Sport, Leisure and the Body
Spring 2010

Learn Through Sport

Notes from the Chair

WE (JUST) DID IT!

At long last the Sport, Leisure, and the Body Division is reality! Many folks worked many hours to make this division a reality (so many, in fact, that I can’t remember everyone!), but I want to acknowledge especially the recent efforts of Kathy Asbury and Stephani Williams for organizing and shepherding the successful petition drive, and for agreeing to serve as the division’s first co-chairs. As some of you know, SSSP’s newest division has been in the works for quite some time. Thus, without minimizing Stephani and Kathy’s work, I also want to acknowledge the early organizing efforts of Todd Crossett. Although Todd’s bid for a division a few years back was unsuccessful, his efforts brought sport to the attention of many SSSP members and laid the ground work for our successful petitioning of the board of directors. Of course, thanks are also due to the members who signed our petition(s) and to all who joined the division. Finally, we are all in the debt of Giovanna Follo, who has graciously agreed to be our first newsletter editor.

THE POLITICS OF SPORT

As we know, sport is part of the fabric of everyday life in the U.S. and throughout much of the world. Sport is political in positive and negative ways, implicated in
struggles over gender, race, sexuality, disability, and nation. Even so, some scholars overlook the study of sport, and sport is sometimes dismissed as “just play.” Yet even a cursory glance at recent sporting events underscores the power and import of sport. There are, of course, many dimensions we might explore when considering a politics of sport, and even more events to ponder. Here I mention but a few that are suggestive of sport’s contradictory racialized, gendered, and sexualized terrain, i.e. how sport naturalizes bodily differences and relations on the one hand then sometimes undermines these same relations on the other.

When the 2009-2010 academic year began, South African runner Caster Semanya was the focus of media attention. Some of the coverage was sensationalistic if not degrading; some though, was respectful, even insightful, particularly when exploring how Semanya’s presence was confounding the sex binary – both in sport and beyond. The resulting dialogue about the social construction of sex and gender was astounding. Sports officials and commentators quoted prominent scholars on intersexuality, as did papers such as the *New York Times*. Wanting to be sure I was following the developments, close to twenty of my former students excitedly contacted me last fall. Many noted that the Semanya case was catalyzing deep and thoughtful constructionist discussion with parents and friends -- some of whom had previously dismissed the same topic as “merely academic.” Yet this breach of the binary threatened to close as quickly as it opened when pictures of Semanya’s impressively fit and muscular body were suddenly replaced with new images that included make-up, styled hair, and “feminine” clothing.

In November U.S. attention turned predictably to pro-football. Many were devastated when the Supreme Court declined to review *Harjo et al v Pro-Football*, the case concerning the disparaging “Redskins” mascot and NFL trademark. On the positive side of the football ledger, in December the NFL conceded publicly that concussions have long-lasting deleterious effects. Might this be the tip of a discussion that eventually reconfigures the iceberg of masculinity? Arrests of high-profile players on charges of sexual and non-sexual assault suggest not, but the Super Bowl later provided quite the hegemonic – counter-hegemonic tug of war. As usual Super Bowl advertising received as much attention as the game. The net was abuzz regarding the Dodge Charger “Man’s
Last Stand” bit and its obvious pandering to fear of hetero-male emasculation, for example. Then again, New Orleans Saints linebacker Scott Fujita – a man low on the girly man index to be sure – came out publicly in support of gay rights, a fact noted rather positively by many commentators. Similarly, when Irish athlete Donal Og Cusack came out in the macho sport of hurling, his teammates -- and many fans -- barely batted an eye.

