

# Rhetorical Critique

## An Analysis of John Sapochetti's Use of Rhetorical Devices

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*by Lucas Tembras*

“Lebron, not Michael is the Greatest of All Time,” frames the problem at stake by placing an increased emphasis on a comparison between both Michael Jordan and Lebron James. The article itself appears to be John Sapochetti's attempt at changing the public's perception, who by majority, seem to agree that Jordan is “the G.O.A.T.” Therefore, it can be inferred that the article's purpose is to persuade readers, which we can assume are basketball fans or follow the sport to some degree, into buying into the narrative that Lebron James is the greatest player to have ever played the sport. The platform that Sapochetti chooses to voice his message on has an influence on the liberty that he is given to make his case. Due to the fact that the publication of the article was made on the website of a relatively small digital media company ([fullpresscoverage.com](http://fullpresscoverage.com)), how he chooses to express himself takes on a more casual form. In addition to this, the genre of the article itself warrants a more easy-going approach due to the nature of the world of sports. Although he explicitly states the reasoning behind limiting his comparison down to just two players, Michael Jordan and Lebron James, the deliberate omission of other players equally worthy of the title limits the scope of influence of the argument. If we don't consider all of the possible candidates for the title, how can we be certain the one that we have come to embrace as the “greatest” is truly the best? Personally, I believe to have provided a more holistic argument, he should've made the comparison between all of the players who qualify for the title both statistically, and in the eyes of the basketball community. It is understood that his target is to persuade the majority of people, more specifically, those who believe Jordan is the greatest of all time, but to those who believe other-wise, in that maybe they believe that Kareem Abdul-Jabbar or perhaps Larry Bird is the greatest, that should've been considered: and a more thorough argument should have been constructed. However, the angle of vision we are presented with suffices in making the distinction between both Jordan and Lebron. The logical progression and development of the text is sound. Sapochetti structures his argument by choosing to focus on generalities. Amongst these, are the narratives that revolve around both Jordan and Lebron that Sapochetti views as threats to Lebron's ascension in the so-called “G.O.A.T.” hierarchy. Nonetheless, the fact that Sapochetti chose to address such broad concepts such as offensive averages, and the lack of championships that Lebron has been able to win and why, limits the argument, as although this allows for us to get an overview of the two players, it serves as more of a preface to the argument. Without the use of advanced metrics, it shows that Sapochetti fails to demonstrate an understanding of the nuances that accompany the argument. This lack of depth goes on to damage the reader's perception of his basketball knowledge by virtue of the fact that it makes it seem as though he shares the insight of a casual fan. Not to mention, the way in which Sapochetti chooses to develop his points and arguments such as when describing Jordan's competition comes off as immature and unjust as it doesn't properly credit Jordan for his accomplishments. Following this, Sapochetti's appeal to readers' emotions, imaginations, and values is weak and underdeveloped. The exclusion of Lebron's backstory coupled with the absence of Lebron's most inspiring and iconic moments weakens the article's impact. In addition, Sapochetti's weak use of broad statistics and the injection of bias debilitate his appeal to logic and make it difficult for readers to make an informed opinion. Ultimately, I both disagree and agree with the values of the author, I appreciate Lebron's contribution to the sport, but I can't get myself to support the author's indifference towards Jordan's accomplishments.

# Rhetorical Critique (Cont.)

## An Analysis of Neil Paine's Use of Rhetorical Devices

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*by Lucas Tembras*

Neil Paine, author of "[Why Michael Jordan Was The Best](#)" expresses his concerns for the debate on who the greatest basketball player of all time is. The piece itself was written on behalf of all sports fans, but is more clearly catered to those who are fans of basketball. Paine's purpose in writing the article is to persuade readers that Michael Jordan was and is the greatest basketball player of all time due to his endured statistical dominance and lasting impact on the sport. The article was published to the FiveThirtyEight website, [fivethirtyeight.com](http://fivethirtyeight.com), which is owned by ABC News. As a direct result of this, it appears as though Paine deviates from what the genre of sports usually encourages, which often times is a less analytical approach than the one presented in the article. This orderly approach however, improves the quality of the text and allows for Paine to delve deeper into the subject, enriching the readers' experience and knowledge of the topic at hand. Paine's approach to answering the question of who the "G.O.A.T" is centers mainly around using data and statistical analysis to drive his points forward. Consequently, the text's logical development is extensive and consistent. Paine highlights far more than simple metrics such as points per game, field-goal percentage, and so on, which often fail to provide the context needed to properly reach a conclusion. Instead, he opts for metrics such as Win Shares per 48 minutes, Player Efficiency Rating, Game Scores, but most surprisingly he includes the use of an original metric called [RAPTOR or Robust Algorithm using Player Tracking and On/Off Ratings](#). This falls perfectly in line with Paine's claim that "[Jordan] has the stats on his side[.]" Paine comes across as fair, reliable, and knowledgeable on the subject. It is apparent through his diction in the text that he understands the complexity of the issue -- "Was Jordan actually the greatest ever? It's something of a loaded question." Not to mention, he acknowledges that there are people that disagree with him, and he uses this to further push his argument by asking readers to consider Jordan's elaborate lore and the deep influence on those who came after him. Therefore, he makes a stronger argument by relating to those who oppose his views by getting them to rationalize with him. In relation to his ability to knowledgeably articulate his points, his diction and ample use of facts lead me to believe that he is well-informed and can be trusted on the subject. As for his ability to relate the readers' emotions, he falls short by failing to include details regarding some of Jordan's triumphs and successes that could aid in swaying public opinion by failing to provide examples and by assuming that the reader has already seen the emotionally charged Netflix documentary on Michael Jordan himself "The Last Dance." Paine does attempt to make an appeal to values by reasoning with whoever may disagree with his stance in order to reach a broader audience: "So the arguments can go in both directions. But the numbers tell us that Jordan was uniquely great, both in terms of what he did and how he did it[]" is an example of this. Ultimately, Paine provides a thorough and well-supported argument for why he believes that Michael Jordan is the best of all time. However, in doing so, he fails to address some of the intangible components of a player which may give them a slight advantage. Furthermore, with Paine trying to make his case as to why Michael Jordan is the greatest of all time using statistics, the same argument could be made for a slew of other great players with the use of different metrics. Although statistics can be helpful in determining who the greatest of all time is, it can be a flawed means of gauging who the best truly is. There are a variety of other factors that contribute to a player's legacy and overall skill, so Paine's oversight of this simple fact hurts his argument.