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John Kerry

By Jeff Merron

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John Kerry is a man on the move, hopping from state to state, fundraiser to fundraiser, and rally to rally as he gears up for this week's Democratic Convention in Boston (where he took in Sunday night's Red Sox-Yankees game) and the hottest season of his political career: the fall presidential election campaign against the incumbent, George W. Bush. Page 2's Jeff Merron tracked the Massachusetts senator down to ask him 10 Burning Questions about his past as an athlete, his present as a sports fan, and, of course, his plans to put a hockey rink on the White House lawn.

1. What's been your favorite sports moment as a fan?

John Kerry threw out the first pitch at Fenway Sunday night.

Oh, God, there've been so many it's hard to pick just one. Bobby Orr in [the] 1972 Stanley Cup playoffs. Adam Vinatieri, last-minute kick, Super Bowl. The famous snow game with the Raiders. The most recent [Super Bowl] victory, which I watched in Fargo, North Dakota, on a cold night.

Lance Armstrong. The extraordinary last-minute victory of Greg LeMond when he won it the third time. [LeMond's "last-minute" victory, when he came from behind to beat Frenchman Laurent Fignon by eight seconds, came in LeMond's second Tour victory, in 1989.]

Great Olympic moments, I can pick so many. Franz Klammer winning the Olympic gold medal in skiing when he was recovering from a near-disastrous fall, going all-out, breakneck speed. Tiger Woods. I don't know, I like a lot of different sports. Different sports, different great events. McEnroe and Jimmy Connors facing off. There's just so many.

Obviously one of the greatest sporting moments ever witnessed, I thought, was the Miracle on Ice. I mean, the Miracle Team in '80. I remember watching the 1960 one, too, which was huge. I remember that very distinctly. The Cleary brothers -- it was a great year.

Anytime you watch Wayne Gretzky or Jaromir Jagr and some of the great U.S.-Russian hockey games of the past ... big, open, wide skating, stick-handling, passing -- beautiful game.

2. What about as an athlete?

There are a lot of different kinds of memories. There are some great team moments when the team just gelled and came together and we won some great games. We had a great lacrosse team my senior year at college, with some very, very big highs and a couple of big lows (laughs). But I remember that as a great team and a great experience. On a personal level, getting a hat trick against Harvard in soccer [in 1965] was good fun.

2a. That won a game, didn't it?

Yeah, we won 6-3. That was my senior year, a nice way to close out.

3. A little while ago at ESPN.com, we did a package on [the toughest sports to play](#). Since you have participated in so many, what do you think is the toughest sport?

I think there are different kinds of toughness.

There are one-on-one, physical combat, body-violence tough sports. But there are tough sports mentally and otherwise physically, too.

Rugby is a tough sport. Professional football is a very tough sport, it's gladiator combat out there. Something like the Tour de France, when Lance Armstrong or Greg LeMond wins. Particularly, I think Greg LeMond's first win as an American was really a breakthrough, and that took a kind of talent and discipline, mental and otherwise -- it's pretty extraordinary. Triathlons. I'm always amazed by marathon runners. I've run a marathon and the concept of doing an under-five-minute mile 26 times in a row is pretty mind-boggling.

I think climbing Mount Everest is tough, without oxygen. To be the best in any sport is tough. The mental discipline of the U.S. Open, getting through ... there are just different kinds of toughness. Basketball is tough. These guys are throwing elbows -- it's combat out there. I think hockey, obviously, is very, very tough.

3a. You've run a marathon?

I did. I ran a marathon back in '80, something like that. Did the Boston Marathon.

4. If you become president, you're going to have some time problems. What's the one sport that you absolutely won't give up?

I haven't really thought about eliminating anything at this point. I intend to muck around doing what I do. I've stopped flying. I did stunt-flying for a while; and I have not, will not, obviously, be flying an airplane. So that's out.

