

EDITED BY

ROBERT
EDELMAN
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≡ The Oxford Handbook of
SPORTS HISTORY

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF
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SPORTS
HISTORY

Edited by

ROBERT EDELMAN

and

WAYNE WILSON

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INTRODUCTION

ROBERT EDELMAN AND WAYNE WILSON

Not long ago, a British historian observing the changing landscape of academic inquiry remarked to a colleague, “Sport, it would seem, is the new film.” His remark was apt. These days no leading university would omit the cinema from its offerings, and the study of sport is rapidly approaching a similar status. Our handbook proposes to examine the present state of this burgeoning field and point to what still remains to be done. Today, sport’s grandest events are watched by billions of viewers, while billions of dollars are generated by its globalization and commercialization. Sport occupies an enormous part of the content on the Internet and other forms of media. Inevitably, sport has attracted the attention of scholars who increasingly have found it to be a subject that can help us answer the big questions facing historians of all sorts. Once a domain of unadorned empiricism, sport history today mobilizes complex and sophisticated social and cultural theories to derive a vast range of meanings. The grand old categories of class, race, gender, nation, and religion can all be used to understand sport, and in turn sport can give us new understandings of those same categories.

The emergence of sport history is the culmination of more than a half century of disparate developments. As early as 1951, John Rickards Betts completed a pioneering doctoral dissertation at Columbia University titled “Organized Sport in Industrial America.”¹ Betts, who became a member of the history faculty at Boston College, continued to research and write about sport in the 1950s and 1960s, but he was one of very few Anglophone historians to do so. Unencumbered by the intellectual inhibitions of traditional historians, physical educators took the lead in organizing the International Committee for the History of Physical Education and Sport in 1967. This step was followed six years later by the establishment of the North American Society for Sport History (NASSH), a scholarly association made up of physical educators and historians. In 1974, it launched the *Journal of Sport History*. NASSH was also a model for the development of subsequent associations, including the British Society of Sport History, the Australian Society for Sports History, the International Committee for the History of Physical Education and Sport, and the European Committee for Sport History. The growing academic interest in sport was not limited to history, as sport subfields took

root in several other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. This interdisciplinary interest led to the establishment of numerous scholarly societies in the next two decades. The International Committee for the Sociology of Sport, the International Society of Sport Psychology, the International Association for the Philosophy of Sport, and the Sport Literature Association were among the most notable such groups.

Concurrent with the growth of these sometimes insular scholarly societies were much broader intellectual developments, as a wide variety of thinkers began advocating a more comprehensive examination of the human experience. Dismayed by the dismissal of popular culture in general and sport in particular, by the New Left and particularly the Frankfurt School, a later generation of thinkers sought a more nuanced and optimistic understanding of the reception of mass culture by very various audiences. Instead of diversion from the weighty matters of life, they sought to stress the possibilities for resistance and agency to be found in play and entertainment. At the University of Birmingham during the 1970s, Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, and their colleagues, inspired by Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, devoted intelligent and rigorous attention to television, film, sport, and many other human activities once dismissed as "not serious."² In creating the new field of cultural studies, these scholars established the intellectual and political preconditions for sport studies to flourish. Such well-established historians as Eric Hobsbawm, Richard Holt, and Tony Mason began exploring the role of sport in the development of mass culture and class consciousness.³ In North America, Elliot Gorn, Jules Tygiel, Steven Riess, and Randy Roberts turned their talents to sporting matters.⁴ The literary scholar John Hoberman published a rich and intelligent work on sport and political ideology.⁵ Allen Guttman, of Amherst College, wrote *From Ritual to Record*, a seminal work that analyzed the transformation of sport from a premodern to modern phenomenon.⁶ The anthropologically trained John MacAloon produced an intellectual and political biography of Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, that we now can see was light years ahead of its time.⁷ We have come a long way since 1938, when the great Dutch historian Johan Huizinga produced *Homo Ludens*, his pioneering study of the play impulse throughout history.⁸

At much the same time in France, Michel Foucault was elaborating an approach to historical knowledge that placed the human body at the center of scholarly concerns and deployed a concept of power that was particularly helpful to understanding how relations of domination and subordination were constituted and expressed in sport.⁹ His fellow theorist Pierre Bourdieu pointed to the importance of the habits and practices surrounding the body and argued that the body could express much that the mind and speech could not.¹⁰ Deploying the concept of cultural capital, he called for mobilizing a rigorous, historically informed sociology to study a wide range of cultural forms, sport included. Along with sex and dance, sport is the most corporeal of human activities. By the 1990s, these and many other thinkers in turn helped precipitate what has come to be called the "cultural turn" in the historical profession. In subsequent decades senior historians who had established reputations in more traditional subfields came to examine sport with rigor and nuance.¹¹ They in turn inspired young researchers and graduate students in history to study sport as their career path.¹²

These shifts have changed scholars' older notions of what is important. Topics that were once deemed marginal—murder mysteries, musical comedies, soap operas, and sport, to name a few—have today assumed new significance. In the process, popular culture in general and sport in particular have become the subjects of an explosion of thoroughly serious, rigorous research and writing, filled with all manner of compelling implications. At the same time, historians of sport came to realize the importance of addressing their work to the larger profession. Sport was no longer treated as an autonomous realm—an escape from a so-called real world. It touches the most significant elements of the human condition. Sport has been a gender factory—a site where men made themselves into men and where women fought and overcame the consequences of that historically constructed “male bastion.” Sport is the terrain over which struggles between social classes, religions, and nation-states have been ardently and at times dangerously contested. It is, to paraphrase Clifford Geertz, the place we tell ourselves stories about ourselves.¹³ Whether it is Bourdieu's “cultural capital” or Huizinga's “play,” sport is, has been, and will continue to be one of the great engines of culture creation.

While these changes were taking place in the academy, there were other processes going on in the larger world. Since the 1980s, we have been experiencing yet another wave of a globalization process that has had several previous iterations in the course of world history. Sport has now come to occupy an increasingly large portion of the world's cultural, economic, and political space. Such organizations as soccer's international federation (FIFA) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) boast more members than the United Nations and offer a platform to large and small nations alike that is unrivaled by any other cultural or political body. The production, communication, and consumption of sport through myriad and increasingly complex interrelationships across transnational corporations, federations, and forms of media have allowed recent so-called mega-events to balloon to cumulative audiences in excess of 40 billion. High-performance athletes enjoy greater mobility and visibility, and conglomerates have more vested interests in supporters, stadia, clubs, franchises, and international markets than at any other point in the history of sport. So-called mega-events that last for weeks and are transmitted all over the world are more “mega” and costly than ever. Both the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi and the 2014 men's soccer World Cup in Brazil were simultaneously dripping in political implication and commercial exploitation. The women's soccer World Cup and the new and hard-fought gender equality of the Olympic Games have generated profound rethinking of what is femininity and, in their wake, masculinity. The historic dominance of men in sport, a product of the nineteenth century, is now challenged by the useful if fluid concept of metrosexuality.

As sport itself has gone increasingly global, so has its study. International scholarly sport societies have grown and matured. All publish journals and organize annual conferences. Many colleges and universities offer courses on a wide range of sporting topics. Graduate students now choose sporting topics for dissertations and succeed in finding gainful employment. There are even chairs of sport history at major universities. Today, the leading university presses have all published books on this subject. Networks of researchers have formed with only a tenuous relationship to the established sport

studies associations. The 2010 Sport in Modern Europe Project was one such example of a European-based network, led by academics from departments of history, sociology, literature, and business in several countries. The Cold War International History Project's multiyear, multisite research program on Cold War sport is another example of broadly international cooperation to tackle an important element of transnational history.

Sport, for us and for most historians, is a form of competition featuring physical performance, pursued in accordance with written rules and administered by formal organizations. Rather than focus on recreational physical activities, or the German gymnastics tradition, sport's main competitor as a form of bodily culture, we are primarily concerned with organized spectator sport.

We believe sport occupies a profoundly useful place within the larger historical profession. Joseph Nye's concepts of soft and hard power have been extremely useful to scholars, but which of them best describes sport?¹⁴ Because sport is liminal, it constitutes and expresses its meanings not only through institutions and printed sources but in the spaces between them—in families, neighborhoods, courtyards, street corners, the criminal world, parks, pubs, kitchens, cafes, schools, schoolyards, and places of worship. If sport has been one part of a popular culture that seeks to impress and convince, it can be seen as a form of soft power, but the links among sport, physical fitness, and military preparedness make it an especially hard form of soft power. At the same time, the question of fitness is one element of the military world that does not directly involve weapons and destruction, making sport a softer form of hard power.

A great deal of energy has gone into studying how sport reflects the strengths of competing political and economic systems, but sport can just as easily mask their weaknesses. Indeed, sport can do both at the same time. For scholars seeking to make sense of the *big* issues of history, sport then turns out to be what the British journalist Simon Kuper has called a "slippery tool."¹⁵ Due to its competitive nature, sport is unlike such well-studied cultural activities as ballet, theater, music, literature, movies, art, and design. It is unscripted, unpredictable drama that feeds off deep personal and collective loyalties and fascinations. It produces easily measured results from which governments and their citizens draw rapid conclusions. Yet, for the historian intrigued by the fabric and weave of societies rather than grand moral master narratives, these can be tricky calibrations. Sport is not a shortcut that obviates the need for meaningful contextualization and rigorous research.

While sport history is primarily focused on the modern period and the rise of sport is usually associated with the coming of modernity, we offer three chapters explicitly about premodern sport and several others that touch on premodern antecedents to modern sport. First and foremost, this is a historical handbook and not a work of anthropology. It is, therefore, largely but not entirely limited by the existence of written sources and documents. Accordingly, the premodern chapters are concerned with those activities in Europe, North America, and Asia that played roles in the development of modern sport. Africa, which commands one of our chapters, offers the clearest contrast of the anthropological with more conventional historiography. Relevant documents were produced

by the colonial powers who sought to portray indigenous populations as “peoples without history” before the coming of the “white man” and his often uncivilized imposition of the civilizing mission.

Because it is impossible to provide full coverage of every sport and country, we have chosen to take a more thematic approach. Still, geography is important. The section on the familiar modernization narrative provides coverage of Great Britain and North America and examines the most popular forms of sport. Other geographic regions are addressed separately, covering an even wider range of sports and their precursors. We look at the many directions of transnational acculturation and seek to reveal the diffusion of sport to and from all parts of the planet.

