

Where did You Go, Jackie Robinson? Or, the End of History and the Age of Sport Infrastructure

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An 'end' to sports history? This is an alarming prospect for someone who has worked in the field for over a quarter of a century and who has at least a decade before retirement! These anxieties notwithstanding, I pondered the topic and concluded that there are three levels at which to consider the end of any history. Each level embraces the notion that history is a story: Level 1 — Making the story through human agency; Level 2 — (Re)discovering the story in Level 1; and Level 3 — Conveying the story (re)discovered in Level 2. These levels of 'history-making' exist concurrently in the everyday world. People often make history with an eye to their sense of the past, discovered or developed through some exposure to oral, written, or visual history. Sport administrators will rewrite the rules to nudge or wrestle their games back to a sense of the 'good old days' they have read about in coffee-table pictorials. Academic historians may lament distortions in the public's sense of the past, but academics are usually too busy attacking each other to have serious influence on the public imagination. History seems to keep spinning, but could all of this fun suddenly end, as Doug Booth's question implies? Of course not. However, there are issues worth exploring at each level. While my examples are set in the American sport industry, I hope they reflect issues that might interest historians from other countries.¹

Level One — Making the Story: Or, Will Rupert Beat Disney?

This level gets us right to the Fukuyama question, which is to ask whether the broad process of human social development is coming to an end. In Fukuyama's words, 'the particular events of history can become meaningful only with respect to some larger end or goal, the achievement of which necessarily brings the historical process to a close'. For him, the recent victories of democratic capitalism suggest that we may be reaching

an end to the long transformations and revolutions in political economy that have dominated our collective past, both lived and written. After centuries of experiments with monarchy, theocracy, oligarchy, republicanism, communism, socialism, and more, will humans hunker down for a long embrace with free-market, democratic capitalism? Time will tell.²

But what of the sportsworld? The Fukuyama question returns us to longstanding debates about sport mirroring, dramatising, or prompting wider social and economic change. To understand the prospects for the ‘making’ of future history, we must first consider the basic shape of the industry, which is offered in Table 1.³

Table 1. A Model of the American Sports Industry

Producers of Games and Events	Infrastructure (provides goods and services to support producers)
<p>Grassroots Examples: <i>Schools, raquet clubs, and YMCAs</i> Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend toward local capital/control • Programs for novices as well as elites • Focus on instruction and development <p>Big-time Examples: <i>New York Yankees, Duke University Basketball, Women’s World Cup soccer</i> Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital/control often ‘distant’ • Programs for elite level • Focus on profit and publicity 	<p>Providers Examples: <i>Equipment - Nike</i> <i>Exposure - Fox, NBC, ESPN, Sports Illustrated</i> <i>Sponsorship - General Motors</i> <i>Sports Medicine - Association of Pro-team Physicians</i> <i>Memories - International Boxing Hall of Fame</i> <i>Marketing - IMG</i></p>

The sports industry has one simple objective: to provide consumers with the experience of playing, watching, hearing or reading about sports

games/events. At its core, the industry contains two types of firms — those who produce games/events, and those in an infrastructure that supports the producers. Producers work at either the grassroots or the big-time level; some organisations (e.g., American universities) work at both levels simultaneously.

In America, entrepreneurial modes of free market capitalism have driven the sport industry for over two centuries, as far back as the colonial tavern owners who promoted sports for obvious reasons. Historically, it has been precisely this entrepreneurial ethos — an eye on making a dollar by satisfying consumers, developing and delivering products more efficiently, or controlling costs (especially labour costs) — that spurred the tensions and transformations within sports history. With the exception of sporting goods, most operations were small businesses, serving small markets. While many baseball franchises were owned by brewers and mass transit magnates who exploited corporate synergies as well as any of their recent counterparts, franchises in baseball and in all professional sports leagues were usually run like Mom and Pop grocery stores. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the amateur governing bodies were not much different. Although giant firms like Spalding & Bros. sporting goods, dynasties like the New York Yankees, and entrenched bureaucracies like the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) have enjoyed periods of domination, the industry has thrived on competition and tension within and between firms and entrepreneurs in the grassroots, big-time, and infrastructure.⁴