I think that it may be possible, with a small group of guys, to go out and do some skating. It will be hard; it's hard to find a team sport that you can really do. You might be able to get a little pickup with a regular group, play some hockey occasionally, go out and skate. But I haven't really thought that through. I just don't know what the limitations are really going to be, in a sense. It's harder to go out and run around outdoors everywhere.

ALL ABOUT JOHN KERRY

EDITOR'S NOTE: As the Democratic National Convention opens Monday in Boston, Page 2 joins in the fun with a look at the sports life of the presumptive candidate, John Kerry. In addition to the [10 Burning Questions](#) fired at Kerry by our own Jeff Merron, today's package includes a detailed examination of [Kerry's athletic career](#) at St. Paul's School and Yale University (as well as his active participation in recreational sports as an adult), a glance back at the best (and worst) [sports-minded presidents](#) of the 20th and 21st centuries, and ESPN The Magazine's [current interview](#) with Kerry.

Not a Democrat? Worried about equal time? Never fear. We'll attempt to give George W. Bush the same Page 2 treatment when the Republican National Convention rolls around next month.

5. Nixon built a bowling alley. Carter had his tennis courts. Bush has ...

Are we going to have a skating rink on the front lawn?

5a. Yeah. Is it going to happen?

(Laughs) I don't know. I haven't thought about it, that idea.

6. We've got to ask you some Red Sox questions. Do you believe in the curse?

Do I believe in it? No, but it certainly makes a powerful argument from time to time. I mean, I don't believe in curses, but I do think that we've been under a cloud here and there. I was 30 yards away from Billy Buckner in that famous Shea Stadium game in '86. So I've been there in the heartbreaks. And I was screaming at the television set when Grady did not pull Pedro out.

6a. Do you think that the Red Sox should re-sign Martinez at all costs?

Pedro? I think he's great. I think he's worth holding on to, absolutely. I wouldn't say at all costs. But I think Boston wants Pedro.

7. When you get into office, would you consider passing an executive order that would prevent Pedro from signing with the Yankees?

I'd consider an executive order that abolishes the Yankees. We'll have to set up some very strict regulations with respect to Yankee behavior. I think the Red Sox may take care of it. I think there may be an A-Rod backlash this year. I think there may be a reverse curse here.

8. What about the negotiations last winter?

What did you think of how the Sox handled the Nomar and A-Rod deals?

Kerry's hoping this is the year the Red Sox reverse the curse.

I was disappointed, obviously. I was for the A-Rod deal. I think really what happened is that you probably could have found a way around it. I don't know exactly what the dynamics were for how it fell apart. I know the union itself made the restructuring very difficult. But I think there was probably a way around it, personally. That was my own impression.

And I think if it had been handled a little differently, it might have been closed. It makes it difficult in the aftermath. Garciparra is a real competitor. Boston loves him. It wasn't personal in the way it has been with some players; it was really sort of desperation to break the curse.

9. If you were given a choice -- an either/or -- would you rather see ...

You're making it tough here.

9a. This is going to be a tough question. Would you rather see the Red Sox win the World Series or the Bruins win the Stanley Cup?

Since the Bruins have won some Stanley Cups in the last years, I'll take a Sox World Series right now, before my days are over. But I'm greedy. I'd like to see both.

10. You're on the Senate Commerce Committee and you've done at least one hearing on steroids. What's your view on the steroids/baseball issue?

I don't like drug enhancers in sports. I believe in competition with the basic gifts God gave you. I don't like artificial enhancements. I think steroids, blood doping, all these kinds of things really detract from the ethic and quality of sports.

10a. Do you see government playing a larger role in helping to police that?

I think it's important for the sports themselves to police it. But I see government playing a role in trying to set a framework, certainly jawbone and use the bully pulpit to move it in that direction. I would hope it doesn't come to some kind of government ... I think the sports themselves ought to regulate it pretty tough. Some do, some don't.

We're in the middle, now, of another Olympic drug scandal, and I just think it's important to get the drugs out of sports. And I think it's important for a president to speak out on it. I don't know if you have to take your State of the Union message and exclude the environment and veterans and education and other things in order to talk about it, but I do think it's important.