Sport history remains a developing field that has only recently begun to occupy a significant space in the larger profession. For decades the great bulk of research and writing on our subject has been concerned with Europe and North America and focused on the sporting activities of men who consciously and unconsciously created a masculinity factory from which women were excluded. As is the case throughout the discipline, that emphasis is changing. We have endeavored in this work to examine a broad range of regions in what was once called the developing world. Much less work presently exists on Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Yet, that situation too is now changing as younger scholars all over the world have taken up the subject of sport as their area of specialization to which they plan to devote their careers.

THEORIZING SPORT HISTORY

For too long, historical writing on sport was dominated by an unadorned empiricism that had long ago been deemed insufficient by most researchers. Numbers of home runs and goals were surely interesting, but what did they tell us about the grand questions and great debates confronted by practitioners? Historians these days are guided by a great variety of theories that help us choose our topics, structure our narratives, and derive our meanings. For these reasons, scholars from sociology and cultural studies discuss the contributions their disciplines have made and can make to the understanding of sport. We also asked a historian of international politics to pose two questions: What can historians expect and demand from historians of sport in order to include sporting matters in their larger accounts, and what must sport historians do to be taken seriously by the rest of the discipline?

PREMODERN SPORT

Sport is a modern set of practices closely tied to the rapid evolution of capitalism and the growth of cities. The Industrial Revolution had its roots in the

revamping of agriculture and the exploitation of colonial people and goods from empires. Nevertheless, physical contests of all sorts had existed for centuries prior to the coming of modernity, and we cannot ignore them. Those who have argued ancient Greece was the cradle of democracy and civilization also see it as a matching cradle of sport. The practice and organization of physical contests were highly developed and well organized in the Greek and Roman empires. From the Olympic Games to the spectacles of gladiatorial combat, the ancient world has often been seen as the first site of sporting activity. In both places sport became a form of popular culture through which citizens were created. The fit athlete and the fit warrior became central figures in the projection and maintenance of empire.

By the nineteenth century, philo-Hellenism became a driving force in the creation of the modern Olympics. The founder of the modern version of the Olympic Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, claimed to be reviving the games of ancient Greece, but he also used the Greek example to gain support in Germany and other countries for his movement. One must then ask if this highly male, elitist, and positive interpretation of these ancient societies was connected to only one of many possible interpretations of the classical world. If ancient Greece, in particular, was the cradle of civilization, what sort of civilization was it, and what role did sport play in its creation and reproduction?

It has been said that medieval sport is still awaiting its H. A. Harris, the author of one of the definitive texts on ancient Greek sport. Nevertheless, there is a body of literature on medieval sport, albeit one that relies heavily on British and western European sources from the later Middle Ages. Many sports of the period such as wrestling, archery, and water tilting had martial origins. One study of the sporting pursuits of thirteenth-century English peasants noted that nearly half were “war-related.” People at both ends of the social spectrum pursued sport, while religious leaders attempted to exert varying degrees of control over these bodily and often violent pastimes. The tournament, in which noblemen engaged in jousts and melees, is the best-known form of medieval sport, but less violent activities such as forms of tennis also took root. One of the differences between medieval and modern sport is the increased degree to which contemporary sport seeks to minimize violence, injury, and death and thus be less warlike. Sport, as Norbert Elias wrote, is part of the “civilizing process,” but battles on the playing field are mimetic and not real despite the militarized language that often surrounds them.¹⁶

The early modern period witnessed the rise of several activities that adopted some of the defining characteristics of modern sport. This process occurred in only some sports and advanced at different rates in different countries. Cricket, horse racing, and golf, to cite three examples of sports that eventually became global, developed written rules, formed clubs, recorded results, and consciously sought to attract spectators in the pre-modern period. The growth of premodern sport took place in the context of efforts—of varying success—by church and state to control and direct leisure pursuits and in particular to harness the violence associated with some of them.

MODERN SPORT

Historians no longer believe that the origins of capitalism and industrialization were the exclusive products of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century British genius. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom was the cradle of certain modern sports, most notably soccer/football. Over a century, these claims were expanded, and a master narrative of sport's creation and growth developed. Today, this version of history is thought to have roughly the same validity as the claim that "jazz came up the river from New Orleans." Nevertheless, it is worth repeating to establish an understanding of what might be called the first wave of sport history.

With the first stages of the agrarian and industrial revolutions late in the eighteenth century, a burgeoning and expansive middle class elite emerged. These newly wealthy men had not gained their power and status from the traditional sources of military service and landed wealth. Instead, they sat in offices and "made" money. Sport then became a way to demonstrate their otherwise ambiguous strength and manliness. At the same time, the higher rungs of the British middle class sought to send their sons to the ancient institutions of secondary education known as the "public schools." Today, the names Eton, Harrow, Rugby, and many others can be called global brands, but in the late eighteenth century these were unruly places. Headmasters, most notably but not exclusively Thomas Arnold of Rugby, came to introduce sport into the curriculum in order to provide a release for otherwise violent and sexual adolescent energy. In the process, they sought to create the future leaders of the nation and empire. This experiment was a huge success. Sporting activity then spread to elite British universities.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, rules were codified for various sports. By the 1880s and 1890s, many sporting activities had spread virally to the various laboring classes who had moved into the newly expanding cities and had achieved greater leisure time and expendable income through decades of political struggle. With mass audiences, sport subsequently became organized and commercialized. A crucial role in these processes was played by technological breakthroughs in transportation, most notably the railroad, which allowed athletes and fans to travel greater distances to games and events. The telegraph permitted the instantaneous reporting of sports events to places far away from where the contests were taking place. In the process, sport became national rather than simply local. All of this was said to have taken place outside the purview of the state. Yet such a view overlooks the close ties of sport to the military and to empire. Sport may not have been war, but many elites have mistakenly and tragically thought so.

In light of the strong criticism modernization theory has endured in recent years, one may well ask which parts of the old modernizing narrative are still seen as true. The rise of industry and the rise of modern sport have been closely tied to each other. Accordingly, these profound changes led to the emergence of a class of sporting

entrepreneurs who found new sources of profit in what had been games and pastimes. Were Britain and the United States the only centers of sporting activity, or was the path to sport repeated elsewhere? How did sport constitute and express the demands and aspirations of the industrial age? Were the often conflicting roles of social classes the same elsewhere as those described in the standard "British model" of modern sport's emergence? Again, was sport's growth truly independent from the state, and did governments play similarly limited roles elsewhere?

The urban centers that arose all over the world in the nineteenth century contained the necessary conditions for the rise of modern sport. Large numbers of spectators, transportation systems, communications systems, media companies, and technological expertise could only be found in cities. Although sport developed at different times in different parts of the world, the central role of the city has been consistent. Historians have examined not only the effect of the city on sport but the impact of sport on cities. The first wave of sport historiography produced several works on sport and urbanization during the Industrial Revolution. Writers addressed the relationship between sport and class identity, ethnic identity, associativity, and assimilation. Later works, incorporating research from sociology, urban studies, architectural history, and geography, have opened new avenues of inquiry by examining evolving concepts of space.

Advances in the technology of communication both drove and supported the growth of modern sport. Mass-market newspapers, powered by the telegraph and later the telephone, were able to supply readers with quick and detailed information about sporting events. These publications and the multiple discourses they produced intensified the appetite of the sporting public for more and bigger spectacles. At the same time, the power of sporting accounts drew readers to the press and improved readership and advertising revenues. By the 1920s, the mass press was joined by radio and newsreels to expand and excite the audience for sport. The impact of these new and older media on the citizenry has been the subject of a rich and ongoing debate.

Empires have played fundamental roles in the diffusion of sports. Scholars have examined the impact of colonializing nations with their administrators carrying balls, bats, and rule books from their elite institutions of higher learning. Yet others have stressed the role of existing indigenous cultures and pastimes. Did modern sport trample traditional games and force locals into a single oppressive and controlling mode of civilization? Were those local populations able to use and change sports in ways that allowed them to resist the authority of their colonial masters? Much of this work takes C. L. R. James's classic study of Trinidadian cricket as a conceptual starting point.¹⁷ Yet one must also ask how the sports of formal colonial empires run by administrators and soldiers differed from the informal commercial empires established by expatriate businessmen, managers, engineers, workers, engineers, and sailors. Finally, what kinds of states emerged in the developing world after the initial period of diffusion and the later collapse of colonialism? Did these new governments deploy sport in ways that enhanced their authority, or did sport remain one form of popular culture that supported continued resistance to authority?

PATTERNS OF DIFFUSION

How did certain sports spread from the places of their creation to other parts of the world? How in less than three centuries did we get from a situation in which the rules of games varied from village to village to the opening matches of men's soccer World Cups when the entire planet gazed upon one single place and everyone knew how the game would be played? The diffusion of sport is not simply a process of cultural flow from Europe and North America. It has been a complex, multidirectional phenomenon. The diffusion of three of many possible sports illustrates differing patterns of dispersal and shifting balances of political and financial power within world sport. There are also sports of equal importance that have, however, not generated the wealth of serious, theoretically informed academic literature. Track and field (athletics), basketball, Asian martial arts, cycling, volleyball, wrestling, ice hockey, skiing, and even gymnastics have yet to inspire the massive body of work one fully expects to appear in the future.

NEW GLOBALIZATIONS AND THEIR DISCONTENTS

Originating in the nineteenth century, the modern Olympic Games are the world's premier sports event. Because of their magnitude and public visibility, the Olympics have provided a stage on which most of the major developments and conflicts of modern sport have played out for more than one hundred years. The International Olympic Committee, which drew its early inspiration from the gentlemen amateurs of Victorian Britain, has confronted the major issues of the twentieth century—nationalism, professionalism, and commercialism, not to mention war and peace. Initially, banning female participation, the Olympics became one of the principle arenas where women struggled for inclusion. Scholarly interest has been piqued by the widespread perception, encouraged by the IOC, that Olympic sport is a “movement” capable of inspiring social and political transformations. Along with a politically conservative version of internationalism, Olympism maintained a politically liberal belief in the possibility of social improvement. In practice, commitment to these ideals was combined with continuing cooperation with some of the world's vilest regimes. Accordingly, historians have been eager to analyze this grandiose, idealistic framing of the Olympics, frequently offering critical alternative readings of the Games and their meanings. In the course of the most recent wave of globalization, the Olympics have transformed from a festival of nominal amateurs to an extravaganza of openly professional athletes competing on a world stage promoted by global marketing and sponsorship campaigns.

