

FURTHER READINGS

CHAPTER 10

This file contains additional readings from earlier editions of *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, and some extra materials provided by Jay Coakley. These have not been included within the book as much of the content is explicitly focused on the USA, but users of the book may find these readings useful and interesting. Please feel free to send your feedback and/or suggest additional readings to us at jcoakley@uccs.edu or e.pike@chi.ac.uk.

Topic 1. The 25 most powerful people in sports

Topic 2. Professional football players and poverty rates by state

Topic 3. Women and class-based boundaries to sport participation

Topic 4. Playing sports and career success

Topic 5. The odds of becoming a professional athlete

Topic 1. The 25 most powerful people in sports

In Chapter 10 there's a table that lists the Sporting News Top 25 most powerful people in sports at the end of 2007. Here is a comparison table from 1991 and 1996. I've retained the descriptions of each of the men in the top 10.

The Top 25 in The Sporting News 100 most powerful people in sports, 1996 (and 1991)

Rank	Name	Position	Organization	1991 Rank
1	Dick Ebersol	President	NBC Sports	323
2	Philip Knight	Chairman & CEO	Nike	74
3	Steve Bornstein	President & CEO	ESPN & ABC Sports	6
4	Mark McCormack	Chairman & CEO	Int. Mgmt. Group	11
5	Michael Eisner	Chairman & CEO	Disney (ABC, ESPN)	NR
6	Rupert Murdoch	CEO	News Corp.	NR
7	Ted Turner	Vice Chairman	Time Warner	15
	Gerald Levin	Chairman	Time Warner	NR
8	David Stern	Commissioner	NBA	1
9	Donald Fehr	Executive director	MLB Players' Association	12
10	Ronald Zarella	V.P. (Sales/Marketing)	General Motors	NR
	Philip Guarascio	V.P. (Sales/Adv.)	General Motors	11
11	John Malone	President & CEO	Tele-Communications, Inc.	NR
12	J. A. Samaranch	President	IOC	2
13	Robert Wright	President & CEO	NBC	25
14	Leigh Steinberg	Sports Attorney	(agent)	24
15	Jerry Reinsdorf	Chairman	Chicago White Sox & Bulls	98
16	Paul Tagliabue	Commissioner	NFL	5
17	David Falk	President & CEO	F.A.M.E. (agent org.)	23
18	Gary Bettman	Commissioner	NHL	66
19	James Dolan	CEO	Cablevision	NR
20	Jerry Colangelo	President & CEO	Phoenix Suns	
		Manag General Partner	Arizona Diamondbacks	NR
21	Richard Pound	Vice President	IOC	NR
22	Bud Selig	Chairman	MLB Executive Committee	
		Owner	Milwaukee Brewers	27
23	Jerry Jones	Owner	Dallas Cowboys	NR
24	Russ Granik	Deputy Commissioner	NBA	
		President	USA Basketball	33
25	Chase Carey	Co-COO	News Corp.	
		Chair & CEO	Fox Television Group	NR

Table Summary

The Top 25 actually lists 27 people: 11 media executives (6 of whom were not in the Top 100 5 years ago); 3 executives from corporate sponsors; 1 executive in a sport management company; 10 executives in sport organizations, including leagues, teams, and players' associations; and 2 agents, and 1 chief executive of an agent/sport management organization. There are no women, no blacks, and no athletes on the list; all are white men.

This table lists the top 25 of the 100 most powerful people from the list for 1996, and it gives their previous rank positions in 1991. In 1996 the list included 88 white men, 9 black men, 3 white women, and 1 black woman. In fact, the top 25 most powerful were all white men-no women and no blacks. It is clear that in addition to wealth, dominant forms of gender logic and race logic also have an effect on who has power in sports. There were no coaches on the list, and only four athletes. The athletes were there primarily because of their endorsement contracts and the pervasiveness of their images in television commercials; if it were not for the media and major corporations, athletes would not have the mass audiences they have now. So not even the most highly paid athletes have influence in sports that matches those people who own and manage multi-billion-dollar transnational corporations, including media companies.

