**Pitts: 'Boys will be boys' excuse has no place in Incognito defense**

**Leonard Pitts Jr. says the mentality in the Miami Dolphins locker room that allowed for abusive, racist and bullying acts defines NFL culture.**

**By Leonard Pitts Jr. | November 9, 2013**

Boys will be boys.

Strip away the extraneous verbiage and that is what much of the defense of [Richie Incognito](http://www.chron.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=opinion%2Foutlook&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Richie+Incognito%22) boils down to. Incognito, a [Miami Dolphins](http://www.chron.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=opinion%2Foutlook&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Miami+Dolphins%22) lineman, was booted from the team a few days ago - perhaps permanently - for abusive conduct, racist language and bullying behavior toward fellow lineman [Jonathan Martin](http://www.chron.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=opinion%2Foutlook&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Jonathan+Martin%22). Incognito's teammates are firmly on his side.

"I don't feel like any hazing or anything like that was going on," [Mike Wallace](http://www.chron.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=opinion%2Foutlook&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Mike+Wallace%22) told my colleague, [Greg Cote](http://www.chron.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=opinion%2Foutlook&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Greg+Cote%22) of [The Miami Herald](http://www.chron.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=opinion%2Foutlook&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22The+Miami+Herald%22). "It's normal in football. ... It's what football teams do, like playing with your brothers."

"Rite of passage," said another player, Cam Wake. "You have to pay your dues to get certain privileges. ... Football is the best fraternity I can think of."

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And there is a kernel of truth there. Our culture sometimes devalues the bumptious, rowdy, chest-bumping, testosterone-fueled swagger that typifies boys and men. We want them to be "sensitive" and "in touch" with their feelings. We consider it enlightened to allow men to cry, but sometimes fail to appreciate that a man might also find value in toughing it out.

But before we go too far down that road, consider a voicemail Martin says his teammate left him. Incognito, who is white, reportedly greeted Martin, who is biracial, as follows:

"Hey, wassup, you ……………… I saw you on Twitter, you been training 10 weeks. Want to ………I'm going to slap ………, I'm going to……………………., you're still a rookie. I'll kill you."

Boys will be boys? Um ... no.

And apparently, that's just a sampling of Incognito's charm. Among his other alleged misdeeds: pressuring Martin to pay $15,000 for a party in Vegas that Martin did not even attend. The final straw was apparently a "prank" where Martin sat down at a table in the lunchroom - and everybody else got up and left. Martin is on leave from the team and is said to be in therapy.

Meanwhile, other defenses have been raised for Incognito's boorishness.

It has been suggested that he was ordered by coaches to toughen Martin up. (But that doesn't mitigate the guilt; it only spreads it.)

It has been said the voicemail was taken out of context. (Pray tell, what context would make "……… … ….. ….” appropriate?) This guy's lips should sue his brain for making it say the words.

It has been argued that Incognito was actually Martin's best friend on the team. (Martin obviously felt otherwise.)

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And there is nothing wrong with that. But too much of any good thing is a bad thing and the retarded maturity and abject loutishness pro football seems to consider "normal" suggest these guys crossed that line a long time ago and never looked back. The example set here must cause any parent struggling to raise a rambunctious male child into honorable and productive manhood to cringe a little.

Boys will be boys, yes. But one hopes that once in a while boys will also be men.