Introduction

SITUATING SPORT

At the beginning of any academic discussion of sport it is common practice to define the central term. As a point of departure for this project, I feel compelled to offer a brief rejoinder to this convention. In short, I would contend that there is no guaranteed or essential manifestation, experience or, indeed, definition of sport. Although physically based competitive activities are a feature of virtually all human civilizations, the popular myth of sport as a fixed and immutable category is little more than a pervasive, if compelling, fiction. Sport should instead be used as a necessarily malleable collective noun suggesting the diversity and complexity of what are temporally and spatially contingent expressions of physical culture. In Cashmore's terms, sports are fluid and ever changing "products of cultural endeavors, enterprises that have been manufactured in particular kinds of historical and social circumstances" (2000, p. vii). So, rather than seeking to develop some universal definition of sport, a more productive interpretive strategy is to locate particular sport forms and experiences in the socio-historical context within which they came to exist and operate.

This project, like countless others within the cultural studies of sport, is prompted by the work of C. Wright Mills, whose "sociological imagination" represents one of the more compelling statements on the importance of context to the practice of critical sociological inquiry (Mills, 1959). Mills realized the need to anchor any examination of social existence within the historical moment and conditions that frame it. In forwarding this approach Mills invoked the work of Karl Marx: "What Marx called the 'principle of historical specificity' refers, first,

to a guide-line: any given society is to be understood in terms of the specific period in which it exists" (Mills, 1959, p. 149). The concept of the sociological imagination took off from this historical materialist premise and sought to develop the type of social inquiry that would allow analysts to "see it whole" (Mills, 1959, p. 153). As Mills famously stated, "The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise" (1959, p. 6).

Marx's "dialectical version" (Rigby, 1998, p. 184) of the base and superstructure model—wherein elements of society interact in a two-way relation, characterized by mutual constitution and influence—had a significant influence on Mills's thought. Marx's dialectic materialism (c.f. Callinicos, 1983, pp. 58–64; Ritzer, 1988, pp. 18–20), itself an amalgam of Hegel's dialectic and Feuerbach's materialist understandings, asserted that human consciousness and practice was the product of an engagement with material social reality. The corollary was a new social condition produced by this interaction. According to this "ontological dialectic" (Miliband, 1983, p. 122) individual actions and consciousness are no longer reduced to being the effects of a dominant economic order as a more deterministic reading of Marx would assert. Instead, within the context of the web of societal constraints faced according to one's social and historical location, individual agents possess a degree of autonomy in shaping their life experiences. Marx's dialecticism is most famously expressed in the following quotation from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon:*

> Men [*sic*] make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. (Marx, 1977a, p. 300)

In 53 words Marx captures the constitutive interdependency of the structure-agency relation, linking individuals and the society in which they are located and which, through their actions, they help to form. This understanding is not only applicable to individual actions, for the same holds true for the relation between society and larger formations of individual agents (collective practices, institutions, and organizations). So, following Marx's ontological dialecticism, it could be argued that people make their own working, leisure, political, religious, and indeed sporting lives, but not in the conditions of their own choosing. They do so under the constraints and opportunities of their particular social location, which their working, leisure, political, religious, and sporting lives reproduce or challenge.

While by no means universally Marxist in terms of theoretical and/or political underpinnings, there would seem to be a widespread consensus among the sociology of sport community regarding the need to comprehend fully a sporting practice's necessary interrelation with the social formation in which it is located. While some may engage in a form of willing suspension of cynicism when viewing or attending a sporting event, in the academic sphere sport has been *outed* as the labyrinthine and multifaceted social institution that it is. According to Jarvie and Maguire, there has been:

> a transcendence of a general belief that sport and leisure were somewhat autonomous or separate from society or politics or problems of social development . . . [which] gave rise to a growing recognition that sport and leisure were far too complex to be viewed as simple products of voluntary behaviour or totally autonomous entities. (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 2)

Or, as Sage outlined:

> Sport is a set of social practices and relations that are structured by the culture in which they exist, and any adequate account of sport must be rooted in an understanding of its location within society. The essence of sport is to be found within the nature of its relationship to the broader stream of societal forces of which it is a part. Thus, a real necessity for everyone trying to understand the sociocultural role of sport in American society is to approach sport relationally, always asking, "What are the interconnections of sport to other aspects of American society?" (Sage, 1998, p. 14)

