Sport History and the Historical Profession

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter addresses the paradox that, despite its prevalence in national and global cultures, sport fails to receive due attention from historians interested in the problem of “modernity.” Yet, the history of sport’s rise to its current place in popular culture, combined with its boundedness as phenomenon, serves as a powerful lens on the intersecting processes that historians have identified as the hallmarks of this modernity—economic transformation, urbanization, the invention of “traditions,” and the construction of coexisting and disparate identities, not to mention broader vectors of social change encompassed in the parallel projects of domestic amelioration and the colonial “civilizing mission,” along with their nationalist and globalist or neoimperial successors. The chapter offers a broad overview in the career of sport as reflections of modernizing processes that have long interested historians while suggesting that sport’s history also complicates many of these historical perspectives.

Keywords: sport, modernity, identity, globalization, colonialism, empire, nationalism, mass culture, masculinity, liberalism

ACADEMIC historians of modern sport occupy a curious position within their profession. Although they study one of the most pervasive features in the modern world—attested by the global audiences for the World Cup or the Olympics—sport historians occupy the margins of “mainstream” historical scholarship. Certainly, they share many of the trappings that one associates with any disciplinary subfield—journals, professional associations, debates running a gamut of themes, methods, and interpretations, many of which—gender, class, race, imperialism, and others—are treated in these volumes.

To be sure, sport has occasionally drawn the attention of nonspecialist scholars. Norbert Elias and Jan Huizinga saw fit to reflect on the role of sport, while Huizinga discussed the “ludic spirit,” in human society.[1] Conversely, some specialists in the history of sport have become important references for historians of society and culture. Richard Holt’s and Tony Mason’s studies on sport’s role in modern British society or J. A. Mangan’s works on sport and the Victorian middle classes have become standard references in social histories of modern Britain. Similarly, Pamela Grundy's *Learning to Win* has gained wide acceptance among historians of the United States.[2] More recently, sport has appeared as a special theme in more general historical journals.[3]

These examples, however, stand as proverbial exceptions to the rule in the profession at large. More often, with the exceptions of studies addressing gender and race, sport rarely gains *entrée* into the broader profession. Textbooks on modern European history seldom incorporate sport in their treatments of mass culture, beyond obligatory reference to Hitler's Berlin Olympic Games in 1936 or Joe Louis and Jack Robinson as symbolic figures in the American civil rights movement. Elsewhere, general studies of American higher education pay little regard to the impact of the quasi-professional athletics programs that, as much as anything, have long distinguished American universities from their counterparts abroad. Instead, mainstream historical scholarship emphasizes other areas of mass culture—the production and consumption of **(p. 62)** nationalism or cultural and material commodities—as forces shaping or reflecting notions of gender/sexuality, class, and new identities in modern society.

This curious neglect of sport and the relative rarity of sport historians in the academy cast into sharp relief the disparity between general historical scholarship and sport's undeniable global impact. This neglect becomes all the more paradoxical given sport's sheer omnipresence as an object of mass participation, consumption, and, as important, experience for more than a century. Historians who have traditionally paid more attention to film, print culture, or popular music and entertainments would find in the study of sport a powerful lens on the central processes they have identified as the shapers of modern society and identities.

Perhaps most notably, the history of sport appears to have made little impact on the discussions of "modernity" that have occupied such a prominent place in the discipline over the last quarter-century and more. Thus a recent *American Historical Review* forum addressing modernity and its application in several realms of historiography failed even to mention spectator sport as one of its defining attributes.[4] However elusive modernity's precise definition, scholars have reached a rough consensus about its origins or expression in the processes earlier embraced by optimistic modernization theorists: accelerating rates of industrialization, urbanization, and social transformation; the tightening interconnectedness of the global economy; and the emergence of the nation-state, with its technologies and ideologies of broad social mobilization and discipline that vastly expanded older ambits for the exercise of power. These forces created spaces, socioeconomic relationships, and modes of discourse that made possible the imagining of new types of community to supplant the confessional, agrarian, and ostensibly traditional hierarchies of the "premodern" orders. Histories of the era have followed the effects of these changes in their established areas of inquiry: political thought and institutions, the emergence of new social formations and political parties, high and low culture. More generally, they have documented the ways in which these forces destabilized norms associated with agrarian economies and orders of privilege. These changes produced doubt or alienation, complicated identities, and saw the continuous reinvention of tradition and of the self.

