

Sport in the Land of Television: The Use of Sport in Network Prime-Time Schedules 1946-50

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On December 13, 1988, CBS obtained the network broadcast rights for major league baseball. The price: \$1.08 billion for an exclusive four-year contract.* Early in 1989, the cable sports network ESPN paid \$400 million for the exclusive right to air major league baseball on cable.² NBC's 1991-94 contract with the National Football League called for the network to pay the league \$188 million per year for national broadcast rights. CBS paid \$267 million per year for its football telecasts, while ABC, which airs *Monday Night Football*, paid the NFL \$249 million per year.³ This income from the broadcast networks supplied professional football with nearly 60% of its revenue during the early 1990s; for professional basketball and baseball, the figure has been closer to 30% of total revenue.⁴

Such high prices for programming are not limited to the so-called "major" sports, such as basketball, baseball, and football. CBS paid \$243 million for the broadcast rights to the 1992 Winter Olympics, later selling a portion of those rights to the TNT cable network. NBC paid \$401 million for the more popular Summer Games.⁵ Other sports events, such as the Indianapolis 500, Kentucky Derby, Rose Bowl, and Masters golf tournament have also cost broadcast and cable networks many millions of dollars in rights fees. Such large outlays of cash signal the importance of televised sports programming to the networks and also the large profits that can be earned by airing sporting events. The networks' generosity has also made organized sport highly dependent on television revenue. Without television, no team could hand out multi-million dollar contracts to players such as Dwight Gooden, Joe Montana, or Michael Jordan. In the sport-television relationship, television, with its deep pockets, has become the dominant partner.

1. William O. Johnson and William Taaffe, "A Whole New Game," *Sports Illustrated*, 26 December 1988, 34-42.

2. "ESPN Gets to Play Ball for \$400 Million," *Broadcasting*, 9 January 1989, 43.

3. Richard Huff, "NFL Wraps TV Deals with CBS, NBC Pacts," *Variety*, 14 March 1990, 43.

4. *Ibid.*, 26.

5. Johnson and Taaffe, "A Whole New Game," 35.

While it is true that sport today comprises an important part of the networks' overall programming schemes, most sports telecasts can be found only on weekend afternoons. Televised sport attracts a heavily male audience which can not compete, in terms of sheer numbers, with the larger and more heterogeneous audiences for prime-time programming.⁶ The logic is simple: Advertisers for prime-time programs demand large audiences; therefore, television programmers try to attract as many people as possible by airing programs that appeal to a broad audience. Outside of prime time, this logic changes somewhat; the daytime audience is largely composed of women, thereby attracting advertisers who want to reach a female audience. On weekends, it is the male audience that holds sway, which results in a heavy concentration of televised sport.

It was not always this way. For a brief period comprising the first five years of network television programming, no ground rules had been established. The television industry, in its infancy, had no experience with which to guide itself; there were no television ratings, no demographic breakdowns of the audience. In this time of uncertainty and experimentation, prime-time programmers found themselves drawn to sport as a way to attract an audience to their new medium. For a short time this strategy worked as televised sport lured many people to watch television, first in taverns and restaurants, and then in their own homes. From 1946 to 1950, it was sport which held the upper hand in its relationship with television as the networks relied heavily on sport to fill out their prime-time schedules in those first few years.⁷

A Brief History of Television

Prior to World War II radio dominated the airwaves. RCA and others had conducted experiments as early as the 1920s with a new medium, television, but only slowly developed an economical and efficient television transmission and reception system. In 1939, RCA president David Sarnoff, eager to begin regular television broadcasts, had arranged with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for NBC to televise several events from the New York World's Fair.⁸ In addition, a mobile production truck began televising various events in the New York City area, sport being a prominent subject of the telecasts. This mobile unit provided the first sports telecast, a Columbia-Princeton baseball game, shot with one camera stationed near the third-base line. It was not an

6. Jeremy Schlosberg, "Who Watches Television Sports?" *American Demographics*, February 1987, 45-49, 59. A survey by the Simmons Market Research Bureau found that men comprised the majority of the audience for all of the top twenty televised sports.

7. Those "first few years" are a somewhat frustrating time period for historical study. One problem is that the networks and local stations of the era had no idea that what they were doing would someday be regarded as significant. As a result, most of their records and film libraries are now believed to reside in landfills in New Jersey and other places. Government documents provide little help because the FCC was not concerned about programming, instead directing its energies toward such problems as frequency (the "freeze") and a standard for color television. Richard Keller of Emporia State University aptly summarizes the problem in "Sport and Television in the 1950's: A Preliminary Survey," included in the 1982 North American Society for Sport History newsletter. As Keller put it, "Not even God knows much about televised sport during the 1950's."

8. Erik Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States* (Vol. 2) *The Golden Web* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968) 126-27.

aesthetic success. A later telecast from Ebbets Field, for a Reds-Dodgers doubleheader, was improved somewhat by the addition of a second camera. The mobile unit also covered boxing and wrestling cards on an irregular basis, all for an audience which numbered in the hundreds. CBS also experimented with sports telecasts in 1939, including the first televised boxing match, in which Lou Nova took on Max Baer at Yankee Stadium.⁹

By the early 1940s both NBC and CBS, competing to develop a market for their television receivers, were broadcasting a limited schedule of programs to the small number of set owners in New York City from their newly-built television stations. The start of World War II, however, suddenly halted the development of television, as technological expertise and raw materials were channeled into the war effort. Once the war ended, television became a top priority for broadcasters and advertisers, although not all were convinced that the new medium would succeed. One imposing obstacle was that television sets cost almost as much as a new car. Others in the industry, secure in their financial and popular success, simply felt that nothing could ever supplant radio as the entertainment medium of choice.

In 1946 NBC became the first network to establish regular television programming, followed shortly by DuMont, a short-lived television network headed by Dr. Allen DuMont, a pioneer in experimental television broadcasting.¹⁰ The other national radio networks, CBS and ABC, were, for different reasons, slower to enter the television arena. ABC, created in 1943 when NBC was forced by the government to spin off its "blue" radio network, lacked a New York television station from which to originate network programming." CBS did have a New York station, but held off on developing a television presence because it wanted its experimental color system accepted as the industry standard, rather than the color system developed by RCA, NBC's parent company. The FCC ultimately chose NBC's color system because it was compatible with the black-and-white system then in use, unlike the CBS system, which would have required viewers to buy new sets. While CBS waited four years for the FCC to make a decision regarding color, it lost time in establishing regular network television programming.¹² For ABC, the problem was money; the network had little to spend on television.