With the divine Johnny Weir and the cigar-smoking, beer-drinking Canadian women’s hockey team we saw up close and personal just how slippery (hetero)gender can be. In both cases, high profile cross-gender challenges were celebrated by some while other commentary was overtly, unapologetically homophobic. I prefer to see this push-me-pull-you as indication of persistent unease about the solidity of the sex/gender binary. “Unease” lets me have it both ways: evidence both that the binary gender foundations of heteronormativity may be eroding while acknowledging the existence of push back. Some view the coverage more harshly, evidence of a backlash that includes assaults on ENDA, same-sex marriage and of individuals perceived as lesbian or gay as a result of transgressing gender. After all, in a move reminiscent of 19th century medical constructions of Victorian womanhood, the Winter Olympics banned women’s ski jumping as a threat to women’s health. These same Olympics, though, opened with dyke dream (or is it dream dyke?) k.d. lang singing her heartthrob heart out to millions while decked out in a dapper pin-striped suit.

Yet another see-saw emerged in May via the Palestinian World Cup. BBC commentators noted somewhat dismissively that many of the athletes were over-weight, out-of-shape, and/or simply past their youthful prime. But that the event was covered at all reminded at least a few folks that it’s not only “radicals” who suffer in the blockade of the occupied territories. Futball provided another instance of sport’s race-gender-nation nexus this month. After having first been banned on safety grounds, an Iranian girl’s soccer team was reinstated after negotiating a deal to play in hats rather than head scarves.

These contradictory developments, and many more like them, got me thinking back to the U.S. Open. Tennis has for years been rife with gendered, racialized, sexualized, and classed commentary and coverage. This was especially the case in the women's matches. Among other things, you may
recall Serena Williams blew a head gasket in a profanity-laced tirade against a much smaller lines-woman. Many analyzed the incident’s “big scary Black woman” racialized gender dynamics. Some noted the double-standard wherein even more extreme behavior in white male players such as Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe is tolerated (if not embraced). A few analysts even reminded viewers of the history of racist taunts endured by the Williams sisters (Indian Wells being but the most egregious example). Also mentioned was Wimbeldon’s “Battle of the Babes” that put hetero hottie 8th seed Azareuka vs. 28th seed Cristea on center court -- while relegating 2nd seed Serena to court 2. A Wimbeldon spokesman later admitted that the “beauty of a player” is one of the factors taken into account during court selection.

With Serena out the women's Open final was a veritable feast of white heteronormativity as returning "mom" Clijsters was pitted against teenage femme fatale Wozniacki. Among other things the announcers felt it appropriate to comment repeatedly on the women's smiles and dote approvingly on Clijster's (admittedly adorable) baby. Lest we forget what women's tennis is really about, the camera people provided viewers with many, many Wozniacki cleavage shots -- so many, in fact, that I lost count. (What might the male equivalent of this be?) At the end of the match the traditionally feminine white women were lauded for perhaps ushering in a new, "post-power" era in women's tennis. The power reference was to Serena, who, along with her sister, Venus, is often accused - yes, that is the correct verb in this instance -- of beating up the smaller (white, though they never say it) "girls" (their word, not mine). In this incarnation the "unfair strength" discourse is rather overtly racialized and classed; in years past it was a heterosexualized discourse, as when (out, muscular, lesbian with short hair) Martina was seen as beating up on (traditionally feminine, long-haired) Chrissie Everet. Though years apart, the Martina and Serena match-ups share the dynamic of critiquing unfair advantage when embodied by an Other, whether lesbian of Black (heaven forbid both!).

It's interesting to consider the “unfair advantage” narrative in relation to the discussion of teenage phenom and “cute Pixie” Melanie Oudin who, at 5'6" fell prey to the superior power and strength of a much larger female athlete -- an athlete not accused of unfair advantage, despite the obvious and dramatic size difference. It
would no doubt be instructive to also consider the coverage of the “bubbly blond” “America’s sweetheart” in relation to that of Caster Semenya, who is yet another Other: strong, Black, African, and possibly intersexed.

So, the Open was replete with hegemonic coverage. But there were a few visible counter-hegemonic incidents, too. Moments where the gender order was destabilized, if only for an instant. Wozniacki’s cleavage, for example, wasn’t the only torso consumed by hungry fans. One of the loudest Open ovations occurred when Rafael Nadal removed his shirt, revealing taut abs and chiseled pecs for all to see. Some women gasped, others screamed; but it was a man who charged onto the court to kiss Rafa and profess his love. Rafa graciously smiled in response -- setting off a round of rumors that he’s gay.