Historians have also agreed that the making of the modern went hand-in-hand with a broad transformative program, conscious and not, expressed in the parallel extension of social control over the new societies and their imperial dominions. It fostered the democratization promised by modernization theorists but also totalitarian colossi driven by their own vision of the modernity they claimed to build. At the same time, these transformations gave rise to movements—from trade unionism to anticolonialism—that pressed their own visions of the modern. In science the uncertainties of quantum theory undermined the Newtonian edifice. In philosophy, Nietzsche and Freud overturned an older positivist consensus, much as Cubism, constructivism, or the twelve-tone scale transformed the arts. “Modernity’s” sheer variability has persistently defied historians’ attempt to render it coherent.

Inevitably, the history of modern sport mirrors the complexity and ambiguities that have modulated each of these processes. At the same time, sport’s boundedness—its set (p. 63) matches, rules, times and spaces, or binarized narratives of “us” and “them,” winning and losing—affords a clear view of sites and vectors of interaction so difficult to define in studying consumption of culture or the direction of capital flows. If that boundedness makes sport seem cloistered, it also gives a surprisingly clear perspective on the embedding and social internalization of the “modern.” As a realm of practice, experience, and performance, mass spectator sport has played an unappreciated part in the experience of the modern for millions of consumers worldwide and as such merits fuller incorporation into our larger narratives of the period. One could well argue that large sections of the world’s population—largely male until the last twenty years—learned, through these experiences and the emotions, conflicts, and bonds they elicited how to *be* modern.

The mass spectator sports that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century have left modernity’s imprint in the form of the grand stadiums that stand as local or national landmarks in cities the world over. The earliest of these appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—Hampden Park in Glasgow, Wembley Stadium, or Boston’s Fenway Park—and served as models for such subsequent entrants as Maracana in Rio de Janeiro and Beijing’s “Bird’s Nest.” Over the century and more since their construction, they have also spawned miniature replicas in the playing fields and schoolyards of virtually every community on the planet, where millions of children emulate their local or global sporting heroes in physical education classes and on school, village, or club teams.

These huge structures, accommodating crowds exceeding 100,000, provide a visible dividing line between modernity and what went before. As sites, they represent dense points of convergence for the forces and processes that created this modernity. Their size and construction demonstrate the mobilizational capacities of industrial capitalism, able to assemble the funds and the labor to build them. The clubs that played their matches in these stadiums depended on audiences of urbanites, the descendants of peasants or immigrants, with the disposable means and leisure time to attend these spectacles.[5] These crowds arrived at these stadiums on new forms of mass transit to watch “their” side against competitors from other neighborhoods or cities. These “fans” formed their own sort of civic associations, their members sporting their side’s colors. Specialized sports pages attracted readers for countless newspapers and magazines, while advertisers hawked their wares in stadiums and the press alike, seeking association with these teams and their star performers.

These stadiums and the teams they hosted anchored identities grounded in the new neighborhoods and institutions of urban life, giving compelling expression to the shared experience and values of these new communities. Social and cultural historians could learn much about the formation, performance, and variability of urban identities through the study of sporting crowds, which have long demonstrated seemingly dissonant loyalties in different settings. In league matches, their allegiances might reflect such ties as location, workplace, confessional allegiance, class, or ethnicity. Yet these local loyalties could dissolve in the equally powerful appeal of national belonging. The latter became a fixture in association football with the inception of the Scotland–England **(p. 64)** rivalry in 1872, a mere nine years after the codification of the game’s rules. These contests saw the most bitter local adversaries—for instance, Glasgow’s sectarian Rangers and Celtic supporters—become ardent fellow patriots celebrating national triumph. Likewise, the modern Olympics, conceived as a celebration of a sort of “pure” athletic achievement on the model of an imagined classical Greece, quickly became an arena for the glorification of national accomplishment.

Stadiums served as settings where communities could see and feel themselves embodied and actively assert their shared identity. Stadium terraces became proprietorial territory for supporters staking out “our” space *versus* “theirs.” Recurrent instances of “hooliganism” and violence associated with the claiming of space—in stadiums or adjoining pubs and squares—have become a virtually universal phenomenon in national and international sports. The Heysel disaster of 1985 represents merely the bloodiest of the conflicts bred by the “modern” identities and venues of modern sport. Space also divided supporters’ communities also divided along lines of social or economic status. The traditional genteel seating areas in stadiums dominated by standing crowds have become catered “luxury” suites for the privileged, perched above the mortals exposed to the elements and the dubious fare of stadium vendors.