By 1948 ABC and CBS had followed NBC's lead and established their own network programming schedules. Although the FCC issued a temporary freeze on the construction of new television stations in 1948, network television began to spread westward via coaxial cable. By 1949 the midwest was linked to the networks, and in 1951 the link reached the west coast. In a short time television had gained a firm hold on the nation's consciousness.

For some at the radio networks, television was simply an extension of radio;

9. "Sports Shows, Radio vs. Video," *New York Times*, 13 June 1946.

10. Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time TV Shows, 1946-Present* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), xiii.

11. Sterling Quinlan, *Inside ABC: American Broadcasting Company's Rise to Power* (New York: Hastings House, 1979), 6-7.

12. Barnouw, *The Golden Web*, 243.

for others it was a new and unexplored visual world. For all, it was an uncertain business in which no one had any experience in identifying which show would succeed and which would fail. What was certain, however, was that television needed programming, and lots of it. The network schedules of the late 1940s and early 1950s reflected both uncertainty about programming strategy and the scarcity of programs. The networks, in their attempts to lure an audience, aired a wide variety of program genres, including such variety programs as *Your Show of Shows* and *Texaco Star Theater*, crime dramas such as *Man Against Crime*, a long list of anthologies including *Goodyear Television Playhouse* and *Kraft Television Theater*, and quiz shows such as *Majority Rules* and *Think Fast*. Advertisers, rather than buying a commercial or two within a program, as is the practice today, bought entire blocks of time on the networks during the 1940s and 1950s, which resulted in such early programs as *Chevrolet Tele-Theater*, *In the Kelvinator Kitchen*, and *Mohawk [Carpet] Showroom*. Amidst all this programming variety, sports programming was not neglected. In their early years, the networks looked to sport as an essential component of prime-time programming.

Sport was given a chance in prime time because no one knew what kinds of programs the public wanted to watch, which made the early years of network programming a time of great trial-and-error. With no prior experience or audience research to guide them, programmers put lots of shows on the air and hoped some would find an audience. Since sport had long been a popular staple on radio, it seemed to be a natural for television. As broadcasting historian J. Fred MacDonald points out, a parallel exists between the early programming strategies of radio and television in which both media used the “excitement of sport contests” to attract the male audience.¹³ For those advertisers whose products were primarily purchased by men, such as tires, cigarettes, and beer, advertising on sports programs appeared to be a logical strategy. Said sports-writer Red Smith, in reference to baseball telecasts, “The sport of Father Chadwick and AIG. Spalding has been taken over by John Barleycorn and Lady Nicotine, who are not going to let it go as long as it sells products.”¹⁴

Sport also provided a convenient and relatively cheap source of programming. The infant networks, all based in New York City, had easy access to a multitude of local sports teams and events. Especially important were the numerous arenas that dotted the city, providing an ongoing schedule of boxing and wrestling cards. Perhaps most important of all, the networks believed that sports programming led directly to the sale of television sets. As long-time NBC director Harry Coyle reminisced in 1988, “What some people forget is that television got off the ground because of sports. Today, maybe, sports need television to survive, but it was just the opposite when it first started. When we put on the World Series in 1947, heavyweight fights, the Army-Navy football

13. J. Fred MacDonald, *Don't Touch That Dial!: Radio Programming in American Life from 1920 to 1960*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 9.

14. Benjamin G. Rader, *In its Own Image: How Television Has Transformed Sports* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 58.

game, the sales of television sets just spurted.”¹⁵ Considering that NBC and DuMont (followed in 1951 by CBS) were all in the business of manufacturing television sets, one of their primary goals was obvious: If it sells sets, put it on. As the networks quickly discovered, sport did indeed sell sets.

1946: Birth of the Networks

In 1946, the first year of network prime-time programming¹⁶ only NBC and DuMont had regular schedules, and then just barely. There was just barely an audience as well. In 1946, only 8,000 television sets had been sold to a public concentrated in the New York City area.¹⁷ The two networks were on the air only an hour or two per night, and not at all on Saturdays.¹⁸ Sport, or boxing, to be more exact, represented a significant part of the network schedules (see Figure 1).¹⁹

Figure 1. Network sport in prime time: 1946

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
A B C							
D U M O N T							
C B S							
N B C		9-11 PM Gillette Cavalcade of Sports			9-9: 15 PM Fight Film Filler 9-11 PM Gillette Cavalcade		

15. Ron Luciano and David Fisher, *Rememberance of Swings Past* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 254.
 16. "Prime time" was originally defined as 7 to 11 P.M. (eastern time) until 1971, when the FCC ruled that stations in the top fifty markets could air only three hours of network prime-time programming per night. By industry convention, prime-time hours then became 8 to 11 P.M.
 17. *Historical Statistics of the United States-Colonial Times to 1970, Bicentennial Edition, Part 2* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975), 796.
 18. Marc Eliot, *American Television: The Official Art of the Artificial* (New York: Anchor Press, 1968), 127-130.
 19. As the contemporary viewer well knows, television schedules are "subject to change." The schedules presented here (all eastern time) represent the programming that usually occupied a particular time slot. These schedules were derived from the following sources: Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time TV Shows, 1946-Present* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981); Mitchell E. Shapiro, *Television*

The Use of Sport in Network Prime-Time Schedules

As can be seen, the prime-time sports schedule for 1946 is sparse, but so was network programming as a whole. DuMont and NBC collectively aired only nine hours and 30 minutes of prime-time programming per week; of this, sports programs comprised three hours and 45 minutes, or nearly 40% of all programming. Prime time sport in this year was represented mostly by a single NBC program, *The Gillette Cavalcade of Sports*. The program was not owned by NBC, but by Gillette, a razor blade manufacturer.²⁰ It was a program ideal for early television, considering the medium's level of technical development. Broadcasting equipment of the time was bulky and difficult to maneuver. Television cameras needed large amounts of light in order to produce a watchable picture, and picture clarity was a problem even under good conditions—long shots of objects tended to reduce those objects to unidentifiable specks. *The Cavalcade* solved these problems and made television engineers happy by televising boxing matches. Boxing lent itself to the existing state of television technology because it took place in a small indoor area which could be provided with the large amount of light needed by the cameras. The relatively small size of the ring enabled cameras to shoot close-ups of the participants, which helped overcome the picture's fuzziness.²¹ Like the television engineers, Gillette was also happy with boxing. It was cheaper to produce than a studio program, with production costs running about \$2,500 per program.²² In addition, the structure of the sport, with three-minute rounds separated by one-minute intermissions, provided ample opportunity for the company to advertise its wares.

