ENGLISH: LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

Warne's Cycling Spin Falls Short of his Social Responsibility

---

Shane Warne's recent spat with a cyclist has left many outraged at his "failure to demonstrate any sense of social responsibility." What Melbournians feel more strongly opposed to is not Shane Warne's "[un]professional[ism]", but how it takes a "professional male athlete" to put the plight of cyclists into the public eye. It is commonplace for the media to portray "road-rage incidents" between motorists and cyclists, typically resulting in injury or even death. Hence, Bridie O'Donnell's opinion piece "Warne's cycling spin falls short of his social responsibility" (The Age, January 12) advocates the deteriorating relationship between motorist and cyclist, by denigrating Warne for acting in a manner unbefitting of how the public adores him. The tone throughout the piece escalates, starting off as reserved before being amplified into a critical and self-righteous voice. By vilifying Warne, O'Donnell is insinuating "all road users" not to follow in his manner but instead show respect and consideration. Since the tone is complex, O'Donnell is restricted as she must be careful not to leave a biased opinion since she is a "professional cyclist". In addition, the integration of the image juxtaposed to the identifiable headline captures the reader's attention, a tactic used by O'Donnell to further her arguments. In order for her demographic audience of Melbournians to accept her views, O'Donnell utilizes a vast array of persuasive language, which aims to target both logical thought and irrational emotion.

O'Donnell's tone is initially reserved; however words such as "disappointed" and "allegedly" imply judgment on her behalf. This is in stark contrast to her subsequent arguments, as her calm voice assists to alleviate the ensuing criticism later on. Readers could identify the increasingly aggressive tone as O'Donnell expresses how she is "more disappointed" at Warne's actions after the incident. The writer incites readers to share her feelings of outrage towards "overpaid, overexposed professional male athletes" by claiming how they betray their obligations by "failing to demonstrate social responsibility." The exasperated tone underlying "failing" paired with the subtle stereotype in "professional male athlete" could leave the suggestion that this problem has occurred before, and that males, rather than females, are culpable. Since the author is a female "professional cycler", readers, more specifically male readers, could find this insulting and therefore be less accepting of her views. Although detrimental to a male readership, this could still instill a sense of pride in female readers. Moreover, the judgmental tone continues as O'Donnell repeats "anti-cycling and anti-cyclist", which serves the purpose of amplifying O'Donnell's criticism of Warne's behavior. Similarly, the author continues the barrage of attacks by undermining his "harmless comments on twitter". The sarcasm underpinning "harmless" is an implication of the opposite: his comments were hurtful towards "lycra clad cyclists" and did not "reinforce his opinion". Sarcasm is again the main form of attack when O Donnell coldly states that "a million people follow [Shane Warne] because they admire [him], and are enthralled to hear his whimsical and acerbic sound-bytes". Her claims are laden with contempt, serving no other purpose than to undermine Warne's reputation, encouraging readers to do the same. This also infers that his opinions are neither warranted nor respected from the general public, strengthening O Donnell's attack. Her readers will be drawn into the same position, sharing a sense of derision towards Warne and his uncouth behavior.

Having most of her audience hostile towards Warne, O'Donnell furthers the attack by questioning his integrity as a "professional male athlete" and "role model". O Donnell shows great emotional control when she slanders Warne's "sledging, recidivist womanizing and poor nutritional choice". Attacking Warne in all directions is designed to intensify his flaws; Donnell's controlled satire and gentle humor in "poor nutritional choice" is in an attempt to lighten the tense mood created by O'Donnell's' attacks. By administering a controlling tone, O Donnell reinforces her credibility which has the intended effect of keeping her audience captivated. O Donnell continues the assault on Warne, this time by questioning his status as a "role model" in a country where "sport is so integral". The author considers it a privilege for those who are blessed to be elite athletes; not only can they "make a living" from it, but also "contribute and affect change". Appealing to the sense of pride and patriotism in the mindsets of readers invites them to feel more furious at Warne who O Donnell

thinks should "[re]consider his social responsibility." Notable is how she repeats "social responsibility"- this links to the title and creates a catchy rhetoric for the audience to remember. To further show her hostility for Warne, O Donnell surmises Warne's actions with the broader community, showing the consequences his actions could have. Though Warne states that "he never asked to be a role model", O Donnell quickly dismisses his claim as an excuse that all "lads" procure when going against the law. Once again, "lad" could have the impression that O Donnell is gender biased, which has the possibility of being detrimental to a male audience. O Donnell refutes his excuse, instead achieving a shared consensus in her audience by claiming that "if hundreds of thousands of people care", then "you are a role model". Not only would the colloquial and confronting tone accommodate to the audience's needs, but succinctly summarizes her negative views on Warne. O Donnell moves on to her final argument, focusing her attention back to the real victim of this issue.

O Donnell's main purpose in writing her article is to address the struggles of cyclists; in her final paragraphs she diverts the attention away from Warne and back to cyclists. She builds persuasive momentum when she states how "cyclists can be commuters…old men… young men… women…teens…" By including the quantity of individuals who travel by bike, O Donnell tries to paint cyclists as a large portion of the community who are just a sub-group of "road users". Creating such a friendly atmosphere alleviates the strain from her previous assault on Warne, and sways motorists to view cyclists with a more positive perspective, since they too "pay registration and understand road rules." According to O Donnell, all cyclists (including her) "have the same flaws". This statement almost gives the implication that any faults exhibited by cyclists are reflected in motorists. In a final tone of fervency, she announces to "every registered driver in Melbourne to ride a bike to and from work". This gives the plight of cyclists a renewed hope since O Donnell believes it can "change the way [motorists] see cyclists". Her last statement is a homage to her career as "professional cyclist"; she intends for everyone to "love [cycling] as much as" she does.

Located above the text is an image of a cyclist and the headline itself. The image's composition shows a cyclist crossing a street at a bike crossing. In the foreground are a "give way sign" and a sign depicting a bike. Altogether, the image when taken as a whole lends itself to O Donnell's contention since it portrays cyclers in a positive light. The figure shown cycling is clearly obeying street regulations; they are wearing a helmet and crossing at a designated crossing. Further, upon closer inspection it can be seen that the figure is looking both ways, cautious about any approaching vehicles. Not only does this gesture strengthen their image of "law-abiding citizen", but could possibly evoke questions in readers: why are they taking so much caution, when they are clearly not a fault? What the image could allude to is O Donnell's case study where cricketer Shane Warne was "allegedly involved in a road-rage incident with a cyclist". Under this mindset, it is plausible to deduce why the cyclist shown is taking so much precautionary measures. Juxtaposing the image is the headline "Warne's spin falls short of his social responsibility". "Falls short" arouses readers to create the notion that Warne is inadequate. If read between the lines, the headline could also exude a judgmental tone, which undermines Warne's "social responsibility".

After taking a moment to digest the contents of the article, concerned Melbournians could feel a strong sense of detestation to cricketer Shane Warne. Bridie O Donnell evokes the readers' value of social etiquette and moral obligation in a ploy to develop higher expectations of sporting role models and negate any aversion to cyclists. The article is mostly centered on a harsh attack which undermines Warne from all angles: from his "social responsibilities" to his status as a "role model". Overall, the vast array of persuasive language techniques that accompany O Donnell's piece share the view that Warne has "fall[en] short of his social responsibility"