Sport and the Mass Media

Eitzen & Sage: Chapter 11
KIN 101
Dr. Matthew A. Masucci

Sport and the Media

- Institutions that are not separate
- Commercial industries
- Two of the most lucrative businesses in North America
- Focused on Economic profit

Social Roles of the Mass Media

- Mass Media
  - “All of the technically organized means of communication that reach large numbers of diverse people quickly and efficiently” (p. 237)
  - Print Media
    - Newspapers, Magazines, & Books
  - Electronic Media
    - Radio, Television, movies, & the Internet

Prominent & Subtle Roles of the Media

- Prominent Roles:
  - Communication of Information
  - Entertainment for Consumer World
- Subtle Roles:
  - Social Integration
    - Promotes shared values & norms
    - Messages and images help to shape the cultural atmosphere
  - Social Change
    - Present cutting edge research
    - Report "new ideas" thus promote changes oftentimes
The Symbiosis of Mass Media & Sport

- 4 Roles of Mass Media are sustained through sport
  - Information: results & stats
  - Entertainment: “escape reality” temporarily
  - Social Integration: creates a ‘communal’ focus that binds society
  - Social Change: create, change, and promote the popularity of certain sports

Links Between Mass Media & Sport

- Newspapers:
  - Mid 19th century began periodic coverage of sport
  - By 1890’s sports section was a regular feature
  - Today, almost 50% of some papers devoted to sport and the sports pages have 5X the number of readers of any other section

Links Between Mass Media & Sport

- Magazines
  - First magazines were focused on “outdoor” activities – hunting, fishing, horse racing.
  - 1830, 1st sport journal: Spirit of the Times 1886 – The Sporting News
  - Can differentiate based on sport
  - Sports Illustrated (1954) 3.5 million copies weekly
  - ½ the space at any newsstand is for sport related magazines

Links Between Mass Media & Sport

- Books
  - Many books on boxing, horse racing, & field sports appeared in the late 19th c.
  - Increasingly, “serious” writers began to explore sporting themes
  - Even a journal of Sport Literature!
  - Former athletes and sport journalists making big impact (form kiss-and tell, to expose books)
### Links Between Mass Media & Sport

**Radio**
- Electronic media of all types have made dramatic inroads into sport
- KDKA went on the air in 1920 and in 1921 broadcast heavyweight championship fight
- With TV, radios dominance subsided in the 1950’s
- Still: 700,000 hours of sports
- Call-in shows, play-by-play, interviews...
- Increasing number of "all-sport" radio shows

**Motion Pictures**
- Sport has been a compelling focus for motion pictures since the 1970’s
- ESPN.com - Top 20 Sports Movies of All-Time
- Some sport movies are moving beyond mere entertainment and exploring larger social issues like race, gender and power

### Television: The Monster of the Sports World

**Television:**
- Predominant presenter of sport
- 1950 – less than 10%; by 2001 98% of USA households had TV’s
- By 2000 average viewer received 55 channels
- North Americans own more than 240 million TV sets – over 1/3 of the world’s total!!
Economic Aspects of Televised Sport

- Huge economic impact of TV sport
- Money is the driving force behind the "TV-sport machine" (p. 242)

**How does it work?**

TV networks pay $ for broadcast rights to show a pro or college league's games. The networks hope to get that $ back + a profit (hey, it's a business!). They sell advertising time to corporations like GM for the games. Administrators of the sports leagues take the $ from the networks and distributes it according to their policies. The TV industry is essentially a broker bringing together sellers (leagues) and buyers (advertisers) and consumers (fans). It is purposeful and it is with the sole intent to turn a profit! (p. 242-243)

Fees have escalated to stratospheric proportions!

- Summer Olympics
  - 1960 TV Rights = 395,000
  - 2000 TV Rights = 705,000,000
  - 2008 TV Rights = 894,000,000

More Examples…

- TV rights for NFL games from 1998-2006 (+ the 1997 Super Bowl) = 17.6 billion! 65% on all NFL revenue comes from TV rights
- National TV & Radio rights to MLB sold to NBC, Fox, FSN, and ESPN for 4.2 billion. Each team gets 13 million/year from contracts
- In 1999, CBS signed a broadcast contract (2003-2014) with the NCAA for 6.2 billion for D1 Men’s Basketball Tourney (a 252% increase)
- A 30 second ad spot in the Super Bowl rose from $75,000 in 1971 to $1.9 million in 2002