Another plus for the show, at least in its early years, was that while few homes had television, many taverns did. Large numbers of males gathered in their neighborhood saloons to watch the fights, thus bringing together Gillette's target audience in a place that did not have the distractions of home, where wives and children might want to watch something other than boxing.²³ Gillette must have been pleased with *Cavalcade* in any event—the show did not leave the air until 1964, after having presented over 600 nights of boxing, in addition to such events as the Orange Bowl and the World Series.²⁴ Gillette was not alone in its happiness with televised boxing—a 1946 NBC telecast of the Joe Louis-Billy Conn heavyweight championship fight inspired the *Washington Post* to declare: "Television looks good for a 1000 year run."²⁵ More important to the networks, the Louis-Conn bout garnered praise from the Leo Burnett advertising agency, which declared that the fight was "another achievement by the industry to bring forcibly to the attention of the public the practical value of

Network Prime-Time Programming, 1948-1988 (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1989); Eliot, *American Television*.

20. Until the 1960s it was common practice for advertisers to obtain the rights to sports events and then pay a network or local station to carry the events. It took the networks several years to establish their own separate sports divisions; prior to that sports operations were a part of the networks' news divisions.

21. Ron Powers, *Supertube: The Rise of Television Sports* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1984), 243.

22. "Program Production Chart," *Television*, February 1949, 16.

23. Powers, *Supertube*, 52-53.

24. *Ibid.*, 53.

25. Erik Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States* (Vol. 3) *The Image Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970) 244.

television.”²⁶ At a time when advertisers and their agencies were largely unconvinced of television’s future, this was a significant endorsement of television’s potential as an advertising medium.

In addition to *Cavalcade*, NBC also presented a fifteen-minute fight film filler following the variety show *Hour Glass*, its main offering on Thursday nights. In an era prior to the development of videotape, such filmed programs were an economical way for the networks to fill air time since they could be run again and again.

1947: Gillette and Boxing

As the sales of television sets increased to 14,000 units in 1947,²⁷ NBC and DuMont still had the prime-time airwaves to themselves. The two fledgling networks, however, offered the viewer little more programming than in the previous year.²⁸ Weekend programming, in fact, nearly stopped altogether save for a few special programs presented on NBC. In all, network prime-time programming expanded by three hours to an average of 14 hours and 45 minutes per week; of this, sports programming accounted for three hours and 45 minutes, or 25% of total prime-time programming. While this represents a decrease from the networks’ inaugural year, sports programming still represents a substantial part of the networks’ programming schedules. Critics noticed this and praised the sports programming efforts of the networks and local stations. One preview of the 1947 season cited sporting events as “television’s most professional entertainment” and noted the growing popularity of Gillette’s *Cavalcade* with the television audience.²⁹

The Gillette Company recognized early on that televised sport would be an ideal vehicle for selling razor blades to their male target audience. In 1944, when television wasn’t much more than a rumor, Gillette signed a contract with Madison Square Garden to sponsor weekly fight contests, continuing a tradition of sports sponsorship that had begun years earlier in radio.³⁰ For the most part, Gillette’s partnership with televised sport proved to be beneficial for everyone involved. Gillette saw its share of the shaving products market rise from 16 percent in the 1930s to more than 60 percent in the late 1950.³¹ In turn, Gillette’s success led to large expenditures on sports programming, which gratified those viewers hungry for boxing, baseball, and football. Certainly the networks were the beneficiaries of Gillette’s increasingly large advertising budgets. While many advertisers remained leery of television’s power to sell products, Gillette supplied the networks with both desperately needed programming and the income to develop additional programs. Gillette’s power in this regard was made most evident in 1959. Faced with the cancellation of its *Cavalcade of Sports* on NBC, Gillette moved almost all of

26. “Video Status Confused, Agency Finds,” *Broadcasting*, 12 August 1946, 32.

27. *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 796.

28. Brooks and Marsh, *Directory to Prime Time TV Shows*, 853.

29. Bruce Robertson, “Autumn Expansion Is Seen for Video,” *Broadcasting*, 26 August 1946, 15.

30. Rader, *In its Own Image*, 42.

31. Bert Randolph Sugar, *The Thrill of Victory: The Inside Story of ABC Sports*, (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1978), 47.

its advertising budget to ABC, the weakest and most poor of the networks. As a result, ABC suddenly found itself \$8 million dollars richer, an amount more than the combined profits of its radio and television operations for all of 1959.³² Armed with this new and potent war chest, ABC moved quickly to wrest the important NCAA football rights from NBC and began to establish its own sports programming, most notably the long-running *Wide World of Sports*. Thanks in large part to Gillette's infusion of cash, ABC was able to begin constructing the framework that would eventually allow it to dominate network sports programming.

In the 1947 television season, Gillette's *Cavalcade*, still relying heavily on boxing to fill its air time, remained as the only prime-time sport program (see Figure 2). The first fifteen minutes of the Monday night *Cavalcade* were replaced by the *Esso Reporter*, but the Friday *Cavalcade* was expanded by 30 minutes. The Thursday fight film filler was dropped, which left the *Cavalcade* on the air for the same amount of time as in 1946.³³ The Friday *Cavalcade*, which featured boxing from Madison Square Garden, was a hit with barroom audiences throughout New York City. Gillette would pay for this success when the Garden demanded a then-astronomical \$200,000 for the weekly boxing rights during the 1948 season.³⁴ Early on, sports promoters were learning that television could be a potential gold mine.