Finally, lest we forget the centrality of sport in “American” racial discourse, Arizona is once again a focal point of contested racial terrain. In 1993 the NFL moved Superbowl XXVII out of Tempe as protest of Arizona’s refusal to observe the Martin Luther King holiday. Some hope similar sentiment might lead Major League Baseball to relocate the 2011 All Star game as protest of SB 1070.

Racial minorities are over-represented as players in both football and baseball (but under-represented as coaches, managers, or owners). Some feel that the high number of African Americans in football provided sufficient “motivation” for the NFL to act. Might the number of Latinos in baseball (and condemnation of SB1070 by the Player’s Association) have a similar effect on MLB? White folks make up substantial portions of the fan base in both leagues. As social movement scholars know, the involvement of members of the majority on behalf of the minority can sometimes create a tipping point; at the very least, the All-Star game controversy is bringing the link between race and nation into the consciousness of some who consider themselves racially “neutral” (if not without race). As of this writing it’s not clear how either SB 1070 or the All-Star game will play out. But as the Los Sons jerseys in the NBA play-offs makes clear: “…anyone who parrots the sheltered child’s fantasy that sports are somehow ‘separate’ from politics, or ‘above’ it, understands neither sports nor politics” (Steve Kettman in a May 6th Huffington Post post).
2010 ANNUAL MEETING
SESSIONS
SPORT, LEISURE, AND THE BODY
DIVISION
PJ McGann, Chair

I. REGULAR SESSIONS

THEMATIC
Organizer: Shari Dworkin, University of California at San Francisco
shari.dworkin@ucsf.edu

II. CO-SPONSORED SESSIONS

A. “Constructing Play.” (with Social Problems Theory)
Organizer: Joel Best, University of Delaware

B. “Bodies and Boundaries in Contemporary Sport.” (with Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities)
Organizer: PJ McGann, University of Michigan.
pjmcgann@umich.edu

C. “Racialization and Sport” (with Race and Ethnicity)
Organizer: J. S. Onesimo-Sandoval

SL&B ANNOUNCEMENTS
GOT RESOLVE?
Each year the SSSP membership votes on a variety of social justice-related resolutions.

Please send suggestions for resolutions related to division themes to pjmcgann@umich.edu by June 15, 2010.

CONFERENCES

www.ithaca.edu/hshp/depts/smm/conference
Organized by Bill Sheasgreen (wsheasgreen@ithaca.edu) or Genevieve Gordon (sportslaw@venire.co.uk).

“A Mirror to Our Culture: Sport and Society in America” May 26-28 co-sponsored by the Green Bay Packers and St. Norbert College. Paul Tagliabue, former Commissioner (CEO) of the National Football League, Carl Vogel, Partner of SCP Worldwide, and Robert Kustra, President of Boise State University, will give major addresses offering their perspectives on Sports in America, The Future of American
Sports, and Modern College Athletics. ESPN’s Kevin B. Blackistone will speak on “Race and Sports in America.” More details can be found at www.snc.edu/sportandsociety. The conference registration fee of $275 includes a dinner for all attendees in the Legends Club Area at Lambeau Field, three days of luncheons, several coffee breaks daily, a guided tour of Lambeau Field, admission to the Packers Hall of Fame, access to all major addresses and sessions, and admission to photography gallery and all film/video showings. Total registration at the conference will be limited to 300. Preference for registration will be given to those giving papers and presentations. Submit paper/presentation abstracts at: https://www.snc.edu/sportandsociety?