As a result, a high-stakes cauldron of competition has emerged that offers great monetary rewards for the most visible and elite performers. Although doping in sport is

often framed as a contemporary issue driven by athletes' desires to win riches, athletes, ancient and modern, have long sought to supplement their normal diets with foods, drinks, or drugs to improve sport performance. Accounts of nineteenth-century sport doping abound. The IOC discussed the problem as early as the 1930s. In the post-World War II period, the use of performance-enhancing drugs grew throughout the world. In 1968 the IOC introduced drug testing, and most other major sports organizations eventually followed. Efforts at doping control in the late twentieth century were carried out by disparate organizations with almost no coordination among them. A series of international doping scandals in the 1990s culminated in the creation of the World Anti-Doping Agency, which sought to impose a single anti-doping regime on world sport. The history of doping and anti-doping efforts raises fundamental questions about how different societies view the nature of sport, competition, fair play, as well as the health and rights of athletes. In an environment in which the hormonal, structural, and genetic manipulation of athletes are all possible, doping squarely raises the question of what it means to be human.

RECONSIDERING OLD CATEGORIES AND CONTEMPLATING NEW ONES

The long-established historical categories of class, gender, race, religion, and nation have guided historians for decades, but how useful are each of these analytical tools for the understanding of sport? They can still provide ways to explain behaviors, choices, and identities. At the same time, the history of sport may require other historians to modify their understandings of the ways these categories work and what they can and cannot explain. In recent years, the historical profession has taken a variety of "turns." Moving on from the "cultural turn," scholars have taken things one step further and have devoted attention to the role of emotions. Although many studies make use of the emotional to make sense of sport, the literature on this topic is still thin, but two new approaches have been influenced by the psychological. Sport is watched by both spectators and participants. It is inescapably visual. Following this logic, the scholarly study of sport has taken an explicitly visual turn. Art historians, photographers, film makers, television producers, and webmasters have turned increasing attention to sport, and, in the process, they have produced sources of use to the historian. At the same time, sport historians have turned more and more to using visual sources in both teaching and research.

Despite noteworthy exceptions such as Allen Guttman's *The Erotic in Sport* and Thomas Scanlon's *Eros and Greek Athletics*, sexuality in sport has received less attention than the related topics of gender roles and sex-based discrimination.¹⁸ The connection between sport and sexuality, however, has spanned the history of sport from the homosocial bonding of Greek athletics to the contemporary eroticization of soccer player David Beckham and countless other athletes. The relationship between sport

and sexuality has been the subject of considerable conjecture. Victorian public school headmaster Edward Thing maintained that sports would keep public school boys from masturbating. Freud claimed that sport was a means of sexual sublimation. And, as any viewer of Hollywood boxing movies knows, corner men believe that sex weakens the legs. Sexuality is integral to sport. Athletic bodies typically reflect prevailing notions of sexual attractiveness. In this way, body culture is closely linked to the emotional turn in the historical profession.

In 2012, a multiyear research project on sport in the Cold War sent out a call for papers, and scores of proposals came in from all over the world. Nearly half of them were from graduate students and early-career professionals. The topic's strong resonance with young historians demonstrates two things. First, researchers in our field have come to produce first-rate scholarship of sufficient quality to attract others to follow their path. Second, we are on the verge of greater growth with a new, younger cohort who have chosen sport history as their field of specialization. Our hope is that this handbook will inspire others to take up the proverbial torch or grab the baton from the previous runner. Sport is, indeed, the new film, and that is a very good thing indeed.

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P A R T I

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THEORIZING SPORT
HISTORY

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CHAPTER 1

SPORT AND SOCIAL THEORY

DOUGLAS HARTMANN

WITH a few notable exceptions and setting aside a passing comment here or there, neither classical nor contemporary social theorists have had a great deal to say about sport. Nevertheless, social theory has a great deal to offer the systematic academic study of sport, historically oriented and otherwise. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief, schematic overview of some of the conceptual resources available in classical and contemporary social theory for sport history and scholarship.

The chapter begins by identifying key concepts and orienting frameworks from the traditional sociological canon, drawing in particular from the classic theoretical trinity of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim, as well as the symbolic interactionist school represented by Georg Simmel, George Herbert Mead, and Erving Goffman. All of these works have relevance and utility for sport scholarship. An explicit, self-conscious engagement with the general social theoretical orientation that unifies them can help readers better understand both the historical origins and development of sport, as well as its particular status and function in the modern world. Three distinctive overarching characteristics are highlighted: a constructivist orientation, a contextualizing impulse, and the need for a critical/systemic perspective. The final section draws out some of these broader characteristics and their analytical implications by summarizing the contributions of certain social theorists who have been most specific, systematic, and self-conscious about situating sport in the context of broad theoretical interests and questions—Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu, and C. L. R. James among them.

This general approach and admittedly idiosyncratic collection of thinkers is not meant to be systematic or comprehensive. It is not, for example, intended to survey that vast and impressive body of theoretical work on sport that has been engaged in the last fifteen or twenty years. Nor is this a chapter about how various social theories and theorists have been appropriated, deployed, and reworked in the context of sport research and writing over the years. Rather, it is a basic, conceptual overview of the value and utility of a social-theoretical framing approach to sport history. It is, in short, intended to be conceptual rather than genealogical, illustrative of the fundamental, multifaceted relationships between sport and society in modern history.

THEORETICAL RESOURCES IN THE SOCIOLOGICAL CANON

Classical social theory is, for sociologists at least, still delineated and defined by the research and writing of three founding scholars, the so-called holy trinity of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. Each of these theorists and their followers have their own orientation to history. Each has produced his own set of terms and organizing concepts for analyzing social life, and each has inspired particular lines of research and thought. At the risk of oversimplification, the core insights and contributions of each can be captured by a central organizing term: capitalism for Marx, rationality and/or rationalization for Weber, and social solidarity for Durkheim.

Marx's description of capitalism and all the analytic concepts that go along with it (labor, value, profit, class, exploitation, stratification, alienation, ideology, and false consciousness, just to name a few) are, of course, well-known analytic tools all across the academy. They have been used to explain the historical emergence of modernity; the development of its complex, stratified, and unequal societies; and a diverse array of human experiences therein. Sport scholarship has been no different. When the field took shape in the 1960s and 1970s, the theoretical resources inspired by and developed in the Marxist tradition were prominent and influential. Studies of the emergence of a market-based, for-profit system of sport provision and consumption (both participatory and spectator forms) were most apparent, along with works that analyzed the exploitation of professional (and other) athletes and their "labor" by the owners, administrators, and leaders of the sporting world. Most famously, the idea of sport as some kind of opiate of the masses—an institutionalized, cultural practice functioning to distract spectators and consumers from seeing the systemic sources of their own stratification—traces its lineage from Marx's notions of ideology, consent, and control.

Recognizing the Marxist roots of sports history and scholarship is not just a matter of tracing an intellectual lineage. Such theoretical engagements can make it easier for sport scholars to identify the assumptions and anticipate the directions, implications, and potential conclusions of work in this tradition or other approaches deriving from it. An example would be research into unequal access to sport as a participatory form in contemporary societies. Much of this work is focused on class and derives directly (if not always self-consciously) from the Marxist emphasis on the inequities generated by market-based, capitalist economies. Studies that attend to other social forms and the inequalities associated with them—probably most notably gender and race—also adopt and adapt many of the general Marxist concepts of inequality and systemic social stratification. Valuable in itself, such theoretical awareness can also help connect sport history and research to intellectual developments and innovations in other, related fields.

Weber, a German sociologist and best known for *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, is obviously indebted to Marx but shifted from a materialist analysis of

capitalism to a more cultural critique of the rationalization and bureaucratization of modern life. The focus and result was an emphasis on how different institutional realms of social life (or “spheres”) functioned in society, the ethos they required of their adherents, and the more existential questions of meaning and purpose to which they gave rise. These insights are expressed most famously in his notion of the iron cage. The cultural trap Weber described was not capitalism per se but the world wrought by capitalism, a world marked by incessant complexity, activity, and striving that has become entirely detached from any meaning or moral purpose, most of all the religious ethics that originally gave it purchase.

Weber’s ideas and writings about rationalization in the modern world may not be as familiar to sport scholars as Marx’s critique of capitalism, but they are actually fairly deeply embedded, even taken for granted, in much of the historical and theoretical work on the evolution of modern sporting systems and their role in society. Steven Overman’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Sport* is obviously in this vein, but Allen Guttmann’s classic *From Ritual to Record* may be a better and certainly more influential work within the sport canon itself. At a basic level, Guttmann charts an essentially Weberian institutional history of the emergence and development of sport as a distinctive social sphere or set of practices, one in which sport as a social form becomes more and more regulated, rule-oriented, disciplined, and differentiated as time goes on. In addition, Guttmann suggests a much broader shift and transformation in sport’s meaning, purpose, and function in the modern world from one of communal rites to physical excellence and record-setting for its own, spectacular if essentially unjustifiable, purpose. Such Weberian framings have also given rise to the larger, more general concept of sportization. Here it is worth noting that Weber’s critique of meaning and purpose in modern life—or the lack thereof—yields perhaps the single most famous sport reference in all of classical social theory: “the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport.”

Like Weber, the French sociologist Durkheim can and should be understood to begin from Marx’s critique of capitalism. However, Durkheim’s interest and analysis was less on the inequalities produced by modern economies and more on how the increasingly complex division of labor that they required challenge and change traditional forms of social solidarity and moral order. Durkheimian notions of solidarity, morality, and order may be less well known or frequently referenced among contemporary sport scholars, but they actually resonate quite well with those interested in the broad mobilization and collective impacts of sport spectatorship and consumption in terms of community-building and collective identification. Indeed, the concept of collective effervescence put forward in Durkheim’s masterwork *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* inevitably leads first-year sociology graduate students to speculate about mass sporting practices. Such ideas about the role of sport in creating, perpetuating, as well as contesting social solidarity is exemplified in the work of sport specialists such as John MacAloon or Susan Brownell on Olympic rituals, symbols, and ceremonies, both of whom trace their

Durkheimian roots through the leading midcentury American anthropologist Victor Turner's work on ritual and community.

Several other important lines of research and thought in sport history and scholarship chart a direct lineage to Durkheim as well. One of Durkheim's immediate followers, Roger Caillois, produced the first serious, sociological response to Johan Huizinga's foundational *Homo Ludens*. In contrast to Huizinga's philosophical treatise, Caillois's interest was in the socially differentiated meaning, status, and function of sport, play, and leisure in the modern world. Additionally, there is the notion of *habitus*, perhaps the most well-known and influential theoretical concept to come out of studies of sport, athletics, and the body. While this is obviously not the place for an extensive discussion of this formative notion, made famous by Bourdieu, it should be noted that the term itself was originally introduced by Marcel Mauss, Durkheim's nephew, student, and collaborator. Mauss introduced the notion of techniques or "habits" of the body as a way to call attention to the distinctive ways in which people from different nations used their bodies in walking, swimming, or marching. He sought to make a larger argument about the power of the collective in shaping individual activity and behavior.