While boxing continued to be popular with television viewers, the relationship between television and boxing would soon become strained. The popularity of televised boxing kept fans in front of their television sets and away from the boxing arenas. Live attendance dropped sharply; particularly hard hit were small boxing clubs, and even the prestigious Madison Square Garden saw its gate steadily decrease as the sales of television sets increased.³⁵ The live attendance problem made negotiations between television and sports interests more difficult. DuMont, for example, was able to renew its contract to cover boxing and wrestling at New York City's Jamaica Arena, but only at what was described as a "considerable increase in fee."³⁶

Even at this early stage of television's history it soon became apparent that the power of the medium not only affected the audience for a sport, but also influenced how the sport was played. In the case of boxing, promoters quickly learned that brawlers appealed more strongly to the viewing audience than boxers who relied on finesse. Fights between power punchers were more filled with action, and there was always the possibility of a sudden and exciting KO. Realizing this, promoters sought sluggers for televised bouts, leaving finesse fighters in the background as boxing interests strove to make their product more appealing to the television audience.³⁷ In a short time, the power of television

32. Ibid., 47–49.

33. Eliot, *American Television*, 130–33.

34. Jack Gould, *Radio News*, *New York Times*, 11 March 1948.

35. Rader, in *its Own Image*, 45.

36. Jack Gould, *The News of Radio*, *New York Times*, 25 August 1947.

37. Robert W. McChesney, "Media Made Sport: A History of Sports Coverage in the United States," in *Media, Sports and Society*, ed. Lawrence A. Wenner (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1989), 60–61.

Figure 2. Network sport in prime time: 1947

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
A B C							
D U M O N T							
C B S							
N B C		9:15-11 PM Gillette Cavalcade of sports				9-11 PM Gillette Cavalcade of sports	

In 1947, however, it was sport that held sway in its relationship with television. Television executives saw sport as an effective means to increase the sales of television sets, which would not only increase revenues for the manufacturing and research and development arms of NBC, CBS, and DuMont, but would also increase the available television audience. With an increased audience, the networks hoped, would come increased interest from advertisers in the form of stronger advertising commitments to the new medium. CBS president Frank Stanton underscored the importance of sport in announcing an agreement between CBS and the Ford Motor Company for a new sports series. According to Stanton, not only would the income from the Ford series enable the network to develop better techniques for televising sport, but would also enable the network to produce better overall programming. In addition, Stanton saw sport as providing “a wealth of the finest kind of program material for development of the kind of television everybody wants—color television”³⁸ This latter point was vital to CBS, then locked in a struggle with NBC to develop a standard for color television.

38. “Ford will Sponsor CBS Sports Video,” *Broadcasting*, 5 August 1946, 18.

1948: Basketball Comes to Prime Time

In 1948 television set sales jumped from 14,000 to 172,000.³⁹ Despite the slow westward progress of the coaxial cable, television stations were popping up across the country. New stations, whose applications had been approved before the FCC's licensing freeze took effect, went on the air in such cities as Omaha, Tulsa, Salt Lake City, Seattle, Phoenix, Kansas City, and Los Angeles.⁴⁰ Without a direct cable connection to the networks, these stations either bought programming from syndicators or had programs sent to them from the networks on film or kinescopes.

In this year CBS and ABC aired their first prime-time network schedules, and sport was an important component for both networks in their initial programming efforts. As shown in Figure 3, all four networks relied heavily on sport as a prime-time programming vehicle in 1948.⁴¹ While program schedules in the early years of television were especially volatile, the addition of CBS and ABC increased the amount of weekly programming to 83 hours. Sports programs accounted for nearly 27 hours of the total, or nearly one-third of the networks' programming schedules.⁴² The number of hours of boxing alone available to viewers more than doubled, from less than four hours to more than eight hours.⁴³ As one observer put it, "the passionate affair between television and professional fighting turned into an orgy" as both the networks and local stations found boxing to be profitable and easily produced.⁴⁴

In spite of boxing's popularity as TV fare, it was basketball that dominated the network programming schedules in the winter of 1948, at least for a brief time. Professional basketball circa 1948 was described as a "small-time, penny ante sport, because it attracted so many small-time, penny ante operators."⁴⁵ This was the era just prior to the formation of the NBA, when semi-pro leagues such as the Basketball Association of America and the National Basketball League fought for dominance. Professional basketball in the 1940s and early 1950s was a slow game with an uncertain following. In particular, the lack of a successful team in a major media market such as New York hampered the development of fan support.⁴⁶ To compound the problem, blacks were excluded from the professional game, not only depriving the leagues of a significant pool of talent, but also alienating part of the potential audience. The leagues themselves were shaky affairs, with teams frequently folding or moving to different cities.

In spite of these problems, all of the networks except DuMont regularly aired basketball games, mostly on Saturdays, when three games were often aired

39. Historical Statistics of the United States, 796.

40. "Television Magazine's Status Map," *Television Magazine*, March 1950, 16-17.

41. During the 1948 season CBS aired movies and sports events in the 8:30 to 11:00 P.M. time slot on Thursdays, but existent schedules do not indicate what was shown on any particular night.

42. Brooks and Marsh, *Directory to Prime Time TV Shows*, 854.

43. Eliot, *American Television*, 141-47.

44. Rader, *In its Own Image*, 41.

45. Douglas A. Noverr and Lawrence E. Ziewacz, *The Games They Played: Sports in American History, 1865-1980* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1983), 183-84.

46. Barnouw, *The Image Empire*, 146.

Figure 3. Network sport in prime time: 1948

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
A B C				9-11 PM Wrestling from Washington D.C.			7:30-7:45 Sports with Joe Hazel 9-11 PM Basketball
D U M O N T			9-11 PM Boxing	9-11 PM Boxing from Jamaica Arena	9-11 PM Wrestling/ Football	9-11 PM Wrestling from Jamaica Arena	
C B S		9-11 PM Basketball		9:30-10:45 Boxing from Westchester	8:30-11 PM Movies/ Sports	7-7:15 PM Your Sports Special 8-8:05 PM Sportsman's Quiz	8-11 PM Basketball
N B C		9:15-11 PM Boxing from St. Nicholas Arena	10-11 PM Wrestling from St. Nicholas Arena		7:45-7:50 Sports- woman of the Week	9:145-11 PM Gillette Cavalcade of Sports	8:30-11 PM Basketball

simultaneously. The networks, with little previous programming experience to guide them, risked failure in dedicating nine-and-a-half hours of their collective schedule each week to professional basketball. They quickly learned that basketball was not a wise choice for prime-time programming, as it proved to be much less popular than boxing. The game was not yet ready for network exposure, although the development of the NBA and the emergence of such star players as George Mikan and Bill Russell would later make pro basketball a much more popular sport.⁴⁷