22nd Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball & American Culture. June 2, 3, and 4, 2010. Cooperstown, NY. Co-sponsored by SUNY-Oneonta and the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, the conference examines the impact of baseball on American culture from inter- and multi-disciplinary perspectives. For further information on the symposium, please contact Jim Gates at jgates@baseballhalloffame.org or Bill Simons at simonswm@oneonta.edu

The first official gathering of the International Sport for Development and Peace Association will be at the 2010 Power of Sport Summit, June 10-12, 2010 at Northeastern University in Boston, MA. The ISDPA brings together scholars, educators, practitioners, policymakers and advocates to advance scientific knowledge and practice with respect to the interdisciplinary field of sport for development and peace. The field addresses the role of sport as a vehicle for social change, with a particular focus on youth, health, peace, disability, gender, human rights, and monitoring and evaluation. In doing so, the ISDPA is better able to support quality academic and field-based research through a rigorous peer-review process while also obtaining the long-term involvement and commitment from an array of individual experts from diverse professions and backgrounds. ISDPA will coordinate evidence-based research and data from field-based evaluation that is relevant to support policy developments within the United Nations Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (UN SDP IWG). The focus areas for the ISDPA are directly aligned with the work of the UN SDP IWG. The Summit is an interactive and participatory meeting of scholars, educators, practitioners, policymakers, and advocates working together to define and address both current and emerging issues involving the intersection of sport and social change. http://isdpaonline.ning.com/

The University of Memphis & the University of Maryland is offering the 'Sport, Commerce & Culture in the Global Marketplace' Study Abroad program in London, July 4-17, 2010. The course will be of interest to graduate and undergraduate students interested in international sport business, sociology of
sport, globalization, cultural studies, and the production and consumption of sport. In addition to formal academic lectures and readings the course features lectures from and discussions with industry executives, and 'behind the scenes' tours of the organizations that we visit. The organizations that we plan to visit this year include the FA Premier League, Octagon, Visa, BSkyB television company, Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, the Rugby Football Union, British Olympic Association, Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Club, and Lord's Cricket Ground. Once again, John Amis (Memphis), David Andrews (Maryland) and Michael Silk (Bath) will be jointly leading the program. Students can earn either 3 or 6 credits (1 or 2 courses) for participating in the program and can sign up either through the University of Memphis or the University of Maryland. In previous years has been the diversity of students that have participated from different universities across North America, including Arkansas State University, Clemson University, University of Denver, George Washington University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Iowa, Laurentian University, University of Maryland, University of Michigan, Middle Tennessee State University, Mount Union College, Rice University, University of San Francisco, University of Tennessee, Towson University, and University of Windsor. For more information contact the organizers directly: johnamis@memphis.edu, dla@umd.edu or m.silk@bath.ac.uk. Websites: <www.international.umd.edu/studyabroad/687> and <www.memphis.edu/abroad/london.php>

The 2010 International Sociology of Sport Association Conference, July 11-17, 2010, will take place as part of the International Sociological Association World Congress of Sociology in Gothenburg, Sweden. For information see www.isa-sociology.org. Looking ahead the 2011 conference will be in Havana, Cuba July 12-15, 2011.

Copenhagen Summer School: Sport and Physical Activities – ideologies, practices, and Realities. University of Copenhagen, August 22-27, 2010. The school will take place in collaboration with the International Society for Sport History, the European Association of Sport Psychology, and the International Association for Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women. Participants should be young researchers (planning a PhD, working on a PhD or post-doc) in different disciplines in human and social sciences such as sociology, pedagogy, history, and psychology. Participation is free but participants are responsible for travel and accommodations; 20-25 students will be selected by relevance of the topic and quality of the project. Please send a CV and the application form to Marie Overbye phdsummerschool@ifi.ku.dk Deadline: May 17, 2010.