This brings us, in many ways, to symbolic interactionism. One of the conceits of many sociological theorists and thinkers is that all of social theory and sociological conceptualization can be traced back to the Marx–Weber–Durkheim triad. This yields certain blind spots and misunderstandings, chief among them an absence of attention to social interaction (particularly at the face-to-face or "micro" level) and the minimization of the symbolic significance and cultural meaning endowed in and reproduced through all human interactions and relationships. In sociological theory at least, this orientation is typically called "symbolic interactionism" and can be traced from the work of Simmel in Germany and Mead in the United States to that of the mid-twentieth-century iconoclast Canadian American Goffman.

With their emphasis on culture, symbols, and representations, as well as the making of meanings in and through institutions and social interactions, the ideas that social theorists typically associate with symbolic interactionism often appear in sport scholarship under the headings of communication and consumption, mass media, or cultural studies. However, these foundations and connections are not always explicit or self-conscious. A better exemplar would be Gary Alan Fine's ethnographic study of little league baseball. With his attention to peer group interaction and how it produces a subculture of its own, Fine's work highlights both the interactive and the symbolic dimensions of this tradition. It should also be noted that the earliest and most probing social theoretical treatments of "play" in social interaction and human life can be found in symbolic interactionism. In scattered but extensive discussions, Simmel, Mead, and Goffman's formulations all help shape how sport scholars can think about the larger cultural meaning, status, and function of sport and its experiential significance with respect to how people actually engage and understand ostensibly playful forms of social activity and interaction.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOCIAL THEORY ORIENTATION

As useful as each of these different thinkers and schools of theory may be, what is arguably more important are the overarching but taken-for-granted insights and assumptions they hold in common. There are at least three larger, more general characteristics of what might be called the social theoretical worldview or “sociological imagination” that merit attention: its constructivist orientation, its contextualizing impulse, and the need for a critical perspective.

The constructivist orientation shared by social theorists, whatever their other intellectual interests and analytic proclivities, is that nothing about social life and human history is given, universal, or invariable. In other words, almost everything we know and think, not to mention all the ways we organize and interact, are social constructions. They are the product of social actions and historical forces that are not always visible and usually well beyond the comprehension and control of individual actors. This perspective and orientation may be obvious for some. Many historians speak of a historical imagination as well. But recognizing sport as a social construction, as something that has been produced by human activity, reminds that the basic facts, institutions, and practices of the sporting world were not given or inevitable but have a history of their own. They can and do change over time. Extending from this, classic social theory suggests sport history is thoroughly bound up with the history of modernity itself. This emphasis on the human-made structure and function of sport also, almost invariably, raises historical questions about how the sports world became the way it is. What forces or actors were the historical drivers? Whose interests has it served; who benefited as well as who did not? In other words, this constructivist orientation leads into both the critical and the contextualizing impulses that also define a social theoretical orientation to history and social life.

A second core characteristic of social theoretical thought is the impulse to contextualize—to situate any group, social practice, or cultural form in the broader social environment within which it took shape and assumed its particular meaning and function. The view that human history and social life are not a series of disconnected, discrete parts but a whole system helps make manifest the historical forces and social structures often forgotten or ignored. In sport studies, for example, this might mean explaining the rise of any particular sporting practice (or sport more generally) as owing not only to qualities of a sport itself but as a result of the rise of leisure time and extra income or even the emergence of cities and mass populations, the building of urban infrastructure, the emergence of mass media, commodification, and consumer society itself. Sport scholars should not see sport, its history, and its impact in the world as a self-contained, isolated institution or set of practices. Instead, the sport scholar must situate sport in the broader social and historical context of which it is part and parcel. This

contextualizing orientation reminds us of the necessary, if multifaceted, relationship between sport and society. If we are truly to understand sport, we cannot think about sport as if it were in a vacuum but instead must understand its place and role in society and history more broadly and generally.

The third distinguishing characteristic and contribution of a fully formed social theoretical approach involves a critical orientation. When it comes to critical theory and sociology, many historians and other academicians think of social inequalities and the activist push for social change—the belief that the goal of social writing and research is not just to analyze the world but also to engage the world and bring about change. However, there is a broader and more important analytic point about a critical theoretical orientation that is often lost in this framing. A critical-theoretical perspective also provides a degree of distance and a standard of evaluation that allows social and historical research to go beyond mere descriptive empiricism and dig deeper into both meanings and causes. More specifically, having a more or less fully formed critical orientation to the world provides standards and criteria against which to analyze and evaluate history and an awareness of the mechanisms, processes, and forces that have made the historical world and continue to shape and maintain the social status quo as we know it today.

In its earliest manifestations, critical analytic frameworks were mostly focused on the inequalities and injustices associated with class and economics, especially those generated by market-based, capitalist systems of exchange. Critical theory was, in other words, all about class—economic-based exploitation, oppression, and social stratification. Indeed, throughout much of the twentieth century the phrase “critical theory” was essentially synonymous with Marxism itself, the term having been invented by such German social theorists as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (members of the Frankfurt School) who had fled Germany for the United States where Marxist thought was about as popular as fascism. Yet the basic, generic tenets of critical theory—the need for a systemic framework and an independent analytic standpoint—have been expanded and reworked in the second half of the twentieth century with the rise of feminist theory, queer theory, postcolonial theory, subaltern studies, critical race theory, and intersectional (race–class–gender) analyses. Such analytic orientations have been attuned not only to a wider array of social forms but also stem from broader, more culturally oriented visions of worldview, meaning and purpose, efficiency and rationality. In terms of social differences and inequalities, the shift, both in the sporting world and in terms of the sporting world’s role in society, has been from class and economics to other social forms and forces, perhaps most notably gender and race due to the influence of the rise of feminist studies, critical race theory, and cultural studies more generally.

These grand, orienting assumptions about context, critique, and construction can be difficult to grasp or engage in the abstract. They are illustrated and usefully applied by several members of that small but exclusive set of social theorists who have been among the most explicit and self-conscious about sport as social form and historical force. It is an exercise that both illustrates these general social theoretical principles and extends

our understandings of the complicated, multifaceted relationships between sport and society and, by extension, the role of sport in history.

APPLICATIONS, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND EXTENSIONS

The well-known sport research and writing of Elias is probably most useful in terms of illustrating and operationalizing ideas about social construction and contextualization in sport scholarship. In his historical essays about sporting practices like fox hunting and more abstract orienting essays, Elias offers a very specific argument about the emergence and development of modern social life (the civilizing process, as he calls it) and the place of sport therein. At one level, Elias's work provides a constructivist framework for both recognizing the distinctive characteristics of the institutionalized set of practices and activities we call sport as well as for thinking about how that institution took shape and developed. Even more, Elias provides a broad, sociological context for—and explicit argument about—sport's larger role and function in the modern world. I am referring here particularly to his argument, most famously represented in the collected volume he did with Eric Dunning about sport filling an institutional role and function in the modern, “civilized” world by providing a place for excitement—leisure, recreation, and function marked by physical activity and intensive emotional engagement and release. Elias's emphasis on the experiential and emotional dimensions of sporting practices also undergirds and foreshadows recent work on bodily practices developed by scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, and Judith Butler.

With notions like “field,” “practice,” and the aforementioned “habitus,” the eminent French sociologist Bourdieu did more than any one scholar or theorist to bring terminology and imagery from the sporting world into social theory and social scientific practice. Bourdieu also has a quite specific and refined vision of the emergence, development, structure, and functioning of sport in the modern world. In fact, his is probably the best example and realization of a fully formed social theoretical approach to sport in the social theory cannon.

Bourdieu's approach to sport is grounded in a Marxist-materialist perspective on processes of social distinction, stratification, and control in modern societies and how sport is implicated therein. His empirical work on sport starts from a Weberian analysis of the emergence of sport as a distinctive institutional arena and focuses mainly on how different sporting practices—and the meaning and significance attributed to such practices—mark and distinguish social groups (Durkheim's solidarity and division of labor), thus reinforcing their power and position in society (or lack thereof). Bourdieu's emphasis is not on mass, nationalist sport but on the way in which different groups or classes participate in different sporting forms—for example, the working classes tend to participate in sports such as boxing or soccer while those in the upper classes tend to play golf or

tennis. Drawing on the symbolic interactionist tradition, Bourdieu highlights the more experiential and micro-level processes in and through which various sporting practices cultivate and inculcate distinctive worldviews and orientations.

Although illustrative of all the distinctive characteristics of a social theoretical approach, it is important to realize that Bourdieu and his work tend toward a very specific understanding of the relationships between sport and society, one where sport plays an essentially conservative, reproductive role in social life, reflecting larger historical forces rather than driving them, reinforcing rather than challenging existing societal arrangements. For instance, Bourdieu generally adopted the traditional leftist line that the investment of the working classes in sporting practices, particularly in the consumption of sporting spectacles through spectatorship and fandom, distracts them away from the difficult and fundamentally unjust conditions of their labor and lives. Bourdieu comes to these conclusions for a number of empirical and historical reasons—his understanding of the original form and function of athletic pursuits for boys and young men in elite English public schools, for example, as well as the rigid class structure of French society (his capital empirical case) and its particular sporting scene. Whatever the reasons, these formulations allow relatively little independent space or impact for sport as a social force in its own right.

An important variation on this view of sport as essentially reproductive and reflective can be found in the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz. Though not always included on the list of social theorists with a particular interest or expertise in sport, Geertz's famous article on cockfighting in Bali as "deep play" adds a crucial dimension to our understanding of the more cultural aspects of sport in its relation to society, especially as a mass form. In this now-classic paper, Geertz describes popular cultural forms and practices such as those associated with the sport as "texts" that social analysts might read over the shoulders of their subjects. Geertz's point is that if social analysts and cultural critics can properly "read"—that is, situate, analyze and contextualize—these texts, we have a powerful window onto the ideas and meanings that constitute the lifeworlds and worldviews of human subjects in specific contexts and communities. Geertz's argument about the importance and impact of cultural practices went still further and endowed such cultural forms with an important and relatively autonomous role or function in social life.