Just as striking, however, is the relentless proliferation of these new modes of performance and consumption and the intensity of the meaning with which populations—or the states that rule them—invest in them the world over. As David Goldblatt has documented at length, association football led the way in a well-documented spread across Europe and around the world during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[6] The Olympic Games soon followed, along with such varied entertainments as prize-fighting, cricket, rugby—union and league—baseball, and ice hockey. The World Cup and the Olympic Games have become truly global phenomena viewed by hundreds of thousands of on-site spectators but also by billions of others on ubiquitous television sets or computer terminals in every imaginable setting.

This new cultural sphere also showcased a new sort of notable, the “star,” who gained status, wealth, and fame for excelling at disciplines that have long struck many as arcane or childish. These figures arose as cognate types to new models of celebrity in the more widely studied forms of mass entertainment. Alongside Sarah Bernhardt and Rudolph Valentino, sporting heroes enjoyed the adulation of their own admirers. They acquired fame or notoriety that could transcend class or ethnic belonging, like boxing’s Jack Johnson or football’s Diego Maradona.

Like their counterparts in entertainment, and unlike both groups’ predecessors, these figures came to enjoy a social status that provoked dismay among traditional and newer commercial elites, an ironic reprise of the bemusement that had greeted the latter’s own arrival a century earlier. Many deplored the professionalization of what they regarded as an avocation, while for others the new celebrities’ visibility—and often their conduct—flouted norms of racial or social deference.[7] By the post-1945 era, such stars as Pele or Muhammad Ali were the most widely recognized figures in the world. During the same period, new heroes appeared from once-marginalized groups, including former colonial subjects, African Americans, and women. These new notables ultimately gained **(p. 65)** acceptance, even esteem, among their erstwhile “betters,” earning titles, marrying into families that would once have rejected them, and finding themselves courted by political leaders.

Reflecting and burnishing the “images” of these modern stars were the proliferating media of the modern era: mass advertising, sport journalism, newsreels and broadcasts.[8] New genres of literature also appeared, such as the sporting analogues of Horatio Alger stories; by the mid-twentieth century, these stories had also found a place in film. They recounted fictional athletes’ overcoming such obstacles as prejudice or foul play to earn redemption and learn the moral of lives well lived and games well played. Sport preached its own moral code, modeled on formal legal norms, which became the rules culture that distinguishes modern competition. Sportswriters even developed a normative aesthetic that still informs contemporary reportage of football, cricket, and baseball, stressing the artistry of play as an indispensable complement of a competition’s outcome. Like so much of modernity, these genres proved adaptable to an impressive variety of social and political contexts, finding a place in “liberal” Europe and America, as well as socialist, fascist, nationalist, or imperial orders. In each *milieu*, stories used sport and competition to frame morality tales grounded in the aspirational *mores* of the host society. Reflecting the strength of the genre, and the familiarity of sport as experience and myth, there also emerged a harshly critical counternarrative that saw in sport a microcosm of abuses and exploitation abroad in modern society as a whole.

Like the industrial economy that gave it a framework, a clientele, and working-class athletes, sport reflected modernity’s impact.[9] New technologies, sites, and scales of production replaced the seasonality and flexibility of agrarian production with the factory shifts and regulated workdays engendered a new temporality that also shaped modern sport. Although weather still played a part in determining the optimal “season” for various sports, competitive seasons became ever more fixed, assuming their own unvarying rhythms, that replaced in many ways the seasons of the agrarian year. In Britain, Saturday matches became a regular possibility with the curtailment of the workweek by the late nineteenth century, while the Sabbath often gave way to new demand for leisure and consumption. Artificial lighting effaced the difference between night and day in scheduling matches, as it had on the factory floor. Similarly, playing times and their measurement became standardized in most field games and boxing. (Interestingly, devotees of cricket and baseball celebrate the *un*measured times in these sports.)

Finally, sport has long embraced the peculiar historicism that marks modernity, inventing its own traditions, as Eric Hobsbawm noted.[10] Baseball historians argue over Abner Doubleday’s claims to have created the sport, while historical research yields ever newer accounts of the “first” game in the sport. Football has its own version of these disputes, tracing the game’s origins variously to ancient China or Renaissance Italy, among other places. Each team has its own lovingly kept history, periodized as “eras” personified in a star player or coach. Individual fans have their own versions of events, resting on interpretations of cause and context, which often lead to fiercer controversies than those engaged at academic conferences or on the pages of scholarly journals. Teams and sports also maintain detailed chronicles of record performances and cumulative performance tallies as quantified measures of historical trajectories. This sense of historicity extends to arenas and stadiums, whose “histories” invariably allude to the Coliseum or the hippodromes of the classical world. These narratives provide a usable past that binds supporter communities at the club and national level, much as nationalists imagine their present and future through their own reading of the past.