The Football Studies Unit at Victoria University (VU) invites attendees for The Worlds of Football conference to be held at Victoria University on Sept. 27–28, 2010 (the Tuesday and Wednesday following the Australian Football League Grand Final). The Worlds of Football is an international multi-disciplinary and multi-code conference that will bring together football researchers from all over Australia and around the world to share their research with like-minded colleagues. This conference theme is Triumphs, Trials and Traumas and streams are envisaged for ‘Gender and Sexualities’, ‘Memories and Identities’, and ‘The Global and Local
Worlds of Football*. Contributions from academics and football enthusiasts relating to the theme are welcomed from the fields of football studies — including but not limited to history, sociology, gender and sexuality studies, ethics, cultural studies, management, law, education and economics — and can address any of the world’s football codes. Postgraduate student presentations are also encouraged. It is anticipated that papers from the conference will be published in an edited anthology or special issue of a journal. Keynote speakers include Eric Anderson (University of Bath), Jayne Cauldwell (University of Brighton) and Rob Hess (Victoria University). Abstract deadline is 5 July 2010. Website: www.staff.vu.edu.au/RobHess/FootballStudiesUnit.htm.

**UCLA Queer Studies Conference, October 8-9, 2010.** This year’s conference welcomes talks or pre-planned panels dealing with any of the following diverse topics/questions/concerns: Queering transnationalism; queer & trans-nationalism; Queer Globalization: On cultural and/or economic exchanges; Queer politics and theories of migrations; Queer translations: How "to do queer studies" in non-US contexts; Between Sex and Gender: On the politics and poetics of trans/inter sexuality; Does queer have a race; is race queer?; The future of queer activism; The ethical impetus of queer criticism; Queer embodiment: Performance, Affect, Style. Proposals for individual papers should take the form of abstracts of not more than 300 words; panel proposals of less than 500 words and should include both a list of participants and paper abstracts. Since one of the goals of the conference is to encourage the exchange of ideas across academic generations, presentations by graduate students, undergraduate students and faculty scholars are welcome. Submissions from undergraduates should be accompanied by a brief letter from a faculty member highlighting the strengths of both the student and the student's proposal. Deadline for Proposals: June 25th 2010. Send abstracts and CVs to Catharine McGraw: lgbts@humnet.ucla.edu. Conference website: http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/lgbts/

**Jews in the Gym: Judaism, Sports, and Athletics. The 23rd Annual Klutznick-Harris Symposium, Oct. 24-25, 2010, Omaha, NB.** Contact Leonard Greenspan, Klutznick Chair: ljgrn@creighton.edu. Website: www2.creighton.edu/ccas/klutznick/
North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS) Annual Conference, Nov. 3-6, 2010, San Diego, CA. Call for participation to be issued Spring 2010. For more information visit the NASSS website: www.nasss.org/index.html

Body Enhancements and (Il)legal Drugs in Sport and Exercise – Human and Social Perspectives, Nov. 10-12, 2010. University of Copenhagen. Denmark. There will be no conference fee, but registration by Oct. 1 is required. Call for abstracts to be issued in June. For info see the conference website: www.ifi.ku.dk/english/communication/dopingconference2010/ and/or contact Ulrik Wagner uwagner@ifi.ku.dk, or Rikke Jeppesen rjeppe-sen@ifi.ku.dk.

JOURNALS OF INTEREST

Journal of Sport and Social Issues Every issue of JSSI is divided into three sections: Focus: A symposium section containing sound research articles and stimulating commentary on a single theme. Upcoming FOCUS themes include World Cup Soccer, Gay Experience and Sport, Social Issues in Sport Management, Youth Sport, and Sport Subcultures; Trends: Articles and briefs devoted to both breaking issues and existing lines of research of vital importance to sport. In this section, critical and empirical scholars can take risks and coexist in a rich theoretical marketplace; and View: Commentary essays aimed at provoking thought, stimulating debate, and developing theoretical positions on varied topics related to the social importance of sport. In-depth review essays on books, films, and other resources. Direct all editorial correspondence to: C.L. Cole, Editor, Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 236 Gregory Hall, 810 S. Wright Street, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801, email clcole@illinois.edu (inquiries only; do not send submissions via e-mail).