Television’s Influence on Sport

- Increases in Sport Revenue
  - New teams, huge profits & player salaries, many sports teams are owned BY media companies
- Indirect Business Linkages Between Media and Sport
  - Media coverage IS promotional (ESPN). Lots of Free publicity
- Popularity Shifts
  - TV boosts popularity of some sports. What sports are more TV friendly? Does the ‘televise-ability’ of a sport matter?
- Professional Sport Franchise locations and the Media
  - TV markets often dictate expansion and team relocation. Many sports “die” w/out coverage
Television's Influence on Sport

- **Intercollegiate Sport**
  - NOT amateur! Some teams seem to get more 'coverage' than others.
  - Big-time programs can't exist w/out TV. NCAA lost court decision to negotiate exclusive rights for football.
  - NCAA Tourney: More teams, more money.
  - So what? Most programs run a deficit and it would be MUCH bigger w/out TV money.
  - Basketball provides 80% of the NCAA's total revenue!
  - Often, other sports (women's & men's) get shortchanged.

- **High School Sport**
  - Even high school games are increasingly televised.
  - National championships – good or bad?
  - Athletes are picking certain universities because of TV coverage.

Television's Influence on Sport

- **Modifying sport to Accommodate TV**
  - Buffalo Sabers Rochester farm team experimenting with "blue ice."
  - Goaltender Ryan Miller says: "Any kind of change would help...If they feel like people aren't able to watch or follow on TV, we should make it more television-friendly."
  - NFL: Moving hash marks & kickoff spot, TV time-outs, liberalized offensive holding
  - NBA: shot clock, slam dunk, three-point shot, more physical game
  - Golf: match play replaces medal play, skins games
  - Tennis: tie-breaker system for sets tied at 6 games all
  - MLB: Designated hitter, lowered strike zone, night games for world series, livelier ball??
  - Sudden death tie-breaking rules in many sports, extended play-off system
  - Many Olympic events rescheduled to air in USA primetime slots

- **Many changes to enhance appeal or accommodate programming needs:**
Television's Influence on Sport

- TV's Own Sports
  - Made for TV sports: World's Strongest Man, Battle of the Network Stars, Gladiators, X-Games, XFL...

Television's Influence on Sport

- Televised Sport as a Mediated Event
  - Form and content altered to suit media interests
  - Is the event an objective "mirror of reality"?
  - Scripts, camera angles, music, stats, zoom & slow-motion, etc
  - Sportscasters "hype" interest in the product but they can help to frame the reality of the event for the viewer
  - Reveal and conceal becomes the "event"
  - Viewers only see a particular event – carefully chosen elements
  - Have to lure fans – with certain events and personalities etc
  - Hook listeners or viewers – create drama!!

The Impact of Sport on the Mass Media

- Increased sport in the media
  - Not just relegated to the sports page – headline news
- Sport's Privileged Treatment by Media
- Sport Consumers and the Mass Market
  - Sports sells product
  - Internet – wide-open market: gambling, fantasy leagues, helps to promote multibillion dollar industry

The Impact of Sport on the Mass Media

- Reproduction of "hegemonic masculinity" in media sport
  - Sends messages about gender expectations
  - Prominent site for messages about masculinity particularly (violence, pain, sexism)
  - Sports Illustrated Covers
The Impact of Sport on the Mass Media

Media Sport and Gender Inequality
- 40% of women participate, yet only 8% of the coverage feature women
- Salary disparities coaches and athletes
- Gender Bias — even broadcasters tend to diminish women’s sport accomplishments (NCAA Basketball Tourney)

To Conclude...
- Media and Sport have an intimate relationship based, primarily, on profit
- Sports are mediated significantly by media in order to preserve the lucrative arrangement
- Hypercritical (journalistic) voices are often silenced
- Sport journalism is still a relatively homogeneous group
- Male dominance of the “sport world” is reinforced daily through the media
- Often, “sportscaster” are not journalists at all, but rather entertainers or former athletes with no “news” training — thus blurring the lines of entertainment and news

The Impact of Sport on the Mass Media

Media Sport & Racial and Ethnic Inequalities:
- History of racism and segregation in the USA — this applies to sport as well.
- Subtle and not so subtle stereotyping often accompanies the discourse surrounding athletes of color
- “Naturally gifted athlete” v. “field general”
- Overwhelming focus on non-while athlete’s thuggish and violent behavior yet equal time is rarely given when white athletes perpetuate similar actions
- Native American stereotypes perpetuated via team names
- Asian America and Latino athletes often not focused on at all or stereotyped based on ethnicity