Geertz explained the meaning and significance of the cockfight in Bali by showing how the betting around the fights mirrored and thus reinforced the social kinship structure of local tribes and communities. People in Bali bet for particular animals and trainers, in other words, in order to demonstrate their communal ties and commitments to kin. On the surface, nothing specific or concrete *changed* in winning and losing. However, at a deeper level, according to Geertz, something important *happened*: social networks were put on display and enacted. In this performance, community and kinship ties were confirmed and re-established. The Balinese may not have wanted or been able to explain their fascination with cocks and cockfighting as a reflection of their social structure, but it provided a dramatic, engaging cultural space for them to experience and live out their communal connections. Thus the cockfight

was, in Geertz's memorable formulation, both a model *of* and a model *for* social solidarities and alliances.

Geertz's framing of the cockfight as a cultural performance suggests that the social and historical dynamics played out in sporting forms do not just reflect the larger, more general forces of history and society; they actually serve as an experiential platform that consolidates and ensures the reproduction of existing social ties. In fact, according to Geertz, sporting practices and performances like cockfights in Bali are all the more powerful as social forces because their participants are so deeply engaged in them and yet so unwilling or unable to articulate exactly why they are so engaged or what is actually going on. Thus these social effects are achieved even as participants think nothing particularly important or social is going on. Here Geertz connects a Durkheimian interest in social solidarity with the symbolic interactionist focus on interaction and symbolic meaning. Semiotic anthropologist Roland Barthes's famous discussion of the performativity among professional wrestlers offers another, even more self-conscious and strategic variation on this approach.

Whether in Bourdieu's straight social reproduction model or Geertz's more nuanced cultural approach, these different approaches to thinking about the role of sport in social life can make it difficult to envision the irreducible, relatively independent roles that sport can play in people's lives, in society, and in history. In sport studies, one line of research and writing that has pursued the relative independence and causal impact of sport is work that conceives of sport as a "contested terrain." This approach was derived largely in dialogue with the writing of Italian cultural Marxist Antonio Gramsci (though typically through the work of his interpreters, scholars such as Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Paul Willis, and the whole Birmingham School of Cultural Studies). Unlike Geertz, this work starts from the assumption that society is not a naturally harmonious, well-integrated place but instead is fraught with inequality, stratification, conflict, and struggle. In contrast to Bourdieu, it sees cultural venues like sport as arenas in and through which these social forces collide and struggle. The social dynamics that are played out, in the contested terrain frame, are not social order and stability but the struggle for order, the quest for control and power—not hegemony but the *struggle for* hegemony. Sport is best understood as an institutional arena where popular consciousness is constructed and contested, often without the participants being fully aware of the social processes in which they are so clearly implicated. In the sport context, this emphasis brings us to C.L.R. James and his magisterial, autobiographical rumination on cricket in the colonial context, *Beyond a Boundary*.

Formulated as a critique of colonialism, James starts from the presupposition that the modern world has been organized by race, both as a principle for the unequal distribution of resources and power as well as a mode for thinking about culture more generally. Squarely within the critical theoretical tradition, he further insists that these arrangements are neither just nor inevitable—and that the task of the analyst is to identify, understand, explain, and deconstruct the often unseen or misunderstood social processes and cultural beliefs that maintain existing racial

formations and inequalities. And, for James, sport, specifically cricket, was a preeminent site for recognition, contestation, and change on a large social scale.

Several things about sport are important and unique as a force for contestation and change in James's vision. One is the disproportionate involvement, access, and success that otherwise marginalized and disempowered groups often have in sport, at least in the Western context. Another is the widespread popularity of sport and the tremendous passion people bring to the practice both as participants and spectators. These characteristics—especially in combination with sport's own dramatic qualities—means that the social dynamics of the sporting world take on meaning and significance far “beyond the boundaries” of the sporting world itself. Much of this impact relies on the consciousness and agency of athletes, many of whom James saw as more socially aware than most American sport scholars would imagine. Almost all of this holds, at least in theory, for a variety of popular cultural forms; however, James was convinced that there was something even more specific and unique about sport (or really cricket) that made it such an important and distinctive social force. It is what I have called the “moral structure” of the game itself—the ideals of meritocracy, competition, fair play, respect for the rules, loyalty, teamwork, and mutual respect embedded in athletic contests themselves. This moral structure of cricket and Western sport more generally was marked for James both by formal rules and structural equality as well as by a deep and intuitive sense of fairness and self-discipline that all participating individuals were required to have and hold to in order to make the competitive system work.

This summary framing may resemble Geertz's depiction of culture as a “model of and model for” formation. Yet, where Geertz's conception of modeling was essentially conservative and reproductive—reinforcing things as they were—James's “model” served as an ethical standard to hold up against the status quo. It was a moral ideal that stood outside of the social world as it was and thus revealed and put demands upon those who held it. As sport sociologist Mike Messner, who has applied this model to struggles for gender equity in sport, has summarized: “[T]he game provided a context in which the contradiction of racism and colonial domination were revealed for all to see.”

In a post-civil rights, postcolonial era—where racism, prejudice, and discrimination still appear rampant both in sport and through sport *and* where so much of the scholarship aims to unpack the complicated ways in which sports images, ideologies, and identities function to maintain existing racial hierarchies—it can be easy to be cynical or skeptical about the accuracy and utility of the abstract, universalistic norms and values James believed were inculcated in sport. Indeed, they sound like the self-righteous rhetoric so often trumpeted by conservative or self-congratulatory sports elites, what the Olympic historian John Hoberman once derisively dismissed as the movement's “universal amorality.” The key point about James's work is the way in which he endowed sport with an autonomy and relative independence as a social force, drawing analytic attention to the broader social impacts and implications of these struggles and the social contestation and change that can occur through sport, not just in it.

THE USE, VALUE, AND LARGER IMPLICATIONS OF THEORETICAL ENGAGEMENT

This overview of some of the basic conceptual resources available for sport history in the social theory canon has been admittedly, even intentionally, schematic and idiosyncratic. In fact, many of the concepts, analytic insights, and broader theoretical orientations outlined here have been elaborated, extended, and applied more extensively, and perhaps more eloquently, in more recent sport research and writing. Once again, the goal here is not to be comprehensive but rather to be conceptual, suggestive of some of the theoretical resources that are useful and valuable for doing sport history.

Such an exercise has a number of potential benefits for the sport historian and social analyst. By referencing or signposting some of these classic concepts and frameworks, one can minimize or even eliminate the need to reinvent the conceptual toolkit with every study, paper, or book project. In addition, a working awareness of the core works and concepts of the social theory cannon can help sport scholars better anticipate the directions, implications, potential problems, and probable conclusions of certain approaches if and when they are applied to sport. These uses are important since denizens of commentators and large secondary literatures have taken shape around each of these well-established bodies of social theory. Further, a more self-conscious and systematic engagement with social theory can also help better situate sport history and research in the context of broader intellectual currents and more general scholarly debates. This latter point is somewhat larger and more substantive than it may first appear.

Throughout, I have argued and tried to show that a more theoretically engaged and informed sport scholarship can contribute to a better, fuller understanding of sport—its emergence and historical development, its relationships with society, and the ways in which it is implicated in the history and evolution of modern social life itself. This “grandiose” framing is obviously intended to contribute to a better, more sophisticated sport scholarship and history, but it has another, arguably more important implication as well. I am thinking here of those historians, social scientists, and cultural critics who normally do not pay much attention to sport. Indeed, I suggest here by way of conclusion that a more theoretically engaged and informed sport scholarship is essential for bringing sport history and scholarship from the margins of the academy closer to the center of history and its aligned academic fields, disciplines, and departments. A more theoretically sophisticated sport studies will, I believe, cultivate new attention to and awareness of the power, complexity, and impact of sport as a social phenomenon and force among that large contingent of scholars who have not previously seen it as such. What is to be gained from demonstrating and explicating sport’s larger social status and historical significance is not just an appreciation of sport but a bigger, broader conception of history

and social life, one that more fully attends to the power of play, popular practices, and symbolic meanings in modern life. Sport scholarship is obviously still far from such ambitious interventions and goals; however, there should be little doubt that a more deliberate engagement with social theory is a key part of making this project a reality.

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CHAPTER 2

SPORT AND POLITICAL DOCTRINE IN A POST-IDEOLOGICAL AGE

JOHN HOBERMAN

FOLLOWING the fall of the Soviet Union, East Germany, and the other Communist dictatorships of eastern Europe, there was good reason to ask what these momentous events had done to the status and *raison d'être* of political ideology in a post-Communist world. Examining the role of political ideology in the politically charged world of international sports was one way to test the proposition that the “end of ideology” had finally arrived. “The collapse of Eastern European Communism and its vaunted sports systems,” I wrote in 1993, “raises the question of whether the familiar left–right bipolar model of the ideological spectrum is still relevant to political life in general or to international sport in particular.”¹ In retrospect, what strikes me about this passage is the confident assumption that “the familiar left–right bipolar model of the ideological spectrum” had been an important dimension of international sport. While it is not surprising that, as the author of *Sport and Political Ideology*, I saw political ideology as an animating force in the pre-1989 sports-political universe, an examination of the sports politics of the past two decades presents an opportunity to define the actual roles political ideologies have played in sports politics both before and after the transition to a post-Communist world. Political ideologies are real in that they exist as official doctrines that are imbued with varying degrees of authority. Such doctrines can exert a profound influence on a political culture, and the more dictatorial or totalitarian the regime, the more such doctrines will be applied to various social venues, including sport. What we want to know is the degree to which national governments have translated official ideological positions into actual sports policies during and after the Cold War. A retrospective look back also affords an opportunity to compare the sports-political doctrines of the Cold War period with those that have been formulated by national governments in the absence of the ideological polarization that marked the political standoff between the capitalist democracies and the Soviet system. Which if any of these political doctrines simply disappeared along with the Soviet empire, and which if any have survived?

Sport and Political Ideology (1984) prioritizes the study of official sports doctrine over the governmental policies regarding sport that conformed to official doctrine to one degree or another. The second part of this chapter describes what some may regard as a “post-ideological,” namely, post-Cold War political world in which governments around the world offer political rationales for the instrumental use of sport for a variety of reasons. This chapter argues that there is a political doctrine governing the professed or actual use of sport by national governments that is so widespread and so fundamental that it persists independent of the traditional left-right political ideologies. These policies and their goals turn out to be quite uniform across the globe. Both wealthy and less developed countries pursue, or at least pay lip service to, sportive-nationalist objectives that range from the pursuit of Olympic glory to combatting juvenile delinquency. Government officials in poor countries often articulate these goals without having the resources (or the resolve) to achieve them.

