

“Debating Our Destiny” by Lee Banville

Excerpt from Jim Lehrer’s Forward p.7

Think sports for a moment.

If the nationally televised presidential debates were baseball, they would be comparable to the seventh game of the World Series, score tied, two out, 3-2 count, bases loaded. In football, contemplate a Super Bowl game with a team three points behind, third and long, 15 seconds to go on the fifty yard line. Basketball? The NBA championship game with time for only one three-point shot to win...

In other words, politics and sports fans, we are talking very big deals.

The biggest difference, of course, is that sports—even the World Series, the Super Bowl and the NBA Finals—are only games. Winning and losing mostly determine the size of rings, paychecks, civic pride, t-shirt sales and halos.

For debates, the stakes are as high as they get in our democratic society. The consequences can be enormous from those final critical events in the process that ends with the selection of the president of the United States. Everybody involved, from the candidates to the ticket takers, knows it and that is why anxiety rules all minds—and stomachs.