College basketball games scored better with audiences than the professional games.⁴⁸ A factor that no doubt helped was that television sets and stations were still concentrated in the east and provided a ready audience for such eastern college powers of the late 1940s as Holy Cross, NYU, and CCNY. Even so, both professional and college basketball disappeared from prime time after only one year. Later, representatives from both college and professional basketball would take steps to ban their games from television, convinced that telecasts on local stations would hurt live attendance.⁴⁹

The concern over the effect of televised sport on live attendance was shared by executives in professional baseball, basketball, and football as well. R. C. Embry, president of both the professional basketball and football teams in

47. Ibid., 165.

48. Brooks and Marsh, *Directory to Prime Time TV Shows*, 65.

49. Rader, *In its Own Image*, 67-75.

Baltimore, discontinued broadcasts of the Bullets' home games, citing a 25% decline in attendance.⁵⁰ Baseball executives were especially concerned about the impact of television. Said Washington Senators owner Clark Griffith, "Television doesn't show you enough. You can't follow the play. If it ever becomes good, I'll throw it out."⁵¹ In a similar vein, baseball commissioner Ford Frick wanted camera coverage of baseball to be strictly limited. "The view a fan gets at home," Frick said, "should not be any better than that of the fan in the worst seat of the ball park."⁵² In an eerily accurate prophecy regarding an attempt by minor leagues baseball to limit baseball broadcasts in 1948, television critic John Drebinger proved both Griffith and Frick wrong when he concluded that any attempt to limit baseball telecasts would fail because "the majors seem unable to resist the lush profits that the expansion of television promises to yield."⁵³ A song written by a baseball writer and presented at a meeting of the New York chapter of the Baseball Writers Association, illustrates one of the prevailing attitudes of the day toward television. It was sung to the tune of *Take Me Out to the Ball Game*: "Take us home to the ball game/ Take us home to the wife/ Get us our slippers, they're just the style/ Plug in the gadget and spin the old dial/ Then we'll root for plenty of action/ If a tube blows out, it's a shame/ But no matter what happens we'll never go out/ To the old ball game."⁵⁴

Another sport to first hit the network schedules in 1948 was professional wrestling. ABC and DuMont both featured wrestling on their prime-time schedules, ABC because it had not yet developed much programming, and DuMont because wrestling was cheap to produce, and, like boxing, lent itself to the available television technology. This was important to DuMont, as the network was struggling financially in its efforts to keep up with NBC and CBS, who were able to fuel their television efforts with the profits from their radio networks. Many of these wrestling programs originated at such venues in the New York area as Jerome Arena and Sunnyside Gardens. Some of the wrestlers who toiled in those arenas rapidly became famous; grapplers such as Gorgeous George, Nature Boy, and The Mighty Atlas became household names.

Wrestling, like boxing, attracted a large barroom audience. What really made wrestling popular with advertisers, however, was that most estimates, however reliable, found women to be the most avid home wrestling viewers. Attracted by the scantily clad and well-muscled grapplers, the female audience was not so much interested in wrestling technique as it was in watching their heroes pose and preen under the hot television lights. One eastern wrestling promoter, waxing optimistic, estimated that women comprised 90% of the horn audience.⁵⁵ Such estimates made wrestling an appealing vehicle for retail adver-

50. "Baltimore Five to Halt Telecasting of Contests," *New York Times*, 13 June 1948.

51. Luciano and Fisher, *Remembrance of Swings Past*, 254.

52. Marc Gunther and Bill Carter, *Monday Night Mayhem* (New York: Beech Tree Books, 1988), 16-17.

53. John Drebinger, "Minors Seek to Limit Baseball Broadcasts and Telecasts," *New York Times*, 10 December 1948.

54. Arthur Daley, "When the Ringside Becomes the Fireside," *New York Times Magazine*, 27 March 1949.

55. "It Pays to Sponsor Television Corn," *Business Week*, 7 October 1950, 25-26.

tisers who traditionally aimed their advertising messages at women, who were responsible for spending much of the average household budget.⁵⁶

Perhaps the most significant aspect of wrestling's appeal is that it is as much an art form as a sport, or, as one scholar describes it, "a ritual dance in which accident has been precluded."⁵⁷ In New York, legislators examined wrestling, with its easily identified "heroes" and "villains" dressed in velvet robes, masks, and other strange attire, and enacted a law requiring every professional match to be listed as an exhibition, not as a contest.⁵⁸ Television programmers were unconcerned about wrestling's status as a sport; all they knew or cared about was that wrestling attracted viewers. For their part, wrestling promoters and the wrestlers themselves proved eager to accommodate their activities to the small screen. Televised wrestling matches were filled with greatly exaggerated wrestling moves, a more polished sense of showmanship, and ongoing storylines which heightened the continuing struggle between the forces of good and evil. And even though the fan at home might perceive the matches as uncontrolled mayhem, wrestling promoters took special care to ensure that the matches did not exceed the time slots between commercial interruptions.⁵⁹

Television helped perpetuate the carnival atmosphere of wrestling by allowing the announcers to throw away any semblance of objective reporting and become part of the antics themselves. DuMont's Dennis James, for example, provided sound effects to match the action in the ring.⁶⁰ If a wrestler had an opponent in a hammerlock, James would draw his fingernail across an inflated balloon in imitation of a cry of agony. To reproduce the sound of breaking bones, James would employ a rubber dog bone, which, when bent, emitted a sharp cracking noise. Wrestling, then as now, left no stone unturned in its attempts to entertain.

In addition to wrestling, several short-form sports programs made their debut in 1948. *Sportswoman of the Week*, a fifteen-minute show on NBC, featured tennis champion Sarah Cooke playing host to outstanding women athletes. *Your Sports Special*, also a fifteen-minute program, featured sports reporter Carswell Adams and former major league umpire Dolly Stark in a sports news and interview show. *Sports with Joe Hasel* was a fifteen-minute weekly summary of sports news on ABC. CBS aired a five-minute show, *Sportsman's Quiz*, which posed questions about hunting, fishing, conservation, and other outdoor topics. The questions were asked by Bernard Dudley and answered by Don Baker, with the help of such visual aids as drawings or diagrams.⁶¹ These cheaply-produced programs were created mainly to fill air time on the networks' schedules. None of them lasted very long.