Five of the ten most powerful people in sports were owners or top executives in transnational media companies-a trend likely to continue indefinitely. The top ten in 1996 consisted of the following men.

Number 1 was Dick Ebersol, president of NBC Sports. Ebersol not only negotiated the \$3.57 billion purchase of broadcasting rights for the Olympic Games for 2000 through 2008, but also was the executive producer for the coverage of the 1996 Olympics, as well as many other major sporting events. As an editor from *The Sporting News* noted, "no one in sports affected more of what we saw, why we saw it and how we saw it than NBC's Ebersol ... we weren't watching the Olympics; we were watching Ebersol's vision of the Olympics." Now Ebersol is in position to influence what TV viewers in the U.S. will see during the Olympics over the next twelve years. He will also make sure that NBC interests are considered in everything from Olympic site selections to which new sports are included in the games. During 1996, NBC Sports also covered baseball's World Series, Notre Dame football, the NBA All-Star game and playoffs, NFL football and Super Bowl XXX, Wimbledon, the French Open, the PGA tour and the U.S. Open, and the Breeder's Cup horse races.

Number 2 was Phil Knight, chairman and CEO of Nike, which controls nearly 40 percent of the athletic footwear market. Nike's sponsorship of athletes and teams shapes the sport images that people all over the world use to give meaning to what they see in the media and what they experience in their own sport participation. In fact, Nike's logo (the "Swoosh") is now a standard mark on the clothing of dozens of college and professional teams and of numerous high-profile athletes, from Michael Jordan in basketball to Tiger Woods in golf. The "Air Jordan" image is a creation of Nike that influences how children around the world see and think about basketball and basketball skills. Nike's image-making power was also clear in its \$43 million contract with Tiger Woods. Nike images of girls and women in sports also have been influential. And all the images revolve around "the shoes" and the clothes.

Number 3 was Steve Bornstein, president and CEO of ESPN, and president of ABC Sports (both ABC and ESPN are owned by Disney). ESPN is the number two sports network in the U.S.; it reaches about 70 percent of U.S. households. About 23 percent of all television sports watched in the U.S. are carried on ESPN channels. ESPN televises sports in over 160 countries and 19 languages worldwide. It has a massive production facility in Singapore that puts it in position to influence the media coverage of sports in Asia, where nearly 40 percent of the

world's population resides. ESPNNews, a new cable channel, was launched in 1996. ESPN Radio covered more events during the year. Bornstein also helped negotiate ABC's seven-year broadcasting contract with U.S. college football, a deal that virtually guarantees that there will be a national championship game in January 1999, and that it will be televised on ABC.

Number 4 was Mark McCormack, chairman and CEO of International Management Group (IMG). IMG controls much of golf and tennis around the world; it not only owns and operates tournaments, but also lists many athletes in these sports as its clients. IMG negotiates endorsement contracts, event sponsorships, and publicity for athletes and events. To recruit and maintain clients and serve as a consultant on event sponsorships, IMG has 69 offices in 28 countries, with plans to expand throughout Asia. IMG also owns sport academies that train athletes in tennis and baseball; their goal is to "create" the athletes they then will manage and "sell" to sponsors or sport teams. IMG guided Tiger Woods as he turned pro, and then negotiated his \$43 million contract with Nike (of which IMG will take a percentage, customarily 15 to 20 percent).

Number 5 was Michael Eisner, chairman and CEO of Disney. Eisner orchestrated Disney's \$19 billion purchase of Cap Cities/ABC, which includes ownership of ESPN and ESPN2. Now Disney has cable access to viewers all around the world. Disney can highlight its teams, the Anaheim Mighty Ducks and the Anaheim (formerly California) Angels, and use them to generate business for Disneyland. As Disney-owned companies control more sports teams and events, sports will become a part of the traditional entertainment industry. Teams and athletes will be associated with Disney enterprises: we will see movies with Disney teams as "stars," cartoons will include images connected with Disney sport teams, and children will grow up associating Disneyland and Mickey Mouse with sports.

