Rhetorical Analysis

I have chosen to rhetorically analyze the broadcast of KNBR San Francisco’s Damon Bruce. On his live show in 2013, Bruce goes on a full-on rant about his belief that women should not be in sports. I transcribed his message, and also browsed on various blogs and articles to see the popular opinion, and to see if others picked up on this man’s poor attempt to persuade his audience.

Some patterns that I picked up on throughout his rant, was that Bruce used a very “matter of fact” tone when giving his opinion, which was almost the whole nine minutes of the show. He also joked around when talking about the possibility of women contributing to sports– he actually denied that there has been. There was also no hint of doubt from his voice. His sentences and phrases were full of “I’s” – showing that he’s most likely extremely full of himself. He knew that people were going to call him a misogynist, and he acknowledged that by saying that he didn’t care and that he is “very right”. The style of his show was also very informal, as it was on his personal show. He used words and phrases, such as, “I’m gonna tell you,” “well that’s a lie,” “pretend,” and “freakin’” that helped to create the tone of his opinion. You can tell that he was very serious and was trying to get his point across because he made every effort to make it known that the sports realm is a “man’s world.” Because he doesn’t make any effort to see things from the other side of the myth that women don’t belong in sports, he isn’t really able to persuade people into thinking the way he does – only further fuels the people already persuaded.
With that being said, Bruce’s overall claim is that women don’t belong in sports. Some of the points that he attempts to make in order to back his claim is that, “it’s a man’s world,” “sports has lost its way” because they [men] have “got women giving us directions,” and because “women are too emotional”. Some of the evidence he provides is that women completely overreact in the case of serious injuries. This evidence can’t really support one of his main points that women are too emotional because there are plenty of men that also react to serious injuries – everyone reacts to them, some just more so than others. He also believes that women being emotional beings is causing the men to be too feminine.

The first fallacy that Heinrichs mentioned that I picked up on when listening to his rant falls under the *false comparison*. He said, “I don’t expect women to understand men’s stuff anymore than they should expect me to be able to relate to labor pains”. This is a very weak comparison because the “men’s stuff” that he is referring to is football. Football is something that anyone can become familiar with if they watch games, recaps, or do statistic research. There are some women that can’t even relate to labor pains if they have not had a child. The next fallacy falls under the *lack of examples*, which goes back to his point that women are too emotional. He doesn’t give any type of supportive claim to persuade his audience into thinking this.

Some persuasion fouls that Bruce makes include, *humiliation, utter stupidity, and truthiness*. He tries to humiliate a broadcaster named Wendy by building her up, saying that she has a lot to contribute to the baseball world and other women have made good contributions, then said, “well that’s a lie. I can’t even pretend that’s true”. His utter stupidity comes across when he can’t even realize his own fallacies within his rant. Lastly, I am going to talk about his *truthiness* foul. As he insinuates, he has no desire to think anything other than his stance that
women don’t belong in sports – again, he even mentions that he doesn’t “expect women to understand men’s stuff”. The one thing that may cause Bruce to persuade someone is that he doesn’t use any doubt; however, he doesn’t even do a good job of persuading in general. He only might have persuaded people that already have the same mindset.

The structure of Bruce’s rant is pretty simple, and doesn’t really help build his argument. He starts off by talking about the idea that the sports world is different, and goes on to say it’s because of women. The rest of his rant is giving reasons why women are to blame, but also giving the women that still choose to be a part of the sports world a word of warning. He warns women that they are stepping into his box, and that anything that happens to them is their own fault, and that they asked for it. He wants women to know that they have to follow the rules that the men set, and they shouldn’t try to change this setting, or try to feminize it. Throughout the whole audio, he structures his points around the idea of a “setting”. He says that sports has a “set” and it’s set to men. He also talks about the idea of a thermostat, and that only men can adjust the “setting.” He uses this repetition of “setting” to help build his argument that the sports “setting” is for men only. He ends his rant by basically saying that if women want to be involved, then they need to know that it’s not going to be friendly for them.

I also want to talk about some juxtapositions within this audio piece. As I previously mentioned, Bruce opens his live show with mentioning that sports has lost its way – an effect. He then goes on to say that the cause for this occurrence is the fact that women have started to become more involved, trying to turn it another direction. In this move he makes, Bruce is trying to show a correlation to help men see what’s happening, and who is responsible for it in order to help build his side of the argument that women don’t belong in sports. Next, he tries to show that women can’t relate to sports, just as he can’t relate to labor pains. He really thinks that this is
helping him build up some *logos*, but if you think about it, there are some women that can’t even relate to labor pains because they have never had a child, so this point becomes invalid. Later on in his rant, Bruce finally says that if women are trying to become involved, then that’s ok. His only addition to that statement is that if they step into the sports world, then they have to be able to defend themselves. I do think that this is probably one of the best points he made. I do think that in a male-dominated workplace, it’s important that women should know that they need to keep up in order to build their credibility within their profession.

Bruce’s rant is an audio piece that has been provided for people to listen to on SoundCloud. Something that already puts him behind in his argument is that people may only find his show from news and blog articles that have ripped him apart, and then have linked the audio within their review. Because the audience already has an idea that his argument is completely invalid and shows sheer stupidity, they are already going into listening to the audio with a mindset that he has no argument. When the audience first listens to it, it just seems like some random man that has been fed up with certain things occurring within the sports world, and finally decides that he wants to say something about it. Personally, when I first heard it, I didn’t think that he had any credibility whatsoever, and I think that other people that listen to it probably think likewise.

In reflection, one point that Bruce fails to admit, or admit without humiliation or jokingly is any of the positive contributions that women have made to the sports world. I think that he might have been able to build a better case if he talked about certain things that women have contributed, but talked about why they weren’t valid or useful. He couldn’t bring up anything that women have positively done or contributed. I think that if he could have done some type of constructive criticism of points that women have tried to make, then maybe it would have helped
him out. The fact that he couldn’t do that shows that he isn’t looking for anything that women have done well, which shows that he has no intentions of actually believing that women could possibly be a good asset to the sports world. Another thing that I think hindered his ability to bring out good points is the tone of voice he used, and the way he chose to say and phrase things. I felt like I couldn’t take him seriously. For example, I keep going back to the moment when he pretended to believe that the woman, Wendy, had made good contributions to the sports world, but then he laughed and said that he was lying. Again, I think that he should have made arguments around actual ideas that she had, rather than just completely discrediting her without any kind of evidence and trying to humiliate her.
References