If there is a spectre bearing the end of sports history, it lies in a trend that has accelerated in the last decade — the concentration of ownership and control, especially involving mergers and acquisitions from the media infrastructure into the big-time level of producers. The most notable examples are Disney (whose empire includes ABC, ESPN, the National Hockey League's [NHL] Anaheim Mighty Ducks and Major League Baseball's [MLB] Anaheim Angels), Rupert Murdoch's News Corp (whose subsidiary owns the Fox networks, MLB's LA Dodgers, and other professional franchise interests), and Time Warner (which owns CNN, TBS, MLB's Atlanta Braves and the National Basketball Association's [NBA] Atlanta Hawks, etc.). In 1997, 52 public corporations had ownership interests in big league franchises; 18 of them were media conglomerates. In 1998, *The Sporting News* rated the top 100 'most powerful' sports executives; nine of the top 25 were CEOs of media conglomerates. Only

five of the top 25 were league executives.⁵

It is not just team sports. Conglomeration is well underway in the agent and marketing business as well, where international firms such as SFX are gobbling up smaller agencies so they are better equipped to take on IMG, Octagon, and ISL, the world's major sports marketing forces. The North American ski industry has gone the same route — believers in competition might say 'downhill'. In 1961, there were about 1000 American ski resorts, most of them small, family-run enterprises. By 1996, the number had dropped to 519. In 1998, 50 of the top 75 resorts were owned by just six companies. Sports medicine, sports travel, sports equipment are all experiencing consolidation.⁶

There are multiple problems associated with all of this, among them conflicts of interests and, in some cases, oversaturation. Can ESPN — often so sanctimonious in its indictments of big-time scandal — ever be truly balanced in its analysis of Disney's growing sports empire? Or take the puzzling trade of superstar Mike Piazza, sent by Rupert Murdoch's L.A. Dodgers to the Florida Marlins. It made no sense until the Marlins gave the regional Fox sports network the rights to televise Marlins games. Worse yet, will the unabated drive to 'grow' every sport and every league into every market lead to oversaturation? A recent economic analysis by *Street and Smith's Sports Business Journal* showed that 22 of 97 big league markets had more sports franchises than their aggregate personal incomes could be expected to support.⁷

There are some signs of public weariness with big-time sports. Sales of licensed merchandise have been relatively flat for the last five years, after stunning growth in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Public polls and legislative battles reflect a rising opposition to taxpayers financing lavish sports stadiums that serve the economic interests of very few citizens. McDonalds and Burger King recently shifted their advertising budgets away from sports and into movies, where they can control their promotional leverage; unlike sports, movie plots and their characters are predictable.⁸

Ultimately, it is this drive toward predictability that most threatens the making of sports history. Big time sports conglomerates are trying to limit the chaos of the marketplace by means of 'branding' — that is to say the creation and promotion of certain standard product attributes that will gain consumer loyalty. The Disney empire is most notable in America, although it is no more proficient at sports management than Rupert

Murdoch, and far less so than Bernie Ecclestone, one of the most successful magnates of all time. Disney has, however, been a giant in the game of branding. Coming from outside sports, Disney is adapting its successful branding of the 'Disney experience' to its new sports products, especially ESPN. No longer content with ESPN and ESPN2 television, Disney has spun off ESPN the Magazine and ESPN Zone restaurants. Soon we may expect ESPN action figures, all playing off ESPN's brand of sassy and hip entertainment. The big leagues, married as they are to media conglomerates, have been hard at work on their own branding strategies. The NBA has a children's television show (now copied by other leagues) and has recently opened up a retail store in New York. Finally, throughout the sprawl of American real estate development, one can find an emerging trend — the 'sports mall' that combines retail stores with museums, halls of fame, big league 'experiences', theme restaurants and hotels, stadiums and arenas, even medical facilities linked to a local team. The sports mall is envisioned as the consumer's one-stop shopping place for branded sports experiences.⁹

All sports, at all levels, are moving in this direction. The model has come from the corporate infrastructure of Madison Avenue, which now dominates the sport industry. If most of today's sports prototypes slowly emerged in an Age of Folk Games (roughly 500 - 1870 A.D.) and became rationalised in an Age of the Big Time (roughly 1870 - 1980), they have become branded commodities in an Age of the Infrastructure (1980 to date). My cut-off dates are arguable, but 1980 provides a logical line of demarcation in American sport. The interleague and free agency wars of the big-time were resolved, at least temporarily; the IOC opened the door to outright professionalism at its meeting in Baden-Baden; ESPN was launched; David Stern of the NBA and Peter Ueberroth of the LA Olympic Committee were devising plans to fashion and sell their branded products to corporate sponsors at dollar levels few believed possible; and the NCAA was about to 'embrace' women's sports, effectively administering a lethal injection to the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, the only national governing body offering an alternative vision of championship competition. American sports had always been commodities, but new forces would shape the process of production and exchange.