There is a modern sports-functional orthodoxy that government officials everywhere feel they must adhere to: elite success plus public benefits. Richard Pringle has identified this orthodoxy with the sociological paradigm known as “functionalism,” and that concept fits the evidence. Functionalism “is typically regarded as a meta-theory that views society as an organized system of inter-related structures that function to produce social integration and stability. Sport, under a functionalist regime of truth, is believed to help society by contributing to ‘personal growth and the preservation of social order at all levels of social organization.’ Functionalist discourses see the strengthening of the structures of sport at both grass roots and elite levels resulting in a more cohesive society.”² It is readily apparent that this functionalist discourse of sport is a state-sanctioned ideology that promotes the value of sport as a resource for implementing various forms of social engineering.

In the last analysis, all of these objectives are undertaken under the rubric of an expansive concept of national security that comprises both international stature and internal national conditions and development. At the same time, Richard Pringle and others have pointed out that the conventional sports-functional orthodoxy is supported by no credible evidence whatsoever, at which point two things happen: the topic of ideology (socially sanctioned fantasies about causes and effects) reasserts itself, and it becomes necessary to look at the interest groups that profit (financially and/or emotionally) from the promotion of sportive nationalism. The sports-functional orthodoxy is, therefore, both a sincere (if probably mistaken) faith on the part of some officials in sport’s beneficial social effects or an official justification for self-serving policies by government and sports officials—or both at the same time. We can call all of this a sports-functional ideology that is itself a consequence of sportive nationalism. This sports-functional ideology is currently an unchallenged international dogma, a global consensus about the importance of a nation’s being internationally competitive and using sport to achieve other national goals that include various forms of social development.

Because totalitarian regimes are the most determined and effective promoters of political ideologies that aim to penetrate every aspect of life and national policy, our examination of the ideological uses of sport should first describe the ideas and policies

of the Nazi and Soviet regimes. To what extent do a dictatorship's ideological declarations correspond to the policies it actually carries out? And can these policies, perhaps, express contrary ideological values even as the policy serves the political objectives of the regime? For example, one might argue that the Nazi regime's willingness to stage the 1936 Berlin Games both confirmed and violated Nazi ideological norms. The Berlin Olympiad offended Nazi purists and violated Hitler's political instincts by allowing interracial competitions between blacks and whites. A principled hostility to internationalism is implicit in fascist ideology, which extols the cult of the nation, the glorification of war, and the doctrine of race.

Doctrinaire Nazis were deeply offended by sporting contacts with "primitive" races and by competing against Negro athletes, in particular. In 1932 the virulently racist *Völkischer Beobachter* demanded racial segregation in Olympic sport: "Negroes have no place at an Olympiad . . . unfortunately, one finds today that the free man must often compete against unfree blacks, against Negroes, for the victory wreath. This is an unparalleled disgrace and degradation, and the ancient Greeks would turn in their graves if they knew what modern men have made out of their holy National Games. . . . The next Olympic Games will take place in 1936 in Berlin. Hopefully, the men who are responsible in this regard will know what their duty is. The blacks must be excluded. We expect nothing less."³ In 1940, during a conversation with Albert Speer, his minister of armaments, Hitler himself endorsed the segregationist position on interracial athletic competitions. "People whose antecedents came from the jungle were primitive, their physiques were stronger than those of civilized whites. They represented unfair competition and hence must be excluded from future games."⁴

Yet the racist argument against staging the Berlin Games did not prevail. In March 1933 Hitler and propaganda minister Goebbels were persuaded to turn this Olympiad into a national mission that would demonstrate Germany's greatness on a world stage. One version of this pro-Olympiad argument cleverly made athletic competition into a test of racial strength. Writing in 1941, Carl Diem, a Nazi fellow-traveler and a principal organizer of the Berlin Olympiad, rationalized a racially integrationist sports policy by emphasizing the Nazi value of sheer self-assertion against other peoples and races. "There are many," he noted, "who, consciously or unconsciously, believe that their race should avoid engaging in physical competition with more primitive races." This, Diem argued, is precisely the wrong policy since the "masterful position of the superior race" will last only as long as Europe is willing to compete against the best athletes in the world, regardless of their race.⁵ Diem's argument was, in effect, that, for this occasion, acting out Nazi racial megalomania required the kind of multiracial cosmopolitan venue Nazi ideologues despised.

The Nazi regime's quandary about whether to stage its Olympiad thus resulted from competing ideological claims that could be made to serve the regime's various political goals. The racist ideology that would exclude blacks was not, in fact, entirely suppressed, since the regime was prepared to cancel these Games at the last moment in the event the United States decided not to participate.⁶ But the presence of, and competition against, the United States, the possibility of Negro victories notwithstanding,

trumped the requirements of racial ideology, regardless of whether this decision disappointed the ideological purists. This conflict between Nazi distaste for competition against “primitive races” and the regime’s decision to make these multiracial Games an important instrument of foreign policy caused considerable confusion in the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, which had no choice but to improvise in response to policy decisions coming from the top of the political hierarchy.⁷ At the same time, staging the Games had an ideological significance beyond achieving the foreign policy objective of enhancing Germany’s stature among the nations. Olympic sport embodied a visible dynamism of movement and force that expressed in dramatic form the narcissistic and aggressive elements of the Nazi ethos that are a significant part of Nazi ideology.⁸ The Olympic medals won by German athletes put the inherent dynamism of high-performance sport in the service of the Nazi regime.

The “Nazi Olympics” of 1936 were, therefore, compatible with Nazi ideology in this and in other respects. First, idealizing athletes could be presented as an expression of biological racism. A physically healthy person, Hitler says in *Mein Kampf*, is always to be preferred to a brainy weakling; the Nazi sport ideology that idealized the statuesque bodies and racially pure athletic competitions of the ancient Greeks translated Hitler’s preference for robust male bodies into racial ideology.⁹ Second, an Olympiad lends itself to being converted into spectacle, and the Nazis were the masters of the spectacle genre at this time. How many Olympic spectators are aware that important elements of Olympic spectacle, such as the torch relay and Hitler’s invitation to “the youth of the world,” were invented by the creators of the 1936 Games?

The great dictatorships of the twentieth century marked the high point of “the left–right bipolar model” of political ideology. To a greater extent than democratic governments, authoritarian regimes promulgate distinctive and intrusive political anthropologies. These doctrines are formulas for producing the exemplary citizens of a regimented social order. The two great authoritarian political ideologies thus prescribed contrasting “conceptions of what human beings are, what their capacities are, and what sort of social order best serves their needs.”¹⁰ The Communist and fascist approaches to sports,” Robert Edelman notes, “are by no means subsumable under some broader ‘totalitarian’ category. Sports in the USSR were to be organized bureaucratically and rationally with the concrete goal of supporting the efficiency of production. Fascism, by contrast, embraced a wide range of irrational appeals, and its approach to sports similarly stressed the joy, ecstasy, aggressiveness, and (for them) virility of athletic competition.”¹¹ A sport could have an ideological signature: “Track and field, a sport of specialists, could be seen as the sporting correlate of the newly empowered [Soviet] technical specialists” of the 1930s.¹² Hitler praised boxing above other sports as a celebration of raw aggression. In short, a sportive style could have ideological content for those who were willing or able or instructed by political leaders to see it.

Both totalitarian regimes achieved great Olympic success. Nazi Germany finished far ahead of the United States in the medal count at the Berlin Games. At every Olympiad from its debut in 1952 until 2000, the Soviet Union (and then Russia) finished either first or second in the Olympic medal count. But it was not the intensified role of political

ideology in the dictatorial regimes of Hitler and Stalin that produced athletic success. As an historian of Italian soccer has pointed out: "It would be naïve . . . to make a direct link between fascist ideology and practice and the winning of a lot of football matches." For the fact is that Italian success in soccer both preceded and followed Mussolini's reign. As this author points out: "Fascism was good for Italian football, and football was good for fascism."¹³

But that does not mean that fascism produced better football than another type of political regime might have done. One could point to similar correlations between Stalinism and weightlifting, the Nordic welfare state and skiing, or American democracy and basketball. These are only a few of the illusory causes and effects that tempt us to believe in the power of an ideology to produce superior athletes. The most persuasive of these illusions are generated by the sports triumphs of dictatorial regimes that trumpet their athletic ambitions to the world. The tendency of many people to "identify with the aggressor" persuades them to see correlation as causation when dictators flaunt their powers and their harsh demands for athletic victory. Less forceful governmental policies to promote success in international sport do not call forth the fascination with power that promotes fantasies about causal relationships between political force and the athletic performances they seem to make possible.

The reigning ideologically inspired athletic stereotype of the politically charged competition between capitalist and Communist "systems" was that of the Soviet athlete as a robotic and insensate creature. The Western understanding of Soviet sport was "dominated by the image of a state-sponsored, medal-producing assembly line."¹⁴ This factory-like operation for the production of athletes embodied the collectivism that was a fundamental ideological requirement of the Soviet model. In 1955 the president of the International Olympic Committee, the American business tycoon Avery Brundage, declared that "Russia is building the greatest mass army of athletes the world has ever known." "By American standards," he said, the Soviet sports program "is harsh and severe. It is both Spartan and puritanical. Most of the spirit of fun seems to have been bled from it, and it thrives on regimentation and fierce national pride."¹⁵ "Their athletes are deadly serious," an American sportswriter commented in 1954.¹⁶ Communist athletes who were sullen automatons were living indictments of the political ideology that had spawned them.

Citizens of the United States who absorbed these images of "Communist" athletes did not see American athletes as ideologically motivated performers. What they did see amidst the ideological polemics of the Cold War were elite athletes who had been enlisted as patriotic political proxies in the competition between the United States and the USSR. The high-jump duels between the American John Thomas and his Soviet rival Valery Brumel during the early 1960s were emblematic of this symbolic struggle. When Thomas died in January 2013, *The New York Times* looked back on an era "when sport was often another arena for ideological struggle."¹⁷

Even as such a verbal formula dramatizes Cold War political tensions, it also conveys a sense of unreality that haunts the ideological polemics that enlisted athletes as reluctant political foils. Sport is properly designated "*another* region for ideological struggle,"

as opposed to the more dangerous arena in which Khrushchev and Kennedy were rattling their nuclear sabers. As Thomas and Brumel competed against each other around the world, “massive political overlays” covered them like a quilt, as the *Times* put it, making them apolitical actors engaged in what many imagined to be a political ritual. The description of their jumping duels as “theater” confirms that interpreting their performances as political acts required a willing suspension of disbelief. It took an act of the imagination to transform these physical performances into symbols of a nation’s political efficiency or superiority.

