

Choosing About Choo: Outfielder Arrested for DUI

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Wednesday, May 04 2011 8:45 AM - Last Updated Wednesday, May 04 2011 8:52 AM



I hesitate to ask the question and even start this topic because it borders on the line of unrelated and important. Just saying that sounds incredibly weird. How can something be unrelated, yet in one aspect be important?

Of course I'm talking about the recent news that outfielder Shin-Soo Choo was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol. Choo reportedly blew a blood alcohol level that was more than double the legal limit. According to the police report, he was on the side of the road, unable to find Avon Lake and asked for a police escort home. The police followed him, noticing unusual driving tendencies and was asked to take a field sobriety test. He failed and then failed a breathalyzer at the police station.

I'm not even sure if I should start period, let alone find a point to start at.

Who are we to sit around and judge? I hesitate to say anything negative about Choo, because he may not deserve it. The most I can say is that he was factually found to have driven at an intoxicated state. For that, I have lost a lot of respect for a baseball player that I admire for swinging a bat and running around on the field. No one was harmed, so no harm no foul, but the thought of something happening is still there. It doesn't excuse Choo from making the mistake. I'm sure Choo knows he made a mistake, but that really isn't good enough in the end of it all.

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So I hesitated to ask it a few paragraphs ago, but I have to now.

Should we care?

Should we care that the best player of our favorite team was found early Monday morning driving around with twice the amount of alcohol in his system that is legally prohibited? Should we care that he is an incredibly important piece to this Cleveland Indians puzzle, or that he swings a bat for a living, or that he doesn't make a living like most of you out there reading do?

Lately the Indians have been pushing their "What if..." campaign heavily, playing off their 2011 success and the past. What if this, what if that. What if 2011 is now our year?

What if, God forbid, Choo injured himself or someone else at that moment? What if he didn't encounter a police officer and made it home safely? What if he hasn't learned his lesson?

We embrace him and the like for hitting heroic home runs into the night, but often don't see them when they go home. If they go home. They may not make a living like most of us, but they are still like us in many ways. They have lives, they live like we live, eating meals and doing normal things normal humans do. Sometimes they like to have fun, sometimes they party or drink.

I'm not one to tell anyone not to drink. I don't myself; it is a choice I've made and not one I'm snobbish about. I don't look down on someone for doing it, but I certainly have little room for you if you decide to drink and then operate a motor vehicle when you have no business to.

Charles Barkley is famous not for just playing basketball, or being an outspoken basketball analyst, but for posing one of the age old questions in one singular statement. Are athletes role models? Should they be looked at in a different light than someone who puts out a fire or delivers the mail? There are laws that take into account a person's celebrity, so why shouldn't they be looked at in a different light?

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How about the fact that Austin Kearns was pulled over a few months ago and that certainly didn't receive the attention this matter has. Is a bigger star like Choo up for more scrutiny than someone of Kearns' status? Do we even care that Kearns did what he did? Admittedly, I cared a lot less that Kearns got in trouble for doing the same exact thing. My reaction was much more timid. How is that right in anyway?

Are these questions hitting you yet?

Let me step back for a second. I said I wouldn't say anything in regards to Choo other than that I've lost respect for him. But I feel posing these questions might be tipping my hand as to how I feel. I don't like it one bit, I hate it; the fact that he got behind the wheel and endangered someone's life, as well as his own. I think it is pure stupidity. You won't change my mind about that.

Here's where I'm stuck though. How do I look at Choo from now on? Do I continue to cheer him when he hits a home run? Should I be angry that he's in the lineup a day after being pulled over and arrested? Am I mad that there is a chance he may have not learned his lesson and could go out there and do it again?

No one gets a heavy punishment anymore for one DUI, so I wouldn't worry about special treatment. But quite frankly, a court fine or anything wouldn't be anything. The real punishment would come from the team, by sitting him down and letting him know he did wasn't right and that he'd miss time playing the game he has a privilege to play. Heck, Ozzie Guillen gets suspended for tweeting and all the major leaguers who've been pulled over for DUI in the past few months get off free. As they say in High School athletics, playing is a privilege, not a right.

Is it a right or a privilege at the professional level?

The given abilities are a privilege, definitely. But I continue to struggle with this notion that we shouldn't hold a player like Choo in a different light. He's in the public eye, so how do you handle him like you would someone else without giving him unfair treatment in either direction? How do you handle someone who doesn't work a normal job? It was pointed out to me on Twitter when I made the remark about benching Choo for a game that it wasn't fair.

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It wasn't fair because if someone else got pulled over for a DUI, they wouldn't be told to go home the next day at work.

And while that is a fair argument, you can't compare the job Choo does to a normal job. That is one of the things I think is inherit when you sign up to play a professional sport. You have to realize what you do isn't a normal job and there are different circumstances that come with it.

Is it fair?

I think athletes make enough money for it to be entirely fair.

So I ask you again, like Chuck Barkley did.

Is Shin-Soo Choo a role model? Does he even need to be for the purposes of this discussion?

Forget putting him in a light where little kids or people look up to him. Do we, as fans of the Cleveland Indians continue to support someone who was so stupid with a decision he made?

Of course, but right now, how do we handle it? I know it seems silly to ask and I may overall be putting way too much thought into this. But just because someone steps onto a baseball diamond and swings a bat, doesn't mean we have to forget what they do off the field, does it? Is that part of sport and being a fan? Heck maybe like when an athlete signs up to be an athlete they are taking on the pressures of being an athlete, we need to take on the pressures of being a fan when we sign up to be one.

Maybe we should understand if we are cheering for a team or player, that when they do something, we have to deal with.

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I guess my problem is simply that I don't want to deal with it.

The biggest thing in all this is that the Indians are winning. Far be it for me to tell Manny Acta at the height of amazing run and an AL-best 19-8 record going into Tuesday's action that he needs to bench his best offensive player. We see this stuff all the time.

Did anyone actually think it would occur within our Tribe though? The hypothetical question you'd likely get in a sport ethics or even an ethics class period is now a reality for us. What do you do with Shin-Soo Choo?

I own his jersey-shirt. Do I continue to wear it and support the player who endangered lives by making a stupid decision? Do I forgive him for a stupid decision if he is sincerely apathetic about? I can respect someone who apologizes to his teammates and the fans about what he did, knowing he did a wrong. But if he really has learned, it won't ever happen again.

The recent issue with Ben Roethlisberger brings up a lot of the same questions. On a smaller scale we have the dilemma of cheering for someone who broke the law. Do we celebrate that individual, knowing we are not celebrating what they did, but rather what they do for a living and the joy their on-the-field performance brings us?

I go back to why I originally questioned diving into this issue. My thoughts may be scattered and often times you may have felt yourself asking where this is going. But that is part of the reason why I asked and wondered. This, in the grand scheme of things has really nothing to do with Cleveland Indians baseball and the product on the field. It is otherwise a sad situation that has come up in the middle of what has been the most positive buzz surrounding Cleveland Indians baseball in a few years.

But is this an important issue or what?

So from important to unrelated. From questions of choice and ethics.

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I ask the biggest question of them all. What do you choose to do?

If you know, good for you. I'm not sure I do. And I'm not sure I ever will.

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You can follow Nino on Twitter @ [TheTribeDaily](#) where he tweets about the Indians. You should also like his [blog on Facebook](#) because you can see Carlos Santana skipping around in a cool manner.