Even such a compressed survey of modern sport and its social or cultural byproducts reminds one of the power and ubiquity of this complex phenomenon as a defining attribute of modernity. In failing to take adequate note of this area, historians have neglected not only concrete evidence of modernity’s progress but also one of the chief elements in the lived experience of millions of men, and far fewer women, in every quarter of the world. If sport as industry generates untold revenues as a commercial operation, it also constitutes a site onto which beholders map their aspirations, antipathies, morality, or identities.

At the same time, sport offers them a concrete area in which they can see clear and decisive competition under a regime of rules, imparting in turn a sense of control or clear norms that confirm or contest their own understanding of the rules and competitions that uncontrollably buffet their own daily lives. These experiences have produced a rich record of press reports, official and popular histories, visual and sound imagery, biographies, and memoirs. More than in other forms of modern mass culture, sport often records the “reception” of its offerings in the form of cheers, songs, memorabilia, or visually recorded performances—by players and crowds—in addition to more conventional documentary sources. Surely, these experiences form a critical part of the social existence historians seek to reconstruct.

Sport and the "Liberal Project"

If the history of mass spectator sport provides concrete insight into change associated with modernity, it also limns the overarching processes that framed that change, especially the pursuit of thoroughgoing transformation that one might term the "liberal project."[11] This endeavor sprang from various sources, particularly the prospect of power and wealth that the British example seemed to promise by the mid-nineteenth century. Viewing Britain's progress through their own historicizing perspectives, statesmen in even the most conservative monarchies—such as Prussia's Friedrich List or Russia's Ser'gei Witte—saw the manifold benefits offered by a properly managed industrial economy. Presiding over professionalizing bureaucracies, supported by the emerging social sciences, and armed with ever more detailed information about their populations and economies, these statesmen shared a strong conviction in the state's ability to guide development. They and their allies in civil society believed that state power could catalyze the creation of a better society, while cultivating the active support of modern citizens and subjects. They understood the reach of the state's and society's interest as extending to the interior life of their population in ways undreamed of by even the most ambitious proponents of the eighteenth-century *Polizeistaat*.

In addition to the exploitative relationships that impressed socialist and many conservative commentators at the time, these efforts to modernize sought to domesticate or civilize European and imperial subjects through the inculcation of "values" that came from participating in the hegemonic culture: literacy, prosperity and a better life within one's class, and an appreciation for higher goods, such as membership in a great nation or empire, or an appreciation for high culture. In terms of these transformative goals, sport instructed its practitioners in the benefits of competition as a test of one's merit while inculcating a respect for rules and fostering the development of healthy minds and bodies. In liberal Europe, where civil associations played such a large part in these processes, the effort sought to recast the working classes in the image of their betters in the entrepreneurial and manufacturing classes.

This "project" comprised twinned paths of assertion, one directed "inward" at inhabitants of the home country and the other abroad in the colonies of the Global South. At home, this meant the conversion of the new working classes to the virtues associated with the industrial order that had spurred the *bourgeois'* success. Thus, in addition to fostering the development of industry and trade, governments sought to improve society through investment in infrastructure, transportation, legal reform, the expansion of state-sponsored education, more inclusive governance, and the foundations of what became the welfare state.

The “civilizing mission” in the European colonies of Africa and Asia—prosecuted by officials, clerics, and traders alike—projected the ameliorative program across the seas, valorizing visible difference and self-consciously introducing into these societies the benefits of a superior European civilization, which, from this viewpoint, replaced sensuality with restraint, arbitrariness with law, passion with reason, and benightedness with enlightenment. The aftereffects of these original impulses still continue to shape the world in the persisting class and political conflicts that divide societies, as well as the enduring legacies of the colonial era across the Third World.

The career of modern sport lends strong support to prevalent narratives of social discipline, hegemonic advance, colonization, global homogenization, or neoliberalism encountered in the works of such scholars as Michel Foucault or James Scott, as well as theorists of postcolonialism or neo-imperialism. Certainly, abundant evidence suggests the globalization and corporatization of sport that critics see in other areas of the global economy. The Olympics and the World Cup have become huge commercial ventures that enrich a small *pléiade* of “content providers,” marketers of consumer goods, and, not least, local *compradores* who often achieve great personal profit while leaving their compatriots to assume the considerable expenses of staging them.