American politicians of both major parties published reflections on the sports politics of the Cold War that indicate little interest in engaging in ideological arguments with Soviet ideas or politicians. Senator Robert F. Kennedy, for example, saw sportive supremacy as a strategy for breaking the political deadlock between the United States and the Soviets. Olympic medals were also a form of strategic propaganda that could refute Soviet claims about the decline of the West: “[I]n this day of international stalemates,” Kennedy wrote in 1964 in *Sports Illustrated*, “nations use the scoreboard of sports as a visible measuring stick to prove their superiority over the ‘soft and decadent’ democratic way of life. It is thus in our national interest that we regain our Olympic superiority—that we once again give the world visible proof of our inner strength and vitality.” One theme is political stature: “Part of a nation’s prestige in the cold war,” he wrote, “is won in the Olympic Games. In this quadrennial conflict the U.S. skidded steadily for 16 years. The record is there for all the world to see—and to note as proof of a decline in our once-acknowledged national energy.”¹⁸

The second and related theme is a quasi-biological notion of national “vitality” and “energy.” Four years earlier, President John F. Kennedy had declared that “the knowledge that the physical well-being of the citizen is an important foundation for the vigor and vitality of all the activities of the nation, is as old as Western civilization itself.” More explicitly than his brother Robert, President Kennedy warned against “the softness on the part of the individual citizens [that] can help to strip and destroy the vitality of a nation.”¹⁹ “Physical vigor,” he said in 1962, “was the key to ‘insuring the continued flourishing of our civilization.’”²⁰ In 1974 President Gerald R. Ford wrote that “competitive athletics” played a crucial role in maintaining “our competitive spirit in this country, the thing that made us great, the guts of the free-enterprise system.” He also promoted the propaganda value of sportive excellence: “I don’t know of a better advertisement for a nation’s good health than a healthy athletic representation.”²¹

This bipartisan rhetoric has two related concerns: the health status of the national organism and the nation’s global athletic reputation. The core fantasy expressed here is that the biological health of the population will eventually manifest itself as national strength in political, economic, and athletic competitions. Almost none of these verbal formulas refer specifically to a Soviet threat or Communist ideology; the exception is Robert Kennedy’s reference to “the ‘soft and decadent’ democratic way of life”—an oblique response to the Soviet propaganda cliché he has quoted. Cliché or not, however, all of these politicians express a concern about American “softness,” a metaphor that signifies both physical decline and a loss of national willpower. All of these hortatory

essays appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, the most widely circulated sports publication in the United States, then and now.

These calls to improve the health of the population and the medal counts at the Olympic Games are ideological in that they faithfully reproduce an ideology of national vitality that was formulated in Victorian England during the second half of the nineteenth century. President Kennedy quotes in 1962 from a speech the former Prime Minister Disraeli delivered on June 24, 1877: "The health of the people is really the foundation upon which all their happiness and all their powers as a State depend."²² The more famous and earthier quotation in this vein appeared in 1861 in Herbert Spencer's essay on "Physical Education": "the first requisite to success in life is 'to be a good animal'; and to be a nation of good animals is the first condition to national prosperity." Writing decades before the modern Olympic movement made sportive nationalism a familiar part of the global political landscape, Spencer notes without much alarm that Victorian England took greater interest in the production of a racehorse than "a modern athlete."

At the same time, Spencer seems to have intuited the future role of the athlete as a representative of national energy on the international stage along with men whose physical performances take a more tangible form. The result of "a war often turns on the strength and hardiness of soldiers," while "the contests of commerce are in part determined by the bodily endurance of producers." It is at this point that Spencer articulates that concern about national vitality American presidents would articulate a century later; "Thus far we have found no reason to fear trials of strength with other races in either of these fields. But there are not wanting signs that our powers will presently be taxed to the uttermost. The competition of modern life is so keen, that few can bear the required application without injury." An important task of the modern state is thus to make English children mentally and physically tough enough to cope with the "excessive wear and tear" to which the modern struggle for existence will subject them.²³

Other Victorian commentators made a direct connection between sportive prowess and national power. The Reverend J. E. C. Welldon, headmaster of Harrow School from 1881 to 1895, wrote that: "In the history of the British Empire it is written that England has owed her sovereignty to her sports." In his treatise on *Our Public Schools. Their Influence on English History*, J. G. C. Minchin wrote in 1901 that "there is assuredly nothing more splendidly Greek than the Eton eight in training for Henley. Such thews and sinews must give the hegemony of the world to the country that can produce such athletes."²⁴ As early as 1868 the *Times* of London had described the University Boat Race as a demonstration of "that instinct which urges every Englishman to be as good as his neighbor, and which keeps up the whole nation at least on a par with other nations."²⁵

These commentaries make it clear that the fundamental premise (or illusion) of sportive nationalism—namely, that elite athletes embody and express an essential competitive instinct that serves the national security—was alive and well during the Victorian period. What is more, the origin of its "ideological" component is a fantasy about the collective biological energy of the nation. Social-psychological thinking (or fantasies) about the "role-model" effects of elite athletes are a post-Victorian development that still coexist with vaguely biological ideas about the health and athletic prowess of the body

politic. Consider, for example, the young Russian nationalists who marched through the streets of Moscow in November 2011 chanting slogans that included “Sport! Health! Nationalism!”—a formula that sums up the sports-nationalist doctrine of Cold War American presidents as well as that of the Victorian inventors of this “ideology” from whom American politicians and others have inherited this extremely influential version of sportive nationalism.²⁶

In retrospect, as we observe totalitarian and nontotalitarian sports cultures, it becomes clear that governments large and small, and across the political spectrum, have employed *raison d'état* as the spoken or unspoken justification for promoting success in international sport. The sportive nationalism that originates in shared fantasies about a linkage between the production of high-performance athletes and national viability constitutes the fundamental sports ideology of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A remarkable sense of urgency about the importance of athletic respectability in the eyes of the world has produced a set of sports policies that can be called *generic* in that they serve state-sponsored objectives that most nations have pursued irrespective of their political ideologies.

While the megalomania of the totalitarian dictatorships attracted massive attention to their use of sport for *raisons d'état*, many nonauthoritarian governments have both accepted and proclaimed the generic doctrine of sportive nationalism that regards international competitiveness as nothing less than a matter of national security. This is the only way to explain the almost ubiquitous emotional and financial investments in this form of national prestige. The perceived psychological lift for a nation that achieves sportive supremacy can seem both real and fantastical. For example, the Soviet performance at the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games came close to matching that of the United States and had a Sputnik-like effect on morale five years before the USSR launched mankind's first artificial satellite into Earth's orbit: “The very idea that that their nation could perform as well as the United States in any field of human endeavor had great resonance with the Soviet public.”²⁷ In a similar vein, “when Brazil in 1970 won the Football World Cup, there was a strong feeling within the country that their way of life was equal to or even better than the first world countries and they felt that their country had become recognized in international society.”²⁸ Spain's 2010 World Cup soccer victory in South Africa stimulated fantasies of a sudden boost to a national economy whose disastrous condition still persists. The alleged murder scandal involving the South African Paralympic champion Oscar Pistorius that erupted in February 2013 exposed once again the fragility of such euphoric national experiences, which are “united around a temporary emotion associated with winning, or even around a personality, rather than a set of values, principles or ideals.”²⁹

State-sponsored sports initiatives of various kinds express a “post-ideological” doctrine (or ideology) of sheer utilitarianism that includes sport's (socially useful) inspirational impact on the nation as a whole as well as the pursuit of international prestige. Like the pig whose every body part must be put to profitable use, governmental agencies regard sport as a multifaceted resource that must not be allowed to go to waste. Sports England, which aims at creating a “community sports system,” declares that “The

value of sport to local government extends beyond sport for sports sake.” The claimed benefits include health, community safety, employment, and economic growth. The Australian Sports Commission is a statutory agency of the Australian Government; the Australian Institute of Sport is Australia’s premier sports training institute. Russia has a Ministry of Sport. The Norwegian Ministry of Culture has a “Strategy for R & D in Sports,” even as Norwegian sports officials struggle to balance their purportedly high ethical standards vis-à-vis doping against the mandate to win medals.³⁰ High Performance Sport New Zealand is a subsidiary of Sport New Zealand, the Crown agency that oversees the sports establishment. Atypically among the wealthier nations, in 1978 the United States Congress delegated responsibility for elite sport to the United States Olympic Committee, a nongovernmental body. The United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) is a “nongovernmental” body that is recognized (and largely funded) by the US Congress as “the official anti-doping agency for Olympic, Pan American and Paralympic sport in the United States.” This makes USADA a curious hybrid among the agencies around the world that bear responsibility for the integrity of a nation’s elite sports. Note that every government with the resources to invest in international sports prestige thereby creates an internal conflict between the requirements of national ambitions to win medals and the pressure to promote or tolerate doping. In some countries, while one governmental agency is charged with developing high-performance athletes, another may be assigned the task of reducing the national medal count by catching the dopers the first agency produces, assuming of course the anti-doping agency has the resources to do so.

The utilitarian ideology of sport, and its implicit (and often vague) invocations of national security and social well-being, has also been embraced in word or deed by many small countries, some of which cannot afford to compete at the elite level. Like the governments of Zambia and Namibia, the government of Jamaica, a small and poor country that still manages to produce world-class sprinters, has appealed for private investment in sport. Wealthy Brunei sponsors the Brunei Gold Project to win medals in regional competitions; physical fitness underlies “national development.” The government of Malta invests in sports to create “a sports Economy that will result in quality jobs.” Sport in Ireland is “an investment in the health and well-being of the country.” The government of Fiji promotes sport as “nation building.” The government of the Azores sees sport as having “raised the Azores to prominence” in the wider world. The determination on the part of micro-states to engage in this global contest on a micro-scale conveys a sense of urgency that derives from a concept of national security whose “ideology” is a doctrine of perpetual competition and slavish obedience to the performance principle. Less competitive civilizational ideals have been discounted in this world of unending global struggle.

This sportive nationalist ideology now coexists with an authoritative anti-doping ideology promulgated by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). The basis of this doctrine is the World Anti-Doping Code that entered into force on January 1, 2004; a revised version of the code took effect on January 1, 2009. It is important to note that WADA’s inability to prevail against the doping epidemic in global sport has not up to this point

reduced the authority of its anti-doping ideology. On the contrary, WADA's prohibitionist ideology directed against doping has become increasingly influential even as its leadership has become increasingly pessimistic over the past couple of years and has even proclaimed that the global "war" against doping cannot be won. The WADA doctrine and sportive nationalism thus coexist as the predominant, and fundamentally incompatible, sports ideologies of the early twenty-first century.