Number 6 was Rupert Murdoch, majority owner of News Corporation, the parent company of Fox Sports and the Fox cable network, Sky Sports, and of other television companies and newspapers around the world. Murdoch's companies influence and, to an extent, determine media coverage of sports in much of Europe, Australia, Latin America, and Asia. In the U.S., Fox Sports has long-term contracts with major-league Baseball, the NFL, and the NHL; it also covers other sports as it sees opportunities for profits. What Murdoch does influences everything from cricket in India to football in the U.S. and hockey throughout North America.

Number 7 were Ted Turner and Gerald Levin, the vice chairman and chairman (respectively) of Time Warner, one of the three largest media organizations in the world. Together they control HBO Sports, all TBS properties (including the Atlanta Braves and Hawks, CNN, TBS, TNT, and SportSouth, the number one regional sports network in the U.S.). They launched CNN/SI, an all-sports news cable channel in 1996, and they are negotiating other major deals that will affect sports in the future.

Number 8 was David Stern, commissioner of the National Basketball Association. Stern was able to reject efforts by powerful sport agents to restructure labor agreements in the NBA. He kept teams from using cable TV to broadcast their games that were not included in the NBA's media contracts, helped market the U.S. men's Olympic teams around the world, and developed the concept of the Women's NBA, which played its inaugural season in 1996.

Number 9 was Donald Fehr, executive director of the Major League Baseball Players' Association. After nearly 4 years of labor-management conflict in baseball, Fehr negotiated a deal that safeguarded the interests of players into the next century. The Sporting News explained that "Fehr's ability to stonewall the owners should be remembered as one of the great stands in labor history."

Number 10 were Ronald Zarrella and Philip Guarascio, vice presidents of General Motors in North America. As The Sporting News noted, “GM’s involvement in sports is staggering.... GM’s mark on sports is everywhere.” The company sponsored everything from the Olympics to yachting to the Women’s Sport Foundation. Forty percent of all vehicles sold in the U.S. during 1996 were light trucks and sport vehicles, and GM trucks and sport vehicles were heavily marketed in connection with sport events.

Who has the power in sports, 1999

The “Top 100” for 1999 identified 107 people; this is because two or three men were sometimes ranked together as decision-makers partners in sports. The “Top 100” included 3 women (ranked #88, #95 and #97), 8 people of color (one black woman, six black men, and one Asian man); and 97 white men. The “Top 25” actually lists 30 people. Of these 30, there are 10 executives from media organizations, 3 from sponsoring corporations; 2 from sport management companies; 7 from professional sport organizations, including leagues and players’ associations; along with 5 owners of pro sport teams; 2 agents; and 1 athlete. Twenty-nine of the thirty, or 97%, are white men; Tiger Woods is multi-ethnic, and there are no women in the “Top 25,” or the “top 87,” for that matter!

It is clear that in addition to wealth and control of the resources of major corporations, dominant forms of gender logic and race logic also have an effect on who has power in sports. There was one coach on the list, and only seven athletes. Not even the most highly paid athletes have influence in sports that matches those people who own and/or manage multi-billion-dollar corporations.

We can see how power operates in sports by taking a closer look at the three men who were ranked together as No. 1 on the list: Rupert Murdoch, Chase Carey, and David Hill. Murdoch was ranked No. 1 in 1998 and two other times between 1994 and 1998. He is the majority owner and CEO of News Corp, a massive media and entertainment conglomerate that controls much of the media coverage of sports in Europe, North America, Asia, Latin America, and Australia (Harvey, Law, and Cantelon, forthcoming). In addition to owning major sports teams and sports facilities around the world, the News Corp owns the Fox Entertainment Group and is connected with Disney, ESPN, AOL Time Warner, and Cablevision. This means that Murdoch works closely with Chase Carey, the Chairman and CEO of Fox Television, and David Hill, the Chairman and CEO of Fox Sports Television Group.

