

Less is More

— Or —

Why I Love Megan Rapinoe's World Cup Celebration Pose

There is a guiding principle in many aesthetic endeavors – Less is More. If given the choice, it is best to choose that which is simpler, more pure and straight forward over that which is overly-construed, byzantine, exaggerated or bombastic.

Let me reassure you that I know that of which I speak. I was a professional dancer, actor and choreographer for most of my life. As such, poses were one of my main stocks in trade. For over 25 years I struck poses on stage set on me by stage directors and choreographers. And, as a choreographer of many musicals, I was in the business of creating poses for actors and dancers. I believe that over the 40 years that I worked in theater, I have developed a keen eye for poses of the human form and what they express.

During the 2019 Women's World Cup Soccer Tournament, the U.S. Women's National Team was subjected to much criticism, much of it focused on what others perceived as excessive celebration upon scoring goals. The first game, in which the U.S. defeated Thailand 13-0, the U.S. players exhibited a great deal of exuberance in their post-goal celebrations. And they never apologized for it. They rightfully believed that they had earned the right to celebrate after all the hard work they had put in preparing for this tournament. They explained that they were merely “blowing off pent up emotion”.

The controversy reached a zenith when Alex Morgan, upon scoring a goal against England, mimed drinking tea from a cup. The audacity!!

But then Megan Rapinoe struck. During the next few games, Rapinoe, or “Pino” as her teammates call her, went on a scoring rampage few have matched over the years. She alone outscored the U.S. opponents. It was truly an impressive display by one of the oldest players on the team.

If you're not familiar with Megan Rapinoe, I don't believe anyone would characterize her as soft-spoken or self-effacing. Au contraire, mon ami. She is undoubtedly the most outspoken member of the U.S. Women's Team. Indeed, part of her popularity seems to derive from her fearlessness and refusal to be intimidated – even when criticized by the President of the United States.

So how did she celebrate amidst all the criticism and controversy? By striking one of the most humble, understated poses I have ever seen a professional athlete perform in any sport. As we are all well aware, football and basketball players are prone to perform elaborate egos-on-parade dances after scoring in their respective sports. It has turned into a perverse one-upmanship

contest in and of itself. It has even gotten to the point in which penalties are assessed for excessive displays.

But Megan Rapinoe, upon scoring a goal in this year's World Cup, simply ran to the corner of the pitch, faced the crowd, put her feet together and raised her arms up and out, as if to say "Here I am. You're welcome. Tah dah!!"

She wore the slightest hint of a smile. She didn't move – no flourish, no bow, no tip of the hat, no self-aggrandizing gesture – just the pose. The fans went absolutely berserk in their admiration of this supreme athlete and inspirational leader of her team. She seemed to merely enjoy basking in the glory of the moment. She simply stood, faced the crowd and acknowledged them and her accomplishment. She let the rest speak for itself.

The first time I saw her do this, I was at first impressed not only by the sheer simplicity of it, but how supremely expressive it was. Even now, viewing it on Google Images, I am in awe of her composure amid all the hype and hyperbole that surrounded her and the U.S. team. This was the outward expression of her calm confidence and pride in her accomplishment. Nothing egotistical, melodramatic. Just humble acknowledgement.

Now, several weeks after the U.S. claimed another world title, I find myself wondering how she decided upon this pose. What was the thought process behind it? It was obviously a conscious decision that she had made. Was it a comment on the criticism of the team's over-zealous previous celebrations? Was it the understated expression of a veteran athlete after years of competition and success? Perhaps it was an attempt to literally silence her critics. And maybe it was a combination of all of the above.

Whatever her reasons, I believe Megan Rapinoe accomplished what few athletes at their prime are able to do – express their humility and gratitude for the gifts they have been given and the successes they have been lucky to have experienced.

To be sure, Megan Rapinoe has been very outspoken in her political and social beliefs and opinions. She has been widely pilloried for them as well. But for this fan, I have nothing but respect. Rapinoe's pose is one for the ages. Look and learn, young athletes. She just gave you a lesson.

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