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To: PlanetX

Subject: Show Review

I was provided several episodes of the Planet X television show for review. These shows included a story on the introduction of wheelchair basketball to disabled Bosnian's, a surfing expedition off of the coast of South Africa and a look at the making of the movie "Miracle on Ice". Common throughout these episodes is the intersection of sports with complex socio-political situations. In my opinion, this can be an effective means for connecting teenagers to situations of historical and contemporary political importance that they are likely unfamiliar with.

Each of these stories utilized virtuous qualities of athletics – camaraderie, healthy lifestyle, self-empowerment – and demonstrated how these are common traits across humanity, allowing for connections to be made with those whose own personal experiences are extraordinarily different due to war, socio-economics, geography or history. Sports are seen as a way to open oneself to a world of experiences leading to the development of a broader world view. The best of these shows stimulate the curiosity of the viewer, and provide a basis of familiarity with subjects. For instance, I reviewed the shows with my 13 year old daughter who was unaware of the Bosnia conflict. The show provided the basis from which we could discuss the situation at further length.

Sports are obviously popular on television; however these shows utilize sports as a hook to expand ones understanding and appreciation of the world at large. They also present these activities as ones that are open to many levels of participation by one and all. The sports are participatory as are the experiences of the planet. These shows have a positive value for the public at large.

Sincerely,

Sheldon Brown  
Professor of Visual Arts  
Director of Center for Research in Computing and the Arts