Arguably the most explicit and influential sport-focused elaboration of Marx's cultural dialecticism came within Richard Gruneau's critical analysis of modern sport, *Class, Sports and Social Development*. Informed by the work of Karl Marx, Thorstein Veblen, Antonio Gramsci, Anthony Giddens, and Raymond Williams, Gruneau sought to transcend the varieties of empiricism, idealism, and vulgar Marxism that shackled the early development of the sociology of sport. Gruneau interrogated sport as a cultural practice that neither "transcends the society that produces it nor is a simple mirror reflection" (Critcher, 1986, pp. 335). Further illustrating the dialecticism implicit within it, Gruneau's approach is expressed by the fact that sport is seen as created by society, but is correspondingly one way in which social beings are able to maintain and develop a sense of themselves. Sport is at the same time constitutive of the boundaries framing social experience, and a forum for the manufacturing of individual lives:

> play, games, and sports ought to be seen as constitutive social practices whose meanings, metaphoric qualities, and regulatory structures are indissolubly connected to the making and remaking of ourselves as agents (individual and collective) in society. To put the matter another way, rather than view any feature of play, games, and sports as some sort of transhistorical essence, need, or transcendent metaphysical form, or rather than see them as activities simply reducible to a "separate" material reality, I am opting for a view where play, games, and sports are all regarded as irreducibly constitutive of our social being. They are, in differing ways, all forms of social practice. As a result, even their "essential" or formal qualities cannot be conceived of independently of the organizing principles, expectations, conflicts, and disappointments that define lived social experience at any given historical moment. . . .
>
> We will have to be more sensitive to the dialectical relationships between socially structured possibilities and human agency. In other words, we must struggle to avoid one-sided considerations of players as voluntary agents acting in the absence of constraining structures and of structures which do not allow for the creative and transformative capacities of players. (Gruneau, 1983, pp. 50–51)

Although utilizing somewhat different terminology, within his expansive *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game,* Richard Giulianotti is equally explicit with regard to his dialectic underpinnings:

> Football and other kinds of sporting practice are not "dependent" on the wider society: they are instead influenced by and influential upon the broader social context. . . . My position throughout the book, therefore, is that the social aspects of football only become meaningful when located within their historical and cultural context. Football is neither dependent upon nor isolated from the influences of that wider milieu; instead, a relative autonomy exists in the relationship between the two. (Giulianotti, 1999, p. xv)

Gruneau and Giulianotti are by no means alone. They are merely part of a slew of likeminded sport researchers (c.f. Birrell & McDonald, 2000; Carrington, 2000; Cole, 1996; Cole & Andrews, 2000; Howell & Ingham, 2001; Ingham, 1985; Maguire, 2000; Miller, 2001; Miller, Lawrence, McKay, & Rowe, 2001; Rowe, 1995; Silk, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999) whose collective contribution has conclusively affirmed the importance of a dialectic sensibility. As Ritzer (1988, p. 135) reminds us, with sport as with any other experiential domain "one component of social life cannot be studied in isolation from the rest."

This project is primarily concerned with illuminating the manner, and effects, of sport's dialectic relation to the commercial structures and rhythms that form the fulcrum of consumer capitalism within the contemporary United States (heretofore referred to as either the US or America). Of course, the use of the noun *America* throughout this book, and specifically in its subtitle, requires a degree of qualification. In an analogous vein to the position advanced by Lafrance, I am uncomfortable with the self-centering, and self-aggrandizing propensities of the American appellation that, whether advertently or otherwise, advances the "truly 'imaginary' character of a national imagination that views the United States of America as the only America that matters" (Lafrance, 1998, p. 136). While acknowledging its problematic assumptions, it is evident that America—the exclusive noun–and American–the exclusive adjective–liberally punctuate a variety of sporting contexts and discourses, in a manner which infuses both the national culture, and its constitutively allied sport culture, with a palpable sense of exceptionalism and ingrained superiority (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001). So, while not wishing to further this form of linguistic imperialism, this project illuminates—and thereby encourages the problematizing of–the normalized and normalizing position of American rhetoric within the US sporting vernacular.