In combination, these three men acquire sports programming, media technology, and regional sports networks around the world. In the U.S., Fox Sports has long-term contracts with Major League Baseball, the NFL, the NHL, and NASCAR. It also covers other sports as it sees opportunities for profits. They helped make NASCAR (the stock car racing circuit) one of the premier television sports in the U.S., and they even turned the Millennium M1 Bass Fishing Tournament into an overnight television success story (that’s power!). They make things happen in sports, and they also keep things from happening. For example, when the organizers of the 2000 Summer Olympics planned to have the road-cycling course too close to Murdoch’s international headquarters on the east side of Sydney, his objections were instrumental in having the course moved to the west side of town; nobody wants to risk a confrontation with Murdoch. It is believed that his media holdings enable him to communicate with over 75% of the world’s population in 24 hours, if he wants to be heard.

Descriptions of others on the list (see <http://www.sportingnews.com>) clearly indicate that economic wealth and power matters in sports. Those who control economic resources around the

world make decisions that influence the visibility of sports, how they are organized, and the images and meanings associated with them. While these decisions do not ignore the interests of people around the world, their main purpose is to establish and expand the power and profitability of the organizations represented by the decision-makers. Therefore, sports tend to revolve around the meanings and orientations valued by those with economic resources and power, while they also provide enjoyable and entertaining experiences to people around the world.

This is why some critical sociologists have described sports as cultural vehicles for developing ideological “outposts” in the minds of people around the world: when transnational corporations become the primary providers of popular pleasure and entertainment, they are able to use pleasure and entertainment to deliver many other messages about what should be important in people’s lives. This is a clear manifestation of class relations at work.

Jay Coakley

Topic 2. Professional football players and poverty rates by state

An analysis of the 2007 NFL rosters suggests a relationship between poverty and playing professional football. In the tables below it is seen that the top five states for producing NFL players also rank in the top 10 states for total poverty rate and poverty rates for children under 18-years old.

In fact, Louisiana, Mississippi, and the District of Columbia are the top three states for both poverty rates and the production of NFL players. South Carolina and Alabama, states with the 4th and 5th highest NFL player production rates also rank very high in poverty rates—number 10 and 8, respectively.

My sense is certain sports are organized in ways that call for a particular willingness to put one's body on the line in the quest for success, and that poverty increases a person's willingness to do this. But more research is needed on this topic.

State	Total NFL players*	Residents per 1 NFL player**
1. Louisiana	71	29,377
2. Mississippi	43	32,776
3. District of Columbia	8	34,083
4. South Carolina	53	39,693
5. Alabama	51	43,715

*On 2007 opening-day, 53-man rosters

**2006 U.S. Census data

Sources: NFL, U.S. Census Bureau, USA TODAY research by Scott Boeck and Jodi Upton

STATE	Residents per 1 NFL player	Rank among all states	Poverty Rate (US = 12.7)*	Poverty rate rank	Poverty rate, <18 (US = 17.8)	Under 18 poverty rate rank
Louisiana	29,377	1	19.2	2	26.4	3
Mississippi	32,776	2	19.3	1	28.6	2
District of Columbia	34,083	3	18.3	3	29.2	1
South Carolina	39,693	4	15.0	10	21.2	10
Alabama	43,715	5	16.1	8	22.6	7

*2004 U.S. Census Bureau

Jay Coakley

Topic 3. Women and class-based boundaries to sport participation

The major class-based barriers to sport participation affect women from working class and lower income households the most. These barriers include:

- Lack of facilities
- Lack of equipment
- Lack of transportation to and from places where sports are played
- Lack of peers with resources needed to participate
- Lack of time, given the need to work long hours, to play sports
- Lack of safe places in which to do sports
- Lack of a predictable schedule allowing for commitments to scheduled participation
- Lack of material support from extended family members
- Lack of well maintained public spaces
- Lack of coaches who understand the conditions of one's life
- A sense of hopelessness that decreases motivation and a willingness to delay gratification for a future time
- The need to share resources with extended family members experiencing economic crises
- The need to assist family members with child care and household tasks
- The greater likelihood of having regular health conditions that interfere with participation
- High levels of neighborhood pollution that cause exercise-induced asthma
- Problems that affect school performance and increase ineligibility rates

See also, Chapter 10, pages 324–326.

