

Review: Reduced Shakespeare Company at San Jose Rep

By [Karen D'Souza](#)

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Get your head in the game, people.

The Reduced Shakespeare Company is back at San Jose Rep, and this time the bad boys of abridgment are skewering "The Complete World of Sports." Welcome to the Olympics of silliness from ESPN commentators who never drop their stentorian game voices while covering events ranging from curling (apparently, it's a real sport) and all-male synchronized swimming (seriously).

Admittedly, if you're like me and you don't know hoops from hops, it can all seem a little, well, inside baseball. Certainly a lot of the name-dropping asides went over this reviewer's head.



(l to r) Reed Martin, Austin Tichenor, Matt Rippy (Meghan Moore)

But it's easy enough to appreciate the speed and dexterity of this short-attention span satire written by Reed

Martin and Austin Tichenor (who also star). Martin and Tichenor (plus third man Matt Rippy) hurdle from one lampoon to another like gold medalists in the art of the giggle. The other members of RSC, as they are often dubbed, are old pros at intellectual gymnastics. Over the years, they have poked fun at everything from the Bible (putting the fun back into fundamentalism!) to the Bard (get thee to a punnery).

This time around, Martin is the macho football fanatic, Tichenor is the egghead and Rippy is the pretty boy. Together the infinitely likable funnymen attack the religion of the arena with groaner puns, slapstick and gusto.

There is a hysterical interlude about the homosexual innuendo inherent in a lot of breathless sports commentary (what is a tight end, anyway?), a pointed jab at the capitalist subtext of football (Karl Marx and Michael Moore go for hot dogs "... maybe you had to be there) and a pithy running gag about having to contend with a small and quiet Tuesday night crowd (ouch).

Indeed, one of the most appealing things about the tour-de-farce is its rough-and-ready sense of topical improv, including Sharks put-downs, Weiner tweets, shameless plugs for corporate sponsors and politically incorrect punch lines. Why not give sports teams names that truly capture a sense of place, they muse? See the L.A. Boob Jobs and the Utah Polygamists. Would it really be any more offensive than the Washington Redskins? (Discuss among yourselves.)

If you have logged some serious hours at bat, you will probably also be tickled by the newscaster who lapses into an ennui coma whenever someone says baseball. As he explains, a no-hitter is the ne plus ultra of baseball achievements which means that "the most exciting thing that can happen is when nothing happens." He's got a point.

The trio also races the clock to trace man's love of sport from the dawn of time to today. Tongue-in-cheek sports updates tell us of ancient Greek games (nude wrestling, anyone?), Elizabethan hijinks (Ophelia botched her swim trials, alas) and the advent of performance-enhancing drugs. Wine tasting meets urine testing in one icky but funny bit. Swish. Sniff. Sip. Repeat.

Speaking of contact sports, there is quite a bit of audience torture, ahem, participation in this show, so sit in the front rows at your peril. Especially if you bear any resemblance to a sports icon. On opening night, there was a shout-out to a random diminutive Asian lady (Kristi Yamaguchi, come on down) and a lanky white-haired gent (greetings, Martina Navratilova).

Of course, if your most cherished memory of P.E. was thinking of ingenious excuses to get out of it (that's not just me, right?), then this decathlon of dorkiness may not quite be your thing. But if you're looking for a Father's Day gift a gazillion clicks up the creativity dial from tie or tool kit, let the games begin.

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'The Complete World of Sports (abridged)'

Written by Reed Martin and Austin Tichenor

Through: Sunday

Where: San Jose Repertory Theatre, 101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose

Running time: Just under 2 hours (one intermission)

Tickets: \$35-\$79; 408-367-7255, www.sjrep.com