Returning to the dialectic nature of the sport-society relation, cultural practices, such as sport, are produced from specific socio-historic contexts, they are also actively engaged in the ongoing constitution of the conditions out of which they emerge; they are "always constituted with and constitutive of a larger context of relationships" (Grossberg, 1997a, p. 257). Thus, contemporary American sport culture must be considered as both a product, and producer, of the social formation (contemporary American society) in which it is situated. Mindful of such an

understanding, in a broad sense, this discussion is concerned with "forging connections" (Grossberg, 1992, p. 54) between sport and the multiplicity of forces, relations, and effects (economic, political, social, cultural, and technological) associated with the contemporary American context, described as the moment, or condition, of "late capitalism" (Jameson, 1991). The prevailing sport forms of both pre-industrial and industrial eras were both a "product of historical conditions . . . and are fully applicable only to and under those conditions" (Marx, 1977b, p. 355); the maturation of nation state-based capitalism in Western Europe and North America, during the second half of the nineteenth century, was accompanied by the emergence of institutionalized sport as—at least partially—an agent of social control for the urban industrial masses. By codifying sporting practice (regulated participation) and sanctioning cathartic release (mass spectatorship), the patrician-industrialist power bloc ensured that sport helped constrain working bodies to the demands and discipline of the industrial workplace, while simultaneously contributing to the commercialization of urban leisure culture (Butsch, 1990). As characterized by Harry Braverman, the noted labor historian:

> the filling of the time away from the job also becomes dependent upon the market, which develops to an enormous degree those passive amusements, entertainments, and spectacles that suit the restricted circumstances of the city and are offered as substitutes for life itself. Since they become the means of filling all the hours of "free" time, they flow profusely from corporate institutions which have transformed every means of entertainment and "sport" into a production process for the enlargement of capital. (Braverman, 1998, p. 279)

Thus, within the modern industrial era, institutionalized sport became an emergent site of "surveillance, spectacle, and profit" within the newly defined realm of "free" time (Miller & McHoul, 1998, p. 61).

Despite a few examples of sport's commercialization in the US before the industrial era (for example, in the promotional activities of colonial taverns, c.f. Struna, 1996), many sport organizations and institutions continued to outwardly resist the lure of capitalist economic forces well into the twentieth century (some undoubtedly conditioned by residues of de Coubertin-esque idealism). Sport in this sense remained a "semiautonomous sphere of culture" (Jameson, 1991, p. 48), only *somewhat* removed from the practices and pressures of the marketplace. After World War II, however, the intensification of corporate-based consumer capitalism accelerated the "infiltration" (Habermas, 1979) of market forces into almost every facet of human existence, including sport. Corporate capitalism's inexorable appropriation of sport culture replaced the amateur(ish) volunteerism of official "Old Boy" sporting values with the scientific business principles and rationalities espoused by "men and women of the Corporation" (McKay & Miller, 1991, p. 86). These new values infiltrated sport via "modern forms of domination, such as 'business administration,' and techniques of manipulation, such as market research and advertising" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 35). Sport was thereafter effectively and efficiently reorganized in accordance with corporate commercial structures and logics which

routinely placed economic (profit maximization) ahead of sporting (utility maximization) imperatives: sport, to invoke an oft cited cliché, became *big business*.

In the second half of the twentieth century, sport was conclusively—and, apparently, irreversibly—integrated into the commercial maelstrom of the dominant consumer capitalist order, such that presently "complex industrial processes and relations . . . together produce sport as one of the world's largest economic enterprises" (Rowe, 1995, p. 115). Contemporary sporting institutions and *bodies* (sport organizations, events, leagues, teams, athletes, etc.) thus became enmeshed with the structures, values, and directives of late capitalist culture: Put simply, a conjuncture within which "everything . . . has become cultural; and culture has equally become economic or commodity oriented." (Jameson, 1998, p. 73). Within this context:

> spectator sports have emerged as the correlative to a society that is replacing manual labor with automation and machines, and requires consumption and appropriation of spectacles to reproduce consumer society. The present-day era also sees the expansion of a service sector and highly differentiated entertainment industry, of which sports are a key part. (Kellner, 2002, p. 66)

Of course, many sporting entities (such as Major League Baseball [MLB], the National Basketball Association [NBA], the National Football League [NFL], the National Hockey League [NHL], and their respective franchises) originated as professional, commercially oriented ventures. However, until relatively recently, most had historically occupied a space at the periphery of the commercial marketplace, with utility maximization (sporting performance) routinely taking precedence over—frequently to the exclusion of—profit maximization (financial performance). The commercialization and commodification of sport—what Walsh and Giulianotti referred to as "the ongoing process . . . of translating the social meaning of a practice or object into purely financial terms" (2001, p. 55)—reached a heightened level of intensity with the advancement of the profit-driven corporation as the naturalized, and largely unquestioned, model of societal organization:

> The history of modern capitalism is the corporatization of social life worlds once under communal and normative control. Education, health, leisure and sport, marriage, child-rearing, work, community life, welfare (the traditional infrastructures of publics) lose their relative cultural autonomy to a formal dependency upon bureaucratic organizations, professional experts, and the imperial decisions of invisible executives. (Alt, 1983, p. 98)

The sporting response to the broader reorganization of social existence—what Alt referred to as the "social hegemony" (1983, p. 98) of corporatization—has been manifest in the emergence of the "corporate sport" modality, against which established and new sporting entities are measured (McKay & Miller, 1991). This normalized, and indeed normalizing, blueprint for commercial sport organizations (Andrews, 1999) privileges, to varying degrees and in varying intensities, the following structural and processual elements: profit-driven executive control and management hierarchies; cartelized ownership and franchized organizational structures;

rational (re)location of teams and venues; the entertainment-driven mass mediation of sporting spectacles; the reconfiguring of sport spectacles and spaces as sponsorship vehicles for advancing corporate visibility; the cultural management of the sport entity as a network of merchandizable brands and embodied sub-brands; the differentiation of sport-related revenue streams and consumption opportunities; and, the advancement of marketing and promotional strategies aimed at both consolidating core, and expanding new, sport consumer constituencies.

The forces responsible for the congealing corporate sport hegemon came from both internal and external points of origin. In terms of the former, and with varying degrees of willingness (recognizing its commercial potential) or reluctance (capitulating to its inevitability), many sport administrators simply acquiesced to what was perceived to be an unrelenting corporatist tide. Thus, a corporatizing wave spread across the sporting landscape, vanguarded by a new generation of executives, whose overriding goal was to manage sport products in such a ways as to maximize profit within the increasingly competitive leisure marketplace (Butsch, 1990; McKay & Miller, 1991).

The reorganization of sport in accordance to the strictures of economic rationality was also informed by externally grounded influences. Sport's latent, and largely underexploited, commercial potential was clearly vulnerable to corporate colonization. The recognition that, within an ostensibly consumption-based economy, ownership of a commercial enterprise invoking a level of popularity and loyalty exceeding far "beyond most other experiences" (Miller, Lawrence, McKay, & Rowe, 2001, p. 1), made sport an attractive proposition for institutional and individual investors alike (many of whom, in previous generations, may have involved themselves in sport more for the social benefits accrued from what they perceived to be a form of community-based altruism, than any expectation of commercial gain). So, through a series of institutional takeovers by various corporate interests (from traditional manufacturing and, more recently, from the burgeoning financial, mass media, and high-technology sectors) outmoded organizational sporting sensibilities have largely been replaced by the profit-driven rationalities of corporate managerialism (with varying degrees of sporting and/or financial success). This is particularly evident at the franchise/team level, where the corporate appropriation and reorganization of sport's storied institutions regularly invokes the disdain of the sporting public.