56. "Women Buy 55% of U.S. Goods, Study Indicates," *Advertising Age*, 26 January 1950, 36.

57. Michael Sorkin, "Faking It," in *Watching Television*, ed. Todd Gitlin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 164.

58. "It Pays to Sponsor Television Corn," 25.

59. Gerald W. Morton and George M. O'Brien, *Wrestling to Rasslin: Ancient Sport to American Spectacle* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985), 47-49.

60. "Dog Bones and Flying Mares," *New Yorker*, 18 September 1950, 23-24.

61. Brooks and Marsh, *Directory to Prime Time TV Shows*, 703.

1949: *Radio Stars and Roller Derby*

Prime-time programming from the four networks increased in 1949 from 83 to 88 hours, but the amount of sport on the networks dropped considerably, from nearly 27 hours a week in 1948 to less than 15 hours a year later (see Figure 4).⁶² Sports programming now comprised less than 17% of prime time. *Nation's Business*, early in 1949, pointed out the reason for the decline: "Up to now, sports have been popular on television largely by default. The few variety shows already on the air have pushed sports into a weak No. 2 spot and dramatic programs are coming up fast on the pole. When the Jack Bennys, Bob Hopes, Bing Crosbys and, heaven help us, soap operas turn to television, sports will be relieved of the dilemma of deciding whether or not to telecast."⁶³ The Hooper ratings, long used to measure radio audiences and now used for television, supported this opinion. The ratings of the top shows for 1948 included such programs as *Texaco Star Theater*, *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*, *Toast of the Town*, and *Howdy Doody*.⁶⁴ The fact that no sports programs were included in the list was an ominous sign of things to come for the producers of prime-time sport. Advertisers, having learned from radio to associate themselves with the highest-rated shows, soon began to withdraw from sports programming. The networks, which had begun to depend on prime time for the bulk of their revenues, now looked at sport with less optimism than in the recent past. The Hooper ratings, and more significantly, their financial implications, would soon signal the end of sport on prime-time television.

Indeed, as the networks, particularly CBS and NBC, infused their schedules with such enormously popular programs as *The Amateur Hour*, *We, the People*, and *Break the Bank*, televised sport became almost something of a programming burden in prime time to both the networks and program sponsors. Only DuMont and ABC, both struggling to match the efforts of NBC and CBS, still relied on sport to attract an audience. As the sales of television sets reached nearly a million units in 1949, the networks began to realize that sport was not the only programming genre that would inspire the public to pay \$400 to \$500 for a set.⁶⁵ In the mind of the networks, Milton Berle's star now outshone that of Gorgeous George. Even more important to the networks' bottom line, Berle's popularity led to the sale of many more television sets. This marked a significant change in the television-sports relationship. No longer did television need sports to sell sets, as it did just a few years earlier. New and better salesmen, in the form of such highly popular shows as *Texaco Star Theater* and *Philco TV Playhouse*, had arrived on the scene.

As television historian Ron Powers has pointed out, the reasons for the decline of sport during prime time are several.⁶⁶ First, advertisers were concerned that while televised sports appealed mainly to men, market research

62. Eliot, *American Television*, 141-47.

63. Stanley Frank, "Main Event: TV vs. SRO," *Nation's Business*, March 1949, 46-49.

64. Radio and Television, *New York Times*, 30 December 1948.

65. *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 796.

66. Powers, *Supertube*, 52-53.

Figure 4. Network sport in prime time: 1949

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
A B C			10–11 PM Tomorrow's Boxing Champions	9:30–11 PM Wrestling from Chicago	10–11 PM Roller Derby	10–11 PM Roller Derby	9–11 PM Roller Derby
D U M O N T		9:30–11 PM Wrestling				9–9:30 PM Fishing and Hunting Club 10–11 PM Boxing from Chicago	10–11 PM Wrestling from Chicago
C B S			10–10:15 This Week in Sports	9:30–11 PM Boxing from St. Nicholas Arena	9:30–11 PM Boxing from Sunnyside Gardens		
N B C						10–11 PM Gillette Calvacade of sports	

indicated that women controlled family viewing choices as well as consumer spending. Program length also played a role in the networks' growing dissatisfaction with sport on television. Unlike dramas or variety programs, there was no way to predict when a sports event would end, which made scheduling difficult. Where once the networks depended on sporting events to fill large amounts of time, this was now a drawback. In addition, snobbery played a role. Was it not better to offer audiences sophisticated musical programs, such as the moderately popular *Kay Kyser's Kollege of Musical Knowledge* or the *Fred Waring Show* than to dignify the often more popular sweating and grunting of the forebears of Hulk Hogan? With this in mind, it is not surprising that sports programs began to be shifted to weekends and other non prime-time hours.

In 1949 the weekly supply of network wrestling programming dropped from seven hours to four, with most of that supplied by the ill-fated DuMont network, which was still struggling to fill out its schedule.⁶⁷ Boxing was still relatively popular during prime time, but the ratings were beginning to fall. The various short-form programs from 1948, such as *Sportsman's Quiz*, all disappeared, the victims of low viewership. CBS tried again with a new fifteen-minute show, *This Week in Sports*. This program featured highlights of the past week's activities in sports as well as short profiles of well-known sports personalities.

67. *Ibid.*, 45.

In the same vein, DuMont introduced a short-lived half-hour program, *Fishing and Hunting Club*, which featured sports interviews and demonstrations.⁶⁸

ABC, trying to catch up in prime-time programming with its more prosperous and star-laden competitors, continued to experiment with sports programming. The network caught lightning in a bottle, at least briefly, when it brought Roller Derby to network audiences. At one point in 1949 Roller Derby was seen four hours a week during prime time on ABC as it became the network's most popular show.⁶⁹

The 1949 official program of Roller Derby describes the "sport" (a spectacle more akin to professional wrestling than to an athletic competition) in this way: "In the past decade, two impacts have hit the American public—the atom bomb and the Roller Derby—and it appears the latter will have the most permanent effect."⁷⁰ History has not justified the optimism of Roller Derby's promoters, but for a brief time, it caught the fancy of the viewing audience. Today, Roller Derby can still be seen, but only on the fringes of syndicated television.

