kenny Hutchinson (*BW* Feb. 5 '81 p. 20) "Dynamite" becomes "dy-no-mite." It is a take-off on comedian Eddy Murphy's famous phrase "dy-na-mite."

- b. John Hollinden's taaaaaal tale (*BW* Feb. 26 '81 p.14) He is 7'6" tall, so "tall tale" becomes "taaaaaal tale."
- c. The nickname (Xavier McDaniel's X) blossomed into a giddy lexicon of X's and . . . Oh's. The puns came as fast as X's rebounds and points, Xceptional, Xciting, Xcellent, Xtraordinary, X-man, Mr. X, Xhibition, Xemplary. Was this all Xcessive, an Xaggeration produced by giddy sports writers practicing their land-bound version of high-fivin', sky-walkin', in-your-face-isms? (*BW* Mar. 18 '85 p.11) In most cases "Ex" is replaced by "X" to match the initial letter of his first name.
- d. Isiah Thomas is simply mah-velous, (*BT* May 25 '85 p.15) "Marvelous" becomes "mah-velous." "Mah-velous" is an upper-class snooty sounding expression. It is also Ed Sallivan's famous phrase after every act in his variety show "simply mah-velous."
- e. Dominique Had Himself A Picnique (*SI* Apr. 28 '86 p.30) "Picnic" becomes "Picnique" to match Dominique Wilkins' first name.

## 7. EXAGGERATION

- a. He's a six star on a five star system. (*SS* '85-'86 p.22) He is unmeasurably good.
- b. He hung in the air until people screamed for him to come down. (*BW* Jan. 29 '81 p.13) His exceptional leaping ability is described.
- c. Pound for pound, inch for inch, Jordan is the best college player in America. (*BW* Mar. 12 '84 p.3) No matter what, Jordan is the best.
- d. built like an advance man for a famine (*BT* May 25 '85 p.3) This phrase means that he is very thin.
- e. He cuts through lane like hot knife through butter. (*BT* May 25 '85 p.3) His performance near the basket is very sharp.
- f. He creates a new position—The Body Guard! (*BT* May 24 '86 p.4) The guard position is usually divided into two: the point guard and the shooting guard. However, he is so well-built, "body guard" is used.
- g. He works as hard and effectively as penicillin on "D." (*BT* May 24 '86 p.6) He works very hard defensively. "D" is also an abbreviation of "VD": venereal disease.
- h. 44" vertical leap enables super catylist to say hello to God three times a quarter! (*BT* May 24 '86 p.7) He can jump so high that he can get close to God.
- i. Larry had a difficult time and missed the ocean on his shots . . . (*PSS* May 13 '85 p.25) His shooting was so bad that he missed a lot of

shots.

- j. The Lakers matched the Celtics shove for shove, glare for glare and punch for punch Sunday in a 136-111 victory. (*PSS* Jun. 4 '85 p.28) The Lakers' physicalness and intensity are described.
- k. He is not going to play until the contract is perfectly executed, the t's crossed and the i's dotted. (*PSS* Nov. 24 '85 p.25) He is out till the contract is completely settled.
- l. Like every proponent of the work ethic, Issel never met a loose ball he didn't like. (*SI* Jan. 30 '84 p.38) For every loose ball, he always hustled to get it. The expression is from a social commentator Will Rogers' famous phrase "I never met a man I didn't like."
- m. When Keith Lee is right, as he usually is, scoring with his left hand is as simple as 1-2-3. (*SI* Feb. 11 '85 p.78) The degree of ease with which he scores is described.
- n. "The best junior, dead, alive, or yet unborn," says Super Scout Howard Garfinkel. (*BT* Feb. 28 '86 p.28) The player is the very best.
- o. Jayhawk opponents beware: Let Danny Manning get too near the basket and you're lunch. (*SI* special '85-'86 p.15) When Manning gets close enough to the basket, he can smell it and score and you will get beaten. "Basket" hints a "picnic basket."

## 8. OTHER JOKES

- a. a fearless driver and dunker (*BT* May 24 '86 p.4) The player is strong at moving to the basket with a ball, and is compared to a reckless car driver.
- b. Their opening opponents, once scorned as the Cleveland Cadavers, are now the Cinderella Cavaliers. (*PSS* Apr. 17 '85 p.25) Long time pro basketball's doormat Cleveland Cavaliers have become strong.
- c. . . . they can play. They think pressure is something you put in your tire. (*PSS* May 25 '86 p.15) They never feel pressure and become nervous.
- d. Issel's jump, uh, hop shot is a thing of beauty. (*SI* Jan. 30 '84 p.38) Issel is not considered a great jumper, so his shot is described as a hop shot.
- e. Hooray For The Red, White, Black And Blue! (*SI* Jul. 23 '84 p.14) This is a cheer for the USA basketball team for the L.A. Olympic Games. Since this team is dominated by black players, "black" is included in the national colors.

- f. State's postal assaults brought it a post man, special delivery. (*SI* Nov. 26 '84 p.124) North Carolina State University sent so many letters to Chris Washburn, the best high school center in the nation, to recruit him. And they got him. The center is called a post player.
- g. Dale Brown's barrage scored points with Williams. Now LSU will be expecting points in return. (*SI* Nov. 26 '84 p.132) Louisiana State University's coach Brown persuaded a prep star John Williams to come to play for LSU and fans hope he will be a big scorer.
- h. MASTER OF THE KEY (*SI* Jan. 7 '85 p.56) This phrase was used to describe Patrick Ewing, the Georgetown University's center, who was the college player of the year. He is such a dominating player in the key, the area formed by foul lane and the free-throw circle at the top of the lane, "master key" is hinted.
- i. Step out for a hot dog and you might miss a rarity: hot-dog Hughes throwing a pass. (*SI* Jan. 21 '85 p.37) "Hot dog" is a typical snack sold during the game. Alfredrick Hughes's nickname is hot-dog because he almost always shoots when he gets the ball.
- j. Call 'em the New York Nix (*SI* Mar. 11 '85 p.72) The New York Knicks (Knickerbockers) are in trouble and not doing well.
- k. Pressley, an unusual face at Vanilla-nova, strolls down a campus walk with Jensen. (*SI* Mar. 3 '86 p.61) Harold Pressley is a star at Villanova University. Villanova is changed here into "Vanilla-nova" because the school is predominantly a white school.

## CONCLUSION

Section I illustrates some of the cultural elements that are presented in basketball articles and points out some of the ways that sportswriters freely use metaphorical expressions. Most of these expressions are not, linguistically speaking, necessarily highly academic. They are simple and straight. It is important, however, to realize that the cultural elements used in those expressions are matters of common knowledge for ordinary Americans. Sports articles, in general, offer many broad-sensed cultural aspects in short and easy sentences. Through Section II, how sportswriters make a parody, figure of speech, hyperbole, and a joke is traced. It is usually difficult for non-native speakers of English to understand jokes in English, mainly because of a lack of background knowledge. In sports articles, however, most jokes are rela-

METAPHORICAL AND EXAGGERATED EXPRESSIONS IN BASKETBALL ARTICLES (Chiba)

tively easy to understand because they are not so complicated. Besides this, sports articles include many quotes either by athletes or by coaches, which are rich in colloquial expressions. Therefore, sports articles present a virtual gold mine of interesting class material waiting to be exploited in the field of English education.

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