Sport's internally and externally driven corporate restructuring had the effect of positioning it more centrally within American commercial life. Moreover, sport's aggressive commercialization became an exemplar of the "culturalization of economics" (Rowe, 1999, p. 70) fuelling the late capitalist condition. As Jameson (1991, p. xxi) reiterated, in a manner which speaks to the processual dualism associated with the corporate sport modality (the commercialization of sport/sportization of commerce), the "*cultural* and the *economic,* thereby collapse back into one another and say the same thing in an eclipse of the distinction between base and superstructure." If sport institutions were ever an organic element of civic life—however, nominally and symbolically—romanticized allusions to the public *ownership*

of sport were categorically repudiated by the corporatist colonization and revisionism that transformed sport into an unapologetic vehicle for the investment and advancement of private capital. It is in this sense that the Super Bowl has come to be understood, even celebrated as the "annual midwinter festival of athleticism and commercialism" (Elliott, 2003, p. C4), and NASCAR gratefully described by Tom Higgins, CEO of NASCAR corporate sponsor, Best Western, as a "business opportunity cleverly disguised as a sport" (Marketplace, 2004).

Since late capitalism's culturally inflected regime of accumulation is prefigured on the operationalizing of the mass media (simultaneously as both core product and process), the corporatization of sport has become inextricably tied to the rhythms and regimes of an expanding media-industrial complex. As Rowe observed, "sport and the sports media, as cultural goods par excellence, are clearly a central element in a larger process (or set of processes) that is reshaping society and culture" (1999, p. 67). So, the relentless rise of commercial television in the post-World War II era—as a major conduit to both the *commercialization of culture,* and the associated *culturalization of the economy*—has revolutionized the sport economy; escalating fees from the selling of broadcast rights and media sponsorships having become, for many professional sports, teams, and events, the single most important source of revenue generation (Bellamy, 1998).

Equally, a new order of entertainment-oriented corporate leviathans (McChesney, 1997)—many of whose organizational histories betrayed origins in the material mass manufacturing past: the newly fused media conglomerate, NBC Universal, is still parented by General Electric, while Viacom's lineage can be traced back to that symbol of American manufacturing, Westinghouse—have come to rely upon sports as an invaluable source of programming content across the breadth of their multi-platform domains (i.e., network and cable television, radio, Internet, film studio, newspaper, and magazine outlets). The principal revenue stream for the commercial media derives from audiences generated (either in terms of television viewers, radio listeners, web page visitors, or magazine readers etc.), which are subsequently sold, as de facto commodities, to advertisers (Grossberg, Wartella, & Whitney, 1998). For this reason, audience size, in terms of quantity and quality, assumes critical importance. Of course, increased advertising revenue is not the only perceived benefit of televising popular sport spectacles, they also represent a priceless opportunity for promoting the network's other programming (particularly new shows) to otherwise unimaginable percentages of the national populace. In the cutthroat world of primetime television, this entrée into audience consciousness can have important effects on establishing the popularity (and hence longevity) of new programming, thereby affecting the profitability of entire networks.

Within this commercially driven media universe, sport's historically and culturally entrenched popular appeal (in terms of audience quantity: sport's ability to deliver a sizeable audience) has elevated it to such an extent that the clamor for the exclusive rights to broadcast sporting mega-events (Roche, 2000) generates inflation-inducing bidding wars: NBC invested $3.55 billion for television rights to the 3 Summer and 2 Winter Olympiads between 2000 and 2008 (Real, 1998);

broadcast rights for the NFL's Super Bowl also represent a significant part of the shared $17.6 billion eight-year contract signed by the NFL and ABC/ESPN, CBS, and Fox in 1998. Having effectively purchased the American population's attention, it is subsequently leased for exorbitant sums to corporate advertisers, usually resulting in sizeable broadcaster profits, despite the magnitude of the initial investment. Even regular sport programming—often with seemingly modest audiences in terms of volume—are lucrative media properties, largely because of the level of interest generated among the 18–34-year-old male viewers/consumers prized by corporate advertisers (audience quality: sport's ability to deliver high concentrations of the *right* audience). While we may be seduced into thinking that media outlets are providing a public service by satiating the nation's appetite for sport, the cold reality is:

> The media have no inherent interest in sport. It is merely a means for profit making. . . . For TV and radio, sport gets consumers in front of their sets to hear and see commercials; in effect, TV and radio rent their viewers' and listeners' attention. (Sage, 1990, p. 123)