If there are similarities between Roller Derby and professional wrestling, part of the reason stems from the fact that both were introduced to television by sports entrepreneur Dick Lane.⁷¹ A Roller Derby contest consists of two five-person teams (there are both men's and women's teams) skating in packs around a banked track. The goal of the game is for the "jammer" of a team to lap the pack and pass the opposing team's blockers, thus scoring points. Punching, wrestling, and hair-pulling are supposedly illegal but occur on a frequent basis. It is the sport's apparent violence, in fact, that forms part of its appeal, Lane himself observed the similarities between wrestlers, Roller Derby skaters, and their fans: "[V]iolent? Oh, my God yes, they were violent. Especially the fans. They were like the wrestling fans. I'd look at them out there in the seats sometimes, screaming and yelling and throwing things, and I'd say to myself, 'My goodness—they must eat their young.'"⁷²

While Roller Derby was popular with its fans and with television viewers, television critics weren't quite so kind. One such critique, dripping with sarcasm, had this to say: "On every hand the evidence is conclusive that the hours of toil which the scientists spent in developing television were not wasted. Never before has roller skating meant so much."⁷³ The critic needn't have worried. The novelty of Roller Derby soon wore off, and by 1951 it was confined mostly to local stations.

In addition to its popularity, Roller Derby represented a needed source of cheap programming for ABC. Like wrestling and boxing, Roller Derby took place indoors in a relatively small and brightly lit area, making it easy to televise while enabling cameras to provide more close-ups than was feasible with such

68. Brooks and Marsh, *Directory of Prime Time TV Shows*, 254.

69. *Ibid.*, 644.

70. "Roller Derby: An Industry Made by Television," *Business Week*, 4 June 1949, 22–23.

71. Powers, *Supertube*, 48.

72. *Ibid.*, 49.

73. Jack Gould, "The Roller Derby," *New York Times*, 6 May 1949.

stadium sports as football or baseball. This was still an important consideration in 1949 as television engineers strove to improve the clarity of the picture.

1950: The Decline of Prime-Time Sport

In 1950 prime-time programming sprang into full bloom as ABC, CBS and NBC offered complete prime-time schedules seven days a week. Only the DuMont network, losing the battle with its more prosperous competitors, failed to air four hours of prime-time programming each night. Although television had not yet eclipsed radio as America's favorite entertainment medium, it was closing fast. By mid-1950 over 7.5 million television sets were in use, and some television shows were receiving higher ratings than *Lux Radio Theatre*, radio's top-rated program.⁷⁴ In five short years the television audience had grown from a few thousand to millions of viewers. The vast majority of these viewers watched television at home, not in barrooms, a development which would greatly affect the programming efforts of the networks as a rapidly growing audience segment of women and children had to be taken into account.

Combined, the networks' weekly offerings in prime time jumped from 90 to 109 hours. As Figure 5 indicates, however, sports programming showed a further decline in this year, dropping to 12 hours and 30 minutes, or 11% of the total schedule.⁷⁵ Gillette's *Cavalcade of Sports*, once the mainstay of NBC's sports schedule, was now on only 45 minutes a week (15 minutes of its time slot was taken by a film filler, *Greatest Fights of the Century*). Outside of the *Cavalcade*, prime-time wrestling telecasts were down to three hours a week, as were boxing programs, which just two years before comprised over eight hours of the networks' weekly prime-time schedules. Boxing and wrestling fans were anything but deprived, however, as local stations began to air their own boxing and wrestling shows. There was even an hour less per week of Roller Derby on ABC as the popularity of the games began to fade and the network strove to bring other types of programming to its schedule. At NBC and CBS, sport was still an important schedule component, but not during prime time, where the two networks were now duplicating on television their earlier dominance of radio. Sport was now relegated mostly to daytime slots on weekends. At DuMont and ABC, where programming attempts had not yet yielded much success, sport was still important in prime time, but as much for its production economy as for its ability to attract a large audience.

Professional football made its first appearance in prime time during the 1950 television season, although complete games were not telecast.⁷⁶ ABC aired two half-hour football highlight programs which showed edited versions of various games, focusing on outstanding plays. *The Game of the Week*, featuring highlights of major college games, aired on Tuesday nights and *Pro Football Highlights*, which concentrated on the New York Giants, aired on Friday evenings.⁷⁷ Neither show was successful and did not return for a second season,

74. Telesstatus, Broadcasting, 25 September 1950, 8.

75. Eliot, *American Television*, 148-54.

76. McChesney, "Media Made Sport," 62.

77. Brooks and Marsh, *Director to Prime Time TV Shows*, 543.

Figure 5. Network sport in prime time: 1950

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
A B C			8-8:30 PM Game of the Week	10-11 PM Chicago Wrestling	10:30-9 PM Roller Derby	8:30-9 PM Pro Football Highlights	9-11 PM Roller Derby
			10:30-11 Roller Derby				
D U M O N T		9-11 PM Wrestling from Columbia Park			9:30-11 PM Boxing from Dexter Arena		9-11 PM Madison Square Garden
C B S				10-11 PM Blue Ribbon Bouts			
N B C						10-10:45 PM Gillette Cavalcade 10:45-11 PM Greatest Fights	

although *Pro Football Highlights* was later picked up by DuMont for the 1952 season.

A major hinderance to scheduling pro football games on television was that in contrast to its great popularity today, the professional game of the early 1950s was a minor sport with a relatively small following. Even newspapers were loathe to cover the pro game, preferring to cover college football, which was a success in stadiums across the country and on Saturday afternoon television. Telecasts of complete professional games would not appear until 1953 on DuMont.⁷⁸ NFL football on television, as we know it today, would have to wait for a decade, and the arrival of television-minded NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle, before it made an impact on network television.

The financially strapped DuMont network (the 1954 season would be its last) found an economical way to program two hours on Saturday nights with *Madison Square Garden*. DuMont simply arranged with New York's famous arena to present, live, whatever event was being staged there.⁷⁹ Although the program lasted only a few months, it became a forerunner of such sports anthology shows as ABC's *Wide World of Sports*, televising a variety of such sports events as rodeos, track meets, and horse shows, as well as more prestigious events such as the NIT basketball tournament.