Jay Coakley

Topic 4. Playing sports and career success

At this point we know less than we should about the precise ways in which sport participation in different contexts may be connected to processes of career development. After reviewing the literature on this topic, I hypothesize that there are four possibilities:

- (1) It may be that under certain circumstances, sport participation teaches young people interpersonal skills that carry over into various jobs and enable them to be successful.
- (2) Former athletes may be defined or labeled by others as good job prospects and given opportunities that enable them to develop and demonstrate work-related abilities that serve as the basis for career success.
- (3) Those young people who were very high-profile athletes may be able to use their reputations to obtain and succeed at certain types of jobs, such as those in sales and/or service occupations.
- (4) Playing sports may put young people in touch with others, especially adults with connections and power, who can serve as advocates and help them obtain good jobs after retiring from sports.

Julius Erving (Dr. J.), a legendary pro basketball player in the 1970s now in a successful second career, has noted that former professional athletes sometimes have problems making transitions into occupational careers after they retire from sports. He says,

I see so many athletes not feeling they have a purpose once their [playing] careers are over.

That's why so many of them make "comebacks." ...It's a lot easier if you begin your business career before your sports career is over (in Hunter-Hodge, 1995).

Of course, Erving realizes that when athletes anticipate what they will face in their lives after sports, they are more likely to use their sport experiences to expand their experiences, contacts, and knowledge. When athletes don't do this, they run the risk of being unprepared to face the challenges of life off the field.

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Topic 5. The odds of becoming a professional athlete

It is difficult to compute the odds of playing professional sports. Sociologists Wib Leonard has computed the odds of becoming a professional athlete for people from different racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. An adapted version of his data is in the table below. This table summarizes the chances of becoming a professional athlete in the four major professional team sports for 15- to 39-year-old males from different racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. The odds are based on the assumption that the numbers of pro players from each of these racial and ethnic groups stays constant from one year to the next.

Considering the entire population of 15- to 39-year-old men in the U.S., the best odds for African Americans are in football: 1 of every 50,000 men between 15 and 39 is a black football player. But when looking at the within-group odds, we see that 1 in every 10,000 African Americans is an NFL player. Note that the odds are worse in basketball, where 1 in 20,000 African American men in the 15- to 39-year-old age category is an NBA player. This is so because there are numerically fewer black NBA players than black NFL players (320, compared to 910).

The odds for becoming a professional athlete in an individual sport are especially poor. For example, rough estimates indicate that of every 750,000 women between 15 and 39 in the U.S., only 1 is a pro golfer, and that of every million, only 1 is a pro tennis player. These odds look even worse when we note that most of the women who play professionally in these sports do not win tournaments or place very high among the money makers. The odds are a little better for men, but not much.

Even though we can question the exact meaning of these attempts to compute the odds of becoming a professional athlete for a specific person, one thing is clear: opportunities for making it to the top as an athlete are extremely limited.

Table 1. Odds of 15- to 39-year-old males in the U.S. attaining professional athlete status in major professional team sports by race/ethnicity.

Sport	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	Other
Football	N = 467	N = 910	N = 14	N = 14
All groups*	111,111:1	50,000:1	3,333,333:1	3,333,333:1
Within group†	100,000:1	10,000:1	333,333:1	333,333:1
Baseball	N = 469	N = 112	N = 112	N = 7
All groups	111,111:1	500,000:1	500,000:1	10,000,000:1
Within group	100,000:1	50,000:1	50,000:1	500,000:1
Basketball	N = 85	N = 320	N = 0	N = 0
All groups	500,000:1	166,666:1		
Within group	500,000:1	20,000:1		
Hockey	N = 630	N = 13	N = 7	N = 7
All groups	200,000:1‡	3,333,333:1	1,000,000:1	10,000,000:1
Within group	100,000:1‡	500,000:1	100,000:1	500,000:1

All Four Sports	N = 1660	N = 1355	N = 133	N = 28
All groups	33,333:1	33,333:1	333,333:1	1,666,666:1
Within group	25,000:1	5,000:1	50,000:1	166,666:1

Source: Adapted from data in table 5 in W. Leonard, 1996. The odds of transiting from one level of sports participation to another. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 13, 3, 288–299.