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Cincinnati and Professional Sports: Community Pride and Ambivalence in the 1996 Stadium Construction Referendum

The citizens of Cincinnati overwhelmingly supported the Issue One referendum, the first citizen approved initiative in the United States simultaneously authorizing taxpayer subsidy for the construction of two major league stadiums. Public enthusiasm for this ambitious construction project was tempered by the knowledge that taxpayer subsidy was required in order to prevent the loss of Cincinnati's National Football League franchise to another community. An examination of the *Cincinnati Enquirer's* coverage of this ballot initiative suggests that the news content was reflective of community values on this issue. Editorial content, however, was substantially skewed to favor taxpayer subsidy for stadium construction by a margin far exceeding available public opinion data. Cost overruns and uncertainties after the ballot initiative's success motivated many citizens to react negatively to the entire stadium construction process. Despite this, examination of public feedback during the opening days of Paul Brown Stadium offered tempered evidence of community pride. Comparisons to media coverage of this project with the decision-making process for Riverfront Stadium, built during the late 1960s indicate that more recent calls for stadium construction include more profound policy-related involvement from team owners.