For this reason, and as Jary lamented, there exists an "increasing tendency for sport organizations in particular to become indirectly controlled or monopolized by media organizations and/or major advertisers" (Jary, 1999, p. 120). Indeed, for many commentators, contemporary sport culture can only be understood in light of its collusive linkages with the media industry, thus references to "mediasport" (Wenner, 1998), the "sports/media complex" (Jhally, 1989), or the "sport-business-TV nexus" (Rowe, 1996, p. 565), all of which corroborates Real's identification of the "institutional alignment of sports and media in the context of late capitalism" (Real, 1998, p. 15). Or, as perhaps best described by Kellner, contemporary "sports . . . merge sports into media spectacle . . . and attest to the commodification of all aspects of life in the media and consumer society" (2002, p. 66). Such is the focus, both individually and collectively, of the essays brought together within this book.

Chapter 1 focuses on the NBA as an exemplar of the late capitalist sport organization, in that it has seamlessly blurred the boundaries between sport, media, and entertainment sectors. The NBA's metamorphosis into a mass media entertainment empire has pivoted on the league's ability to create multi-platform popular media spectacles around which its ancillary sectors (and, indeed, revenue streams) have propagated. In this manner, the NBA can certainly be likened to the Disney Corporation, in that mass media are harnessed as the NBA's principal mechanism, and primary source, of capital accumulation. Consequently, Bryman's (1999) concept of Disneyization—specifically the interrelated processes of theming, dedifferentiation of consumption, merchandising, and emotional labor—are examined and explicated within the empirical context of the NBA. This leads to a discussion of the aggressive globalization of the NBA spectacle which has, perhaps unlike Disney in this case, contributed to the recent internationalization of the league's player personnel; thus furthering the resonance of the league within the global cultural marketplace.

Looking from the other side of the sport-media complex, Chapter 2 examines the commercially driven rationale underpinning News Corporation's (the global media behemoth headed by Rupert Murdoch) extensive and aggressive forays into the global sport landscape. In seeking to harness the public's interest in sport as a means of building audiences for its fledgling network and satellite television interests, News Corporation has not only transformed sport's economic landscape (through its willingness to pay inflated sums for broadcast rights to sporting events), it has changed the modus operandi for global media giants seeking to, more efficiently and effectively, control sport media products, and thereby capitalize upon the popularity of sport (through its propensity for either purchasing or creating sport leagues, teams, and stadia, and inserting them into News Corporation's vertically integrated corporate structure). Murdoch thus led the commercially induced charge responsible for reducing sport to being little more, or indeed less, than a source of mass media content.

Developing on issues pertaining to the sport-media complex, Chapter 3 explicates the corollary of what occurs when sporting and media entertainment interests share the responsibility, or perhaps more appropriately the blame, for the conception of new sport forms. Focused on the short-lived XFL professional football league, the discussion demonstrates how this fusion of professional wrestling's (the World Wrestling Federation) populist sensibilities and network television's (NBC) commercial avarice, led to the instantiation (if only for one season) of what was an illuminating statement on what has come to be the hegemonic union of sporting and entertainment universes.

As evidenced in the reasons for the XFL's rapid demise, even the most august and revered aspects of contemporary sport culture—such as the Olympic Games—have become incorporated into the sportainment hegemon. Thus, Chapter 4 illuminates the commercial imperatives prompting NBC's molding of Olympic Games coverage into primetime network entertainment, and the attendant advancement of traditionally feminine codes within, and through, the content and structure of its Olympic broadcasts. Focusing specifically on NBC's coverage of the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, the analysis demonstrates how the potentialities of an increased female participant presence in the Olympic spectacle was devalued by the manner in which NBC portrayed women as fetishized hyperfeminine objects of production, and essentialized, hypersensitive subjects of consumption. In doing so, NBC, and by appropriation, the Olympic Games themselves, constructed a regressively gendered reality that confirmed, as it further normalized, the inequalities implicit within the contemporary gender order.