The same economic forces have seen the creation of an international workforce of athletes sold and traded among a small coterie of elite leagues and associations in Europe and North America. The stars of present-day European football come from as far away as Africa, South America, and East Asia, while broader trends of global migration have seen the appearance of African-descended players on the national sides of such **(p. 68)** traditional colonial countries as Britain or France and also such noncolonizing states as Poland. North America’s National Hockey League, once overwhelmingly Canadian, now includes dozens of players from Scandinavia and eastern Europe.

Indeed, much as one might trace modernity’s advance in the ramifying of stadiums and sport complexes, sport’s global spread provides an excellent guide to the circulatory system of imperialism in its “hard” and “soft” forms. Historians of association football have long known the role of British expatriates as exporters of the sport to continental Europe and South America. Other Englishmen introduced cricket to their colonial subjects in “settler” colonies, the Caribbean and South Asia. Indeed, contemporary “test” matches and the Commonwealth Games emblematize the persisting ties of empire. By a similar process, American baseball became popular in the Hispanophone Caribbean and parts of South America. It also sank roots in Japan, whose subjects took it to their own Taiwanese and Korean colonies. Thus the domestic and international careers of international sport echo the broader integrative economic and cultural impulses that have driven industrial economies since the early nineteenth century.

This dissemination of sport bore a transformative mission to reshape subjects and citizens as participants in modernity. As manufacturers and political leaders have long understood, mass-spectator sport can instill compelling affiliations that transcend older identities and “local” loyalties. Scholars of immigration, first to North America and later to the erstwhile metropole states in post-1945 Europe, have appreciated the integrative power of sports for arrivals in new societies. In the United States, baseball's emergence as the "national pastime" gave generations of immigrants a means to absorb American culture and strengthen their identification with their new home. Baseball, boxing, American football, and basketball also served as avenues of social mobility for these immigrants' children but also, more slowly and controversially, as a means by which such black athletes as Jesse Owens could become national heroes in the Jim Crow United States.

For their part, histories of nationalism, the dominant discourse of in/exclusion for much of the past 150 years, have often neglected the symbolic power of sport, with the exception of such conspicuous instances as the Berlin Olympic Games or socialist Spartakiads. Equally often, they overlook sport as a powerful experiential mediator through which aspirations of small groups of intellectuals came to be embraced and inscribed with meaning, both by large populations and their rulers.

Similarly, beginning with the interwar appearance of the antiliberal transformative regimes that took root in the Soviet Union, Germany, Italy, and much of the postcolonial world, international competition has assumed a metaphorical significance as a test of a given system and its vision of the brave new world in the making. Leni Riefenstahl's [in]famous *Triumph of the Will* remains the best-known artifact of this use of sport. The Communist states of the Warsaw Pact dedicated large amounts of resources from straitened economies to the selection and training of generations of athletes in the Olympic disciplines. Their competitive success ostensibly proved the superiority of the political order. These efforts included the development of kinesiological science and a pharmacopeia of performance-enhancing compounds administered to athletes with little (p. 69) consideration for their welfare. While historians of sport and journalists have chronicled these developments, the field at large has troubled itself too little with how such pursuits acquired such meaning and significance for participants and spectators, as well as the totalizing understanding of the state's instrumentality that inspired these measures.

International competition provided spectators and participants a concrete setting that reinforced broader narratives about competition as the way of the world and the test of true worth. The first missionaries of sport, largely from the new middling classes, imagined that competition would cultivate the virtues they saw as the reason for their own success. Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) stands as the *Ur*-text for the promulgation of these values through sport. "Muscular Christianity" and the promotion of a "healthy mind in a healthy body" proselytized abstinence, self-discipline, and hard work as tools for success and advancement accessible to all regardless of birth.

Competition itself became a powerful and concrete illustration of the social Darwinist principles that drove so much *Belle époque* discourse and easily transmuted into the essentializing racism of the time. At the same time, fair play, modesty in victory and defeat, adherence to the rules and spirit of the game, and competition for its own sake propagated "gentlemanly" conduct while providing a moralizing framework for explaining competition's inevitable win–loss outcome. In the British colonies particularly, the introduction of sport constituted the exportation of a certain vision of "Englishness" as a model for elite males in South Asia and Africa.