Do we, therefore, inhabit a "post-ideological" era in which the traditional left-right divide has actually disappeared? In fact, the global anti-doping doctrine continued to demonstrate some ideological differentiation along the left-right spectrum in Germany during the 1980s and 1990s. The election of "Green" Party members to the Bundestag (the Parliament) during the 1980s revived the West German neo-Marxist critique of high-performance sport that appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This critical perspective attacked dangerous training regimens, biochemical manipulation of athletes, exploitation of child athletes, and the unwholesome determination to disregard human limits. The Greens' critique of elite sport found its place within a more comprehensive attack on technological interventions into the human organism such as genetic engineering.³¹

This ideological conflict over the proper roles and values of high-performance sport between German conservatives and the Social Democrats and Greens in the German Parliament reasserted itself many years later. Following the 2012 London Olympic Games, it was revealed that the Interior Ministry had assigned Olympic medal quotas to German sports federations and had stipulated that funding levels would reflect performance levels in international competitions. In partnership with the German Olympic Sports Association, the Interior Ministry refused to make public its internal deliberations about what amounted to mandated "performance goals" (*Zielvereinbarungen*). This episode signaled that the federal government's postwar national security ideology regarding Germany's international sports achievements was still intact. In 1989, while serving as Chancellor Helmut Kohl's interior minister, Manfred Kanther (a conservative) had famously declared that high-performance sport was a "national priority" (*ein nationales Anliegen*). A generation after Kanther's pronouncement, Germany's "functional" approach to sports policy continued under another conservative chancellor; and, once again, what appeared to be a politically conservative attachment to sportive nationalism was challenged by left-of-center German parliamentarians. This fundamental left-right ideological conflict over the proper roles and limitations of sportive nationalism could intensify as sports doping scandals continue to erupt around the world.

The attenuation of left-right ideological conflict regarding doping has been succeeded by a more subtle competition between national anti-doping programs. Given the global hegemony of WADA orthodoxy, a new criterion of national superiority is anti-doping fervor and the willingness of governments to enforce anti-doping measures even at the cost of disqualifying their best athletes. Dionne L. Koller has argued that this development resulted from growing public awareness of doping: "It was out of this climate that there emerged a new paradigm for sport in the late 1990s. While the private sector was delivering athletes who were winning, they were no longer enhancing national prestige

because of the cloud of doping. The United States Government, therefore, recalculated its interest to reflect that it is no longer in the national interest to simply have athletes who are successful in international athletic competition. It must do so with the moral authority that the United States does not cheat.”³² Koller argues convincingly that the global anti-doping campaign has changed the symbolic politics of sport, in that doping positives can cancel out at least some of the national prestige that is conventionally associated with victorious athletes. This suggests that the perceived efficacy of a nation’s anti-doping efforts now represents a secondary (if unofficial) form of international competition. The integrity of drug-testing thus becomes an important dimension of the WADA-enforced anti-doping ideology that is now a global doctrine. Koller calls anti-doping regulation “a more evolved manifestation of sportive nationalism. Accordingly, it is no longer winning medals in Olympic Movement competition that provides international prestige. The medals must be won with moral authority.”³³

This important observation must be evaluated in the larger context of the ongoing contest between traditional sportive nationalism and the anti-doping bureaucracy that attempts to contain its pharmacological excesses. While anti-doping regulation can indeed be seen as “a more evolved manifestation of sportive nationalism,” its prestige and impact on sportive nationalism should not be overestimated. For it is not quite the case that Olympic “medals must be won with moral authority.” It would be more accurate to say that they must be won without the medalists testing positive for doping drugs. By now it is widely understood that a significant number of doped athletes continue to win medals without being detected. The result is that these medal-winning performances exist in a kind of purgatorial state. The urine samples of Olympic athletes are now frozen and stored for a period of eight years, so that the improved testing methods of the future may reveal doping that cannot be detected today. A growing cynicism about elite sport in general—and extraordinary athletic performances in particular—now pervades the global sporting public. A series of doping mega-scandals, ranging in time from Ben Johnson’s Olympic disgrace in 1988 to the spectacular fall of Lance Armstrong twenty-five years later, have taken a toll on the prestige value of international sporting triumphs.

National governments have demonstrated varying degrees of commitment to the “secondary” competition (and ideology) of doping control. In the United States, the Office of National Drug Control Policy, established in 1989, partly funds the USADA and has publicly opposed doping in sports. The US government played a leading role in the establishment of WADA. At the same time, the US Department of Justice has taken legal action against confirmed or suspected American dopers such as Barry Bonds, Marion Jones, Roger Clemens, and Lance Armstrong. In February 2004, then-US Attorney General John Ashcroft went on television to announce indictments in the BALCO doping conspiracy case. “The government, as a prosecutorial and reform vehicle, entered the steroids era with zeal and optimism: Finally, baseball and its players had to answer to a more powerful body, one that it could not simply lie to and laugh at.”³⁴

Sportive nationalism in the age of anti-doping morality, as noted earlier, creates a perpetual tension between government-sponsored programs to win international

medals and (in some countries) government-sponsored anti-doping agencies charged with detecting their own doped athletes. Adherence to the WADA Code amounts to a form of global political correctness. In 2010, for example, Swiss Sport Minister Ueli Maurer mentioned the anti-doping mandate in the context of virtuous Swiss internationalism: "It's clear that Switzerland is obliged to do something to fight corruption as we have lots of international federations with headquarters in Switzerland and we want to set an example in solving this problem."³⁵ In the same year, Indian Sports Minister M. S. Gill described his message to Indian athletes: "It is true that we do want lots of medals in the Commonwealth Games. But even if we get one, we want that medal with honour. . . . We have to kill the abuse of dope."³⁶ The potential for farce regarding such commitments was evident in 2012 when Alexander Lukashenko, the authoritarian head of state of Belarus, declared: "We need to criminalize the use of doping."³⁷ This statement came three days after Lukashenko lambasted the country's "complete failure" at the 2012 London Olympic Games. A week earlier the Belarussian president castigated the national soccer team following a 4–0 loss at home to the world and European champions from Spain. "I've never seen such a disgrace for our nation," he said. "Our team, excuse my language, just shit themselves. They came out on the pitch with their legs and arms shaking."³⁸ Dictators who bully their sports officials and athletes are not likely to subscribe to the anti-doping ethos, but they feel, nonetheless, that they are obliged to pledge allegiance to the anti-doping ideology.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has employed the same strategy of demanding drug-free sport and international sporting success simultaneously. The Russian Anti-Doping Agency was created in January 2008 by the Federal Agency for Physical Culture and Sport in compliance with the WADA Code and the 2005 UNESCO International Convention Against Doping in Sport. In 2009 and 2012, Putin called for crackdowns on doping.³⁹ The Russian Parliament passed anti-doping laws in 2011.⁴⁰ Russian sports federations have announced and enforced doping bans against a number of their athletes. But this ostensible compliance with international anti-doping norms coexists with a degree of cynicism about doping controls. In 2010 President Dmitry Medvedev stated: "We must get rid of this image, which our country seems to have picked up. We need to evaluate the situation and take all necessary measures, including the adoption of new laws." He added that doping scandals "are a well-known means of settling scores and an element of global sporting competition. We must know how to defend ourselves and not turn the other cheek."⁴¹ Here the politics of doping is regarded, all too realistically, as a matter of image management and political maneuvering. But even as these sobering realities are addressed, public fealty to the WADA Code and its ideology of sporting virtue must be performed if not sincerely embraced.

Behind the façade of governmental anti-doping pronouncements, government officials and national federations often tolerate the bending or ignoring of anti-doping rules. The Brazilian swimming federation in 2011 accepted the alibis of four swimmers who had tested positive for a banned substance.⁴² The superstar among this group was selected as Brazil's Athlete of the Year despite this suspicious finding.⁴³ In

2010 the National Anti-Doping Commission of Slovenia refused to accept a finding by the International Cycling Union (UCI) that its blood passport procedure indicated Slovenia's best road cyclist had doped.⁴⁴ In 2011 the Russian Cycling Federation refused to ban a rider who had tested positive for a banned diuretic, thereby contesting a ruling from the UCI.⁴⁵ In 2010 an Indian weightlifter was reprieved by an Anti-Doping Disciplinary panel after testing positive for an abnormal testosterone level; the panel accepted his argument that the testosterone was a medically indicated treatment for "infertility."⁴⁶ In 2011 Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero declared that the Spanish cycling star Alberto Contador was innocent of a doping charge that had been upheld by WADA, the UCI, and the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne.⁴⁷ Nor was this the only time a head of state had chosen sportive nationalism over anti-doping ideology.

This survey of the ideological dimension of international sports politics has shown that the classic left-right spectrum has lost most of its relevance as an interpretive framework following the end of the Cold War. That once-familiar ideological spectrum has been replaced by two competing ideologies that exist in a state of tension with each other. The first is a "functionalist" doctrine that treats sport as a multifaceted national resource that includes the self-assertive doctrine of sportive nationalism. The second is the global anti-doping doctrine that WADA promulgates and attempts to enforce with its limited resources.

For sports bureaucrats, the ideological content of sportive nationalism, which includes social development at home and national self-assertion abroad, is both an inspiration and an instrument. Sports administrators and politicians convince themselves and others that the production of elite athletes provides the nation with socially useful role models and dynamic representatives on the global stage. Given the ancient primacy of physical combat as a metaphor of political struggle, modern imaginations can easily transform athletic demonstrations of physical superiority into powerful symbols of national vitality and a people's determination to survive. At the same time, sports bureaucrats enlist the appeals of sportive nationalism to promote sportive nationalist projects that provide them with both career benefits and public recognition. Inspiring ideas commingle with self-serving motives. In this sense, any sports "ideology" that functions in the real world today will alternately inspire pride or shame in those who understand its composite nature.

The ideological character of both of the contending doctrines—sportive nationalism and anti-doping—is evident in their essentially aspirational status. Sportive nationalism has thrived around the world in the absence of any empirical evidence that it confers at home the social benefits it is supposed to produce or the international stature it is supposed to create abroad.⁴⁸ (Let the Olympic triumphs of the former East Germany stand as a lesson to us all.) Anti-doping doctrine expresses a set of values that are constantly being debated as doping scandals proliferate. An attractive ideology, in the last analysis, is not a verifiable claim. It is at its core a hypothesis whose charisma conceals its nonrational origin, its initial leap of faith into a claim about truth.

NOTES

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