Turning to the embodied spectacles proliferating within today's [sport] celebrity culture, Chapter 5 engages the complementary yet contrasting commercially mediated personas of Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods as a means of divining the public representation, authorization, and experience of race and racial difference in contemporary America. Keying on the central role played by Nike in nurturing their celebrity identities, the discussion illustrates how Jordan came to function as a signifier of an atypical African American-ness, which displaced the

attributes stereotypically associated with African American males onto other Black bodies. Although Woods entered the mainstream consciousness as the heir to Jordan's All-(African) American mantle, he was soon molded into America's multicultural *everyman:* a figure whose self-evident, but tantalizingly indistinct, multi-ethnicity allowed him to become the property of all and sundry within commercial America's compelling, if spurious, multicultural vision of itself. Thus, Jordan and Woods act as public individuals—seemingly progressive embodiments of American racial advancement—whose very presence, in actuality, flames the very racial stigmas and prejudices their celebrated existence suggests have been superseded.

Chapter 6 turns the focus onto the interrelationship between sport, social class, and space, through an analysis of the American suburban soccer phenomenon. Although seemingly more distanced from the imperatives of contemporary commercial culture than the empirical sporting worlds discussed in previous chapters, this examination contextualizes the suburban soccer field (understood in Bourdieuian and vernacular notions of the term) as an important constitutive element of the innately competitive, socially differentiating, and highly stylized lifestyle projects, through which individuals (and, indeed, families) engage in the socially sanctioned forms of consumption that conspicuously express their membership of what is a highly valorized middle class culture. In other words, soccer presently enunciates the dominant codes of suburban existence through what is a seemingly natural, un-self conscious vehicle of cultural expression and social organization.

Moving from suburban to urban spaces and concerns, Chapter 7 interrogates the cultural and economic derivations, and implications, of the sport-based spectacularization of many urban environments in the US. Through recourse to the instructive example of Baltimore (and, particularly, the definitive Oriole Park at Camden Yards complex), this analysis elucidates the practices and procedures whereby cities have utilized professional sport venues and facilities as anchoring, both physically and symbolically, components of broader urban redevelopment policies. More importantly perhaps, it assesses the consequences of such strategic policy initiatives—particularly concerning the gathering and distribution of tax revenues—for city inhabitants, many of whom are neither served by, nor serve in meaningful any capacity, at these cathedrals of sporting consumption.

Broadening the spatial focus of analysis even more, Chapter 8 illuminates the strategies used by major corporations (many, such as Coca-Cola, McDonald's, and Nike, American in their *origin*) pertaining to the fact that securing an expansive and profitable global presence necessitates negotiating within the language of the local. Sport frequently acts as a *de facto* cultural shorthand for local differences and identifications. Hence, this discussion examines the reimagining of the local, specifically through sport-inflected advertising and marketing campaigns, that has become the prevailing mechanism whereby transnational corporations entities seek to engage and constitute local markets.

Finally, this collection of essays focused on various aspects of sport's relation to the late capitalist American condition concludes with the—not entirely frivolous—

assertion that the commercial dictates propelling the tenor of contemporary existence have, in a Fukuayaman sense, led to the rejection of anything other than minor variants on the theme of sport as a corporately structured and commercially compelled cultural arena: Any other models of sporting existence being cast to the margins of cultural existence, from where they are destined to perish in a mass media-disregarded anonymity. Thus, in terms of being an organically evolving, dynamic, social institution, sport has reached the end of its "natural" life (it is, now, resigned to being terminally overdetermined by the cyclically regenerating, if largely minor and cosmetic, variants responsible for the characteristic perpetual dynamism of consumer capitalism). The practices of socio-cultural excavation and contextualization advanced within this book thus evince a strategy through which it may be possible to identify, and hopefully intervene into, the creeping politico-economic inertia and cultural banality which pervades—to the point of asphyxiating replication—contemporary sport culture. For, the derivations, manifestations, and implications of the hypercommercial sport cultures that can, at times, transfix and temporarily transform many of our lives, need to be regularly and rigorously interrogated (rather than uncritically absorbed). It is this viscerally seductive and seemingly benign rendering of physical culture which normalizes, as it naturalizes, many of the practices and ideologies that encourage not only the uncritical acceptance of late capitalist sport, but also, and more profoundly, the unquestioning acquiescence to the late capitalist order in general.

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