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Mediated and Political Nostalgia:
The (Re) Generation of Nationalist
Discourses Through Sport, Examples from
White Old Boy Settler Societies (Australia,
Canada and New Zealand)

This paper analyzes the way in which mediated and political uses of sporting nostalgia have worked to (re)generate a sense of national fervor and pride in the late twentieth century. It refines arguments made in a session at the 1995 NASSH Conference in Long Beach where I explored the role of nostalgia in (re)creating the sporting past. In particular, it is at the national level where the discourses of nostalgia, most often tied into sport, occur. The paper draws on examples from Australia, Canada and New Zealand as white-dominated settler societies with racial and ethnic minorities and large post-World War Two immigration from outside the United Kingdom. The role that political nostalgia plays in shoring up the dominant notion of what the nation actually is (Anglo-Celtic Australia, English-speaking Canada and a British New Zealand) has increased at the same time that globalization and international expansion of sporting competitions and options have challenged traditional British-derived sporting cultures. Drawing on Matti Goksoyr's conceptions of different types of sporting nationalism, I argue that there is a particular 'nostalgized' sport-centered nationalism at work in white-dominated settler societies. This is used to re-create what the nation is and who its heroes are so that those who consume the nationalist icons can indeed be 'real' Australians, New Zealanders or (Anglo) Canadians. In this process the 'learning' and 'knowing' of past heroes such as Don Bradman, Colin Meads or Gordie Howe is essential to acquiring social and cultural capital for the negotiating of 'belonging' in and to a society.