Sociology of Sport Journal (quarterly) publishes original research, framed by social theory, on exercise, sport, physical culture, and the (physically active) body. Analyses from diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives are encouraged to stimulate further research, critical thought, and theory development on topics ranging in broad scope from global professional sport, coaching, commercial exercise/fitness, and recreational physical activity. The journal publishes an array of research articles, research notes, and book reviews. Edited by Dr. Pirkko Markula, University of Alberta (ssj.editors@gmail.com). http://hk.humankinetics.com/SSJ/journalAbout.cfm

Editor Jay Johnson announces the introduction of The Journal of Sport, Physical Activity, Body and the Environment (ISSN:1947-6167). The primary goal of JSPABE is to provide a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed, and open-access forum that broadly considers the relationship(s) between sport, physical activity and the environment. The interest that we bring to this multi-faceted examination of sport, physical activity, the body and the environment is not only one of concerned global citizens, but as critical scholars exploring the complexities of these often tenuous intersections. It is our hope that JSPABE will elicit engaging submissions that consider various perspectives of the environment and physical activity and further explore the complex and nuanced relationships that are forged between them. Manuscripts should
follow APA 2009 and be submitted in Word to: jjohnson@kin.sjsu.edu

NEW BOOKS BY DIVISION MEMBERS

It’s All for the Kids: Gender, Families, and Youth Sports. Michael A. Messner, University of California Press, 2009. Youth sport is central to the daily lives of many. Does the fact that many girls are now playing contribute to greater equality in families, communities, and workplaces? Based on 7 years of participant observation and interviews Messner shows how gendered belief systems and informal adult interactions create a division of labor in youth sports where nearly all coaches are men, most women coaches do not advance to higher age groups, and narrow definitions of masculinity limit the participation of some men in youth coaching. The “soft essentialism” effect differently shapes and constrains the choices of girls and boys, women and men. Youth sport participation benefits kids, but gender boundaries are not fundamentally disrupted in the “gender comfort zone” that youth sport has become.

Body Panic: Gender, Health, and the Selling of Fitness. Shari L. Dworkin, UC-San Francisco, and Faye Linda Wachs, Cal State Polytechnic-Pomona. NYU Press, 2009. Increasingly, Americans are being sold a fitness ideal – not just thin but toned, not just muscular but cut – that is harder and harder to reach. Using gender theory Dworkin and Wachs dissect the images, the workouts, and the ideology in 10 years of fitness magazines to determine the ways in which bodies are “made.” By considering women’s and men’s bodies side-by-side and temporally, the authors offer an in-depth analysis that links health, morality, citizenship, and identity.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST


**CAUGHT IN THE WEB**

Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, Multimedia Archives Distinguished Lecture Series, Fall 2005-Spring 2009, open access: www.cehd.umn.edu/tuckercenter/lecture/media_library.htm


**SOUND AND VISION**


*Title IX: Implications for Women in Sport and Education* by NAGWS, Bowling Green State University and WBGU-PBS, 2009. 3 DVDs. Available from the National Association for Girls and Women in Sport, Reston, VA. http://iweb.aaahperd.org/nagws/
OPPORTUNITIES

What’s in a Name? The Sport, Leisure and the Body division newsletter needs a name! Please submit your suggestions to pjmcgann@umich.edu by July 15, 2010. We will discuss the proposed names at the Division Business Meeting in Atlanta.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words – or so they say. How much, then, is a good graphic worth? Once we’ve settled on a name for our newsletter our next step will be the creation of a graphic and masthead.

SUBMIT! A quality newsletter is a collective endeavor. Please send CFPs, information about recent publications, reviews of films, books and articles and other information of interest to Section Chair PJ McGann, pjmcgann@umich.edu or Newsletter editor, Giovanna Follo, gfollo@emporia.edu. Depending on the amount of materials, we may send out a biweekly or monthly announcement email. Deadline for Summer Newsletter is June 30, 2010.

What are your thoughts about the upcoming Soccer World Cup in South Africa?