78. *Ibid.*, 260.

79. *Ibid.*, 660.

Nineteen-fifty marked the end of a brief era in television. In 1951 sport all but disappeared from prime time, with the exception of two wrestling programs and a football highlights show on DuMont. Network sports programs moved to weekends, and boxing, wrestling, baseball, and basketball would become featured attractions seen mostly on local, not network, television. Sport had been used well by the networks, but the programming emphasis was changing to such genres as sitcoms and dramas. The networks, now aware of their ability to draw vast numbers of viewers, began their almost single-minded quest to continually increase the size of their audience. Larger audiences meant higher ratings, which in turn meant higher advertising revenues. With millions of viewers and many millions of dollars of revenue at stake, television had ceased to be an experiment and had become a rapidly growing industry. After a brief heyday, sport had been eclipsed in drawing power in the critical prime-time hours and could no longer deliver the large audiences needed by advertisers. This alone was enough for the networks to eliminate sport from their prime-time schedules.

Sport and Television Today

In 1949 CBS paid \$100,000 for the rights to televise the Rose Bowl. Baseball rights could be had for \$1000 per game. College football was a bit more expensive at \$3,000 per game.⁸⁰ These prices would quickly become a fond memory for the networks. In 1983 NBC signed a three-year deal to air the Rose Bowl at \$2.33 million per year.⁸¹ The price of professional football rights in the 1990s reached hundreds of millions of dollars, and the baseball rights package at CBS cost more than a *billion* dollars. Sport today has become a major component of television programming for broadcast networks, local stations, and cable networks. For the most part, however, televised sport takes place outside of prime time.⁸² ABC has had success with *Monday Night Football* in prime time, although its ratings have declined in recent years.⁸³ ABC has also attempted to televise major league baseball in prime time, which turned out to be something of a ratings disaster.⁸⁴ Aside from *Monday Night Football*, sport in prime time on the broadcast networks is confined to such major events as the World Series, NCAA football bowl games and Final Four basketball tournament, the NBA finals, and the Super Bowl. Unlike the early years of network programming, television programmers have learned, to a certain degree, how to attract the widest possible audience for their offerings. They have discovered that aside from special events, sports programming in prime time is not a viable programming alternative; not when higher ratings had more revenue can be earned from sitcoms, dramas, movies, and the like.

When television was new, sports telecasts were an essential element in

80. Frank, "Main Event: TV vs. SRO," 84.

81. Klatell and Marcus, *Sports for Sale*, 35.

82. Susan Tyler Eastman and Tim Meyer, "Sports Programming: Scheduling, Costs, and Competition," in Wenner, ed., *Media, Sports, and Society*, 97–119.

83. Johnson and Taaffe, "A Whole New Game," 40.

84. *Ibid.*

establishing the fledgling medium. In 1948, television critic Arthur Daley outlined what he called the “inestimable value” of televised sport⁸⁵ First, when television had no identity of its own to sell to the public, sports provided a ready-made cast of well-known stars to attract an audience. Even better, these stars needed no rehearsals and no scripts, with the possible exception of the professional wrestlers. Second, sport helped to spur the sales of television sets and stir further interest in the new medium. Starting out in bars, clubs, and restaurants, sets quickly began to appear in private homes as television began its westward migration across the country. Third, in a time when television programs were restricted to low budget productions, televised sport not only allowed the networks to shoot on location, thus avoiding the high expense of building studio sets, but also filled large amounts of time on the networks’ sparse schedules. Without the crutch of sports to lean on, the development of network television may well have been much slower.

Despite its disappearance from prime-time, sport has continued to grow and thrive on television. The emergence of cable networks in the past decade has increased the amount of televised sport and changed the programming landscape to a significant degree. Since cable is not received in all homes, cable networks usually must settle for smaller audiences than do the broadcast networks. Because of this, such cable networks as TNT and ESPN, and superstations such as WTBS, WGN, and WWOR have found sports programming, to be viable prime-time fare. For the sports viewer equipped with cable, sports’ programming can be had 24 hours a day. It is no longer necessary to rely solely on the broadcast networks for sports coverage. Basketball, baseball, football, wrestling, boxing and a multitude of other sports can be seen once again in prime time.

Technological developments have also affected sport on television. Better cameras can see farther and in less light than those used in television’s early years, thus allowing such widely dispersed sports as golf and even sailing to be telecast. Miniature cameras are now routinely installed in race cars, affording a view that previously could be seen only by the driver. Instant replay has not only allowed viewers to enjoy outstanding or controversial plays again and again, it has also become, in the case of pro football, an integral part of how the game is conducted as field officials consult with replay officials to determine whether or not certain calls should stand. Other developments such as videotape and slow motion replays have shown fans a view of games that could not be seen with the naked eye. As the technology has grown more advanced, television coverage of sport has grown much more sophisticated.

Television has also grown to become an integral part of the way in which sport is conducted. Many sports have adjusted their rules to accommodate television. The “TV time out” in basketball is a good example of this. Starting times for games are now routinely adjusted to better fit television schedules. The enormous amounts of money paid by broadcast and cable networks have

85. Arthur Daley, “Sports Help to Fill the Bill,” *New York Times*, 13 June 1948.

also had a significant impact on the economics of both professional and amateur sport. Television is not just a purveyor of sport to the viewing audience, it is an active participant in the conduct of sporting events.

In contrast to today, the early years of network prime-time programming can be described as years of programming innocence, when no one really knew what would work, and, just as importantly, what wouldn't. As a result, the networks experimented with sport as a programming vehicle, but as the great radio stars took their acts to television, and as ratings services such as Hooper and Nielsen began to more accurately count the audience, prime-time sport fell by the wayside as the networks narrowed their programming focus to maximizing the size of the audience in order to increase advertising revenues. As network television focused its efforts on increasing audience size, the predominantly male audience attracted by sports telecasts could not compete with the larger and more heterogeneous audiences of the variety shows, dramas, and game shows. When the networks realized that *Blue Ribbon Bouts* and *Wrestling from Columbia Park* could not equal the drawing power of Uncle Miltie, Arthur Godfrey, and *Our Miss Brooks*, an adventurous era in broadcasting came to an end.