

News flash: Professional athletes do it for the money

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This weekend is NBA All-Star Weekend 2007, because just having a game isn't enough; you need to make it a weekend-long festival. Tyrus Thomas, invited to participate in the slam dunk contest, which comes with a top prize of \$35,000, was quoted as saying

I'm just going to go out there, get my check and call it a day. ... I'm just into the free money. That's it. I'll just do whatever when I get out there.

And yet, there was a huge uproar over the shocking revelation that (news flash!) professional athletes are in it for the money. Thomas was fined \$10,000 by his team for his remarks—rather ironic that the way to teach him that it's not about the money is to impose a monetary penalty—and issued an apology some days later:

I truly feel honored to be invited to participate in this year's slam dunk contest during next week's NBA All-Star Weekend in Las Vegas. The opportunity to represent the Bulls and the city of Chicago on a global stage is a privilege that I do not take lightly. I regret the extent to which my comments indicate otherwise.

He explained that “it was a miscommunication and understanding of words.” Huh? Under what possible rules of interpretation was “I'm just into the free money” intended to be understood as “The opportunity to appear on a global stage is a privilege that I do not take lightly”?

Only a Game's Bill Littlefield took up the matter in his Weekly Warm-up podcast.

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