More broadly, these ideologies also offered societies new definitions of an idealized masculinity, represented by real and fictional paragons exemplifying the distinguishing attributes of a national or political type. Explicitly and implicitly, these modes of thought created new ways to marginalize or subordinate femininity's supposed domesticity and passivity. They also brought issues of racial and ethnic difference into play, often subverting elite norms. If many of these themes have figured increasingly prominently in general histories, they have elicited little interest among historians of the emotions, culture, or other attributes of modernity.

The Tenacity of Particularism

Still, if the history of professional, spectator, global sport substantiates theories of social discipline, colonization, globalization, and other forms of hegemony, it also brings into view the complexity and ambiguities stemming from the transformative impulses that informed its development and spread. As in other modes of transfer, the intended objects of domestication encountered the new games in their own dense social and experiential contexts. Whatever the intentions and aspirations informing the "civilizing mission," the urban working classes and colonials alike read these new games from their own perspective —through a "revaluation of values," to filch Nietzsche's phrase—making them their own in ways unanticipated by their original sponsors. These revaluations ran parallel to currents of resistance and accommodation flowing through other **(p. 70)** spaces of the encounter between the *Kulturträger* and their putative objects. Stadiums and sports became their own spaces of contestation and accommodation along the shear-lines long known to social history: class, region/nation, race, gender, and metropolis/colonial periphery, to name only the most prominent.

The history and persistence of these appropriations challenges the apparent irresistibility of the totalizing processes that have preoccupied historians since Marx's *German Ideology*. In fact, the practice and consumption of mass-spectator sport demonstrate the tenacity of particularity. If the globalization of football or ice hockey, for example, seem to reflect the relentless concentration of international markets on one hand, the intensity of national sentiment apparent at any World Cup, or the passionate support of individual sides in national leagues, on the other suggest limits to the reach of the transformative endeavor. As a result, the picture presented by modern mass-spectator sports looks highly sedimented, inscribed with varying meanings and morals according to the origin and circumstances of the participant.

One of the earliest episodes of such contestation arose in the late nineteenth century with the challenge of professionalism to the earliest proponents of organized, public competition. The demand for skilled athletes and the growing popularity of spectatorship as a leisure pastime soon created a market for players who would help "our" side win. Middle-class convention held, to the contrary, that exclusive devotion of one's time and talents to athletics perverted the spirit of competition and contravened the balance of the well-rounded gentleman.

These arguments yielded to the popularity of and demand for the rising "stars" of the new sports among the urban working—and immigrant—classes, as with baseball or association football, who made these sports their own. In response, international elite society strove to uphold amateurism in such areas as the modern Olympics or American intercollegiate athletics, as well as in "gentleman's" games like golf, tennis, or rugby union, directed by "old boys." Even these sacrosanct areas proved unable to withstand the wave of professionalization. The last holdout, American university sport, has become a compelling example of the conflicting imperatives involved in defending an amateurism seen by many as anachronistic or hypocritical in an environment that materially rewards the very sort of specialization decried by its original codifiers.

The process by which even these self-declared bastions of amateurism eventually accepted professionalization during the twentieth century offers historians an interesting and complex example of the conflicts in values and worldviews produced by the modernizing project. The same applies *a fortiori*, to the evolution of distinctive cultures, often masculine and defiantly local or class-based, among the consumers of these modern sports. The formation of urban and/or class identity or consciousness arguably owed as much to the experience of sharing in ritual chants and songs or mass processions to and from stadiums for matches as it did to the workplace. Sport served as escape from work, offering membership in a group to which one belonged by choice rather than economic necessity, while reinforcing the culture and status bred by new economic statuses and relationships.

As Lewis and Sasu Siegelbaum note in their contribution to this volume, professional athletes followed other working-class occupations in seeking a greater share of the proceeds generated by their labors and the revenues they produced. Rejecting elite arguments about amateurism, they sought recognition as workers in their own right, demanding better salaries and working conditions and resorting to work-action when they decided the occasion demanded.

