

From a Strange Fascination to Cultural Dependence: The Americanization of European Sport

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At a time when the Global Village is becoming an ever-nearing reality, this paper explores the utility of contemporary politico-economic and social theory to explain the impact of American sport and its attendant cultural values on the European sport scape. Using examples drawn from the American college sports and professional baseball tours to Europe beginning in the 1870s, through later American military influences, and the more recent insurgence of American popular culture (including advertising, comics, fast food, science fiction, and television), the author examines the utility of such phenomena as globalization, cultural assimilation, cultural homogenization, cultural hegemony, cultural imperialism, and cultural resistance to explain the dynamic relationship of sport at the cultural intersticé. In particular, careful consideration is given to how sport history might borrow from Appadurai's (1990) construction of Global Scapes; Tomlinson's (1991) treatise on, and Said's (1993) literary criticism of Cultural Imperialism together with other theoretical perspectives in attempting to elucidate the meaning of sporting movements along culture. The study furnishes both empirical and interpretive evidence and concludes with a critique of contemporary European initiatives launched by the American sporting goods industry; sports leagues; and sports media magnates.