In addition to professionalism, the appropriation of sport by the objects of the ameliorative project injected competition with a decidedly different ethos than that propagated by the original apostles. For many spectators, sporting success became an end in itself, inspiring a fierce partisanship that still bemuses the uninitiated, certainly a far cry from the "sportsmanship" envisioned by Victorians. The emphasis on competitive success—with its potential financial returns—also brought changes in attitudes to rules. If their inventors relied on a sense of honor and respect for laws to govern the playing of games, later generations of players tested the rules' limits, not unlike their counterparts in business, to enhance their competitive edge. "Body-line" bowling in cricket, baseball's "spitter," and "flopping" in soccer or basketball invert the relationship between rules and outcome in ways unimagined by the James Naismiths or de Coubertins of the founders' era. Such shifts in attitudes offer potential insight into larger discussions about the career of the "rule of law" as a humanizing or civilizing process, addressing as it does the problem of reception of these programs.

The rooting of sport in the heart of popular culture has had other effects better studied by historians of race/ethnicity and gender. The categoricity of competition forced racists to contemplate the possibility of superior achievement by the offspring of former slaves. Such realizations contributed to the imposition of the "color bar" in American sport; it only disappeared entirely in the late 1960s. Ironically, however, the restrictions of Jim Crow ensured that white Americans tended most often to encounter African American achievement in a sporting arena whose popularity burgeoned throughout the period.

Sport's role as a marker of inclusion in modern societies inevitably extended to women, as newsreels celebrated the accomplishments of Gertrude Ederle or "Babe" Didrickson. The relationship between sport and status has also found reflection in the continuing efforts of female athletes to gain recognition as legitimate competitors in their own right, whether the inclusion of the marathon as a women's event in the Olympics, its prominent place in the American "Title IX" laws, or the recurrent cases of women from largely Muslim societies seeking to participate in competition. More recently, sport has served as a forum for the discussion of sexuality and gender belonging, in cases involving the putative sex of such competitors, whether the female East European competitors of the Cold War or South African sprinter Caster Semenya. As historians of gender and race appreciate, these broader controversies have found concentrated expression in sport.

Popular sport culture has also turned the stadium into a venue for political expression and interaction, especially given the crowd's role as a literal *vox populi*, often in defiance of organizers' or rulers' intentions. The leaders of liberal democracies, feeling obliged to be seen at showcase events, receive catcalls as often as cheers when introduced. In (p. 72) more authoritarian and repressive orders, stadiums and their vicinities as gathering points have represented rare instances of a genuinely public sphere, largely free from the restraint and coercion in other areas of sanctioned organized activities. These spaces and the interactions within them have begun to draw the interest of sport historians; their mainstream colleagues interested in relations between authoritarian/totalitarian states and their societies would also benefit from appreciating their uniqueness. The history of international sport is studded with such resonant instances as the "riots" in Czechoslovakia following their team's defeat of the Soviet team at the world ice-hockey championships in 1969 or, more recently, the wearing of green clothing by Iranian fans and footballers during the disturbances of 2009.

Similar tensions and ambiguities characterized the "imperial" side of sport's worldwide expansion, a problem that has received attention from such well-known commentators as C. L. R. James. As elsewhere in the history of sport, Britain and its colonies present the paradigmatic case, as games and sports established there found homes throughout the empire. In these realms as well, the local appropriation of sport serves as a vivid mirror of interactions that historians have documented in the realms of politics or culture.

As historians of sport have shown, different societies adopted their "own" games. Cricket took root across much of the empire, outside of central and northern Africa. Both forms of rugby, though, flourished in the white settler colonies in Africa and the anitpodes. Soccer, on the other hand, found strong support chiefly in Africa, except among white South Africans. Since postwar decolonization, much of erstwhile French Africa has also embraced association football.

Not infrequently, competitions pitted teams from the metropolis and the population, giving spectators from both sides a chance to visualize their larger relationships. In colonial times, locals could test themselves against their purportedly superior British rulers. After decolonization, the same competitions, often with other former colonies, served as vessels for envisioning the new nations. Thus, as with players and sports the world over, athletes and fans in former colonies pride themselves on specific "styles" that they see as distinguishing them from one another, but particularly from the English. Alternatively, repeated defeats in "their" sports can provoke morose reflection about England's decline. More recently, the development of such competitions as the "20/20" professional cricket league in India suggests new contours in postcolonial relationships and legacies, with British professionals finding employment on sides and in a league underwritten by a new generation of Indian entrepreneurs.

Sport also left a colonial legacy in propagating class and racial divisions that outlived British rule. The power of the reaction produced by Nelson Mandela's appearance at 1995 Rugby Union World Cup final, clad in the uniform of the South African Springboks—national representatives of a traditionally "white" sport—testifies to the power and concreteness of sport as a forum for popular discourse about societal issues and identities. Thus, even as the institutional and financial frameworks of spectator sport have become increasingly concentrated and global in scope, consumers experience the product in their own contexts, investing it with their own meaning and value. As with the (p. 73) working classes in metropolitan societies, the experience of sport and the setting of the stadium are often underappreciated as media for the expression and reinforcement of larger collective identities, rendered concrete and compelling by the circumstances of competition.

Conclusion

In the past half-century, mass-spectator sport has become a pervasive feature of an increasingly global culture, rivaling and complementing such other forms as movies, television, or music. Statistical indicators from television ratings to worker productivity during major sporting events attest to its significance in the lived and felt experience of billions of people the world over. For more than a century, sport has acted as a medium for the spread of multinational capitalism and international migration, the focal point of identities, a boundary of in- and exclusion, the buttress of political orders, and a commodity for consumption, able to serve as a universal point of reference for largely male populations from all corners of the globe. Critics have decried its universal attraction as a modern version of "bread and circuses" that distracts the oppressed from their exploitation. Its champions laud the virtues it teaches—discipline, teamwork, adherence to rules, and mutual respect.

Like other mass phenomena associated with modernity, sport did not spring up overnight. Its current practices and its popularity stem from deep historical roots that are bound up with the other forces—economic, demographic, political, and cultural—that created the modernity in all of its manifestations. Yet, unlike the areas of modernity that have commanded scholars' attention, the history of sport has long been consigned to the sidelines. As much as its critics would like sport to disappear or to return to some "pure" or less conspicuous state, historians have to take seriously a phenomenon of such magnitude and reach. It serves as an inextricable ingredient in the shaping of class and national loyalties; the assimilation and socialization of broad populations to urban, colonial, or modern life; and a still vital set of institutions, practices, and modes of consumption that shape the lifeworlds and aspirations of broad sections of global society. Failure to take account of its importance means depriving oneself of an important lens on the central questions that have preoccupied our profession since the dawn of the "new" social history and through the profusion of "turns" that have succeeded it. The fact of modern sport and the intensity of the responses elicited by "games" in modern life demand their inclusion in our histories.

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Notes:

(1.) Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *The Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process* (London: Oxford University Press, 1985); Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, trans. R. C. F. Hull (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949).

(2.) Pamela Grundy, *Learning to Win: Sports, Education and Society in Twentieth-Century North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

(3.) For example, the French historical journal *Clio: histoire, femmes et sociétés* 23 (2006): *Le genre du sport*. See also *Journal of Contemporary History* 38.3 (2003): *Sport and Politics*, and *Ethnologie francaise* 41.4 (2011): *La diffusion du sport*, which features articles by prominent historians of sport, despite its disciplinary affiliation. For an excellent discussion on the historiography of American sport, see Amy Bass, “State of the Field: Sports History after the Cultural Turn,” Journal of American History, vol. 101, no. 1 (June 2014): 148-172, with comments from Lisa Alexander, Adrian Burgos, Susan Cahn, Nathan Daniel, Randy Roberts, and Rob Ruck, concluding with Bass’s response: 173-197.

(4.) “AHR Roundtable: Historians and the Question of ‘Modernity,’” *American Historical Review* 116.3 (2011): 631–751. For an excellent discussion on the historiography of American sport, see Amy Bass, “State of the Field: Sports History after the Cultural Turn,” *Journal of American History*, vol. 101, no. 1 (June 2014): 148–172, with comments from Lisa Alexander, Adrian Burgos, Susan Cahn, Nathan Daniel, Randy Roberts, and Rob Ruck, concluding with Bass’s response: 173–197.

(5.) Wray Vamplew’s contribution to this collection provides a detailed analysis of the modern city as the setting for mass spectator sport.

(6.) David Goldblatt, *The Ball Is Round: A Global History of Soccer*, 2nd ed. (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008).

(7.) Interestingly, Huizinga’s celebration of play as a central element in culture did *not* extend to modern professional sport, in which “the spirit of the professional is no longer the true play-spirit; it is lacking in spontaneity and carelessness.” *Homo Ludens*, 197.

(8.) Michael Oriard gives a magisterial account of this process in American media in *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and*

Magazines, the Weekly and the Daily Press (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

(9.) Allen Guttmann has written extensively on the “modernization” of sport, most notably in *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978). See also Wray Vamplew’s discussion of industry and sport in this volume.

(10.) Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 300–301.

(11.) Vamplew’s article discusses the same project in a different context.

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