Ultimately, the Age of Infrastructure is no better or worse, no more or less 'moral' than its predecessors. Our question is whether this all signals

the 'end' of sports history? Will the vast networks and conglomerates that marry the likes of ISL, FIFA, and ABC with UPS and Nike stifle the development of anything fundamentally new or different? The answer will lie within the industry's grassroots, where most innovations — especially new games — have developed, even in the Age of the Big Time. Just think of 1895, when William Morgan invented volleyball and Clara Baer invented 'Newcomb' a similar game that was for a time wildly popular. In today's already saturated marketplace of branded sports malls and sports experiences, is there room for grassroots innovators like Fred Lebow, who developed a 1970s road race (the New York marathon) into a model for successfully merging grassroots, big-time, and infrastructure? Should we be nervous at comments like those of Primo Nebiolo, the Czar of international track and field: 'The world has an order. The world has a discipline. We have tried in sport for centuries to create a certain structure. If we want to exaggerate democracy, we'll have chaos'. Without chaos, will sports history cease to unfold? Or can we take heart in the wisdom of Eduardo Galeano, the Latin American intellectual, who recognises sport's (in this case soccer's) unending capacity for innovation: 'The more the technocrats program it down to the smallest detail, the more the powerful manipulate it, soccer continues to be the art of the unforeseeable?'¹⁰

America has moved further down Nebiolo's path, toward fewer alternatives to the Disney-type experience. Nothing represents this trend more vividly than the recent Women's World Cup, a marketing bonanza that was built on the assumption that America's vast consumer base of suburban families had sufficiently adopted a sports brand that was relatively new — women's soccer. What was surely a moment of liberation and triumph for women in sport may be also seen as another victory for the new corporate sports model. Or take the case of 'extreme' sports, which on the surface seem like a good example of a sports alternative, developed at the grassroots by entrepreneurs. Rock climbing, mountain biking, skateboarding, and snowboarding (among other extreme sports), grew as countercultural activities, promoted by youth (my oldest son was among them) who held little stock in the big-time model that dominated mainstream American sports of football, baseball, basketball, and soccer. In the early 1990s, extreme sports were the fastest growing segment of the industry, in both participation and dollars. Within a few years, however, each of the activities was wrestled into big-time shape by

international governing bodies with ties to large corporate sponsors and media conglomerates. The process culminated with ESPN's production of the 'X-Games', a television spectacle that sells alternative sports in mainstream commodity packaging, just like the beverage, food, and clothing corporations who sponsor the production. John Stouffer of *Trans World Snowboarding Business* magazine was recently candid about the reality: 'Extreme sports. The name itself is only a fabrication mass media and marketers have created to tap into the raw energy and adrenaline rushes of a youthful generation that chooses to be a little different'. The most alarming part of the commodification of extreme sports is the speed of the process. It telescoped into a few years what took decades to occur in the major sports. Some of the leading 'shredders' in snowboarding have rebelled against the big bureaucracies, and even refused to participate in the Olympics. It appears to be a losing battle.¹¹

Athletes and fans will continue to press the margins of Nebiolo's order and insure that, within existing sports, we will enjoy moments of what Galleano called the art of the unforeseeable. In America, however, the Age of Infrastructure looks to be the age of few alternatives, an age of cultural convergence, which will represent a lull, if not an end, to sports history. At the same time, Rupert Murdoch, Disney, the NFL, the NBA, Bernie Ecclestone's Formula One, and all their corporate sponsors and media partners now slug it out in an international arena. They all have their eyes on China, never mind Australasia. Those areas will provide the most interesting arenas for conflict over the nature of sport and the future of sports history.¹²

Level Two — (Re)Discovering the Story

The original story that humans create, in any age, must somehow endure forces that destroy the historical record with regularity — fires, wars, clerks intent on cleaning out the old 'rubbish' files, and wholesale lapses in collective memory. Even when records, sources, or memories remain, they must be interrogated and brought to life by subsequent generations. As Marc Bloch notes in his classic, *The Historian's Craft*, the richest caches of primary source materials 'will speak only when they are properly questioned'. Each generation, each interest group has its own questions and its own agenda for history. The Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood recently argued this point elegantly: 'the past no longer belongs to those who once lived in it; the past belongs to those who claim it, and are

willing to explore it, and to infuse it with meaning for those alive today. The past belongs to us, because we are the ones who need it'.¹³ At the level of (re)discovery, sports history will not end as long as: 1) people keep uncovering new primary sources, and 2) they keep asking new questions of the sources. While I am sanguine about these prospects, I raise two issues about sources and their interrogation. The first concerns the rise of the internet and on-line research; the second concerns the agenda of questions now dominating the professional field of sports history, as represented by groups such as the Australian Society for Sports History (ASSH) and North American Society for Sport History (NASSH). Both issues parallel, in their own ways, my concerns about the making of history in an Age of Infrastructure. We may be living in a period of convergence — what Raymond Williams described as a 'relatively formed market', in which, to paraphrase Williams, the researcher's choice is being squeezed within a narrower range of choices.¹⁴

This may seem an odd description of the internet, which looms so large as a free market of ideas and as a relatively cheap engine for search and research. And so it is. But the internet's world wide web of communication may accelerate convergence rather than diversity, especially in terms of primary sources. On the one hand, more people will be immersed in primary sources, as repositories such as America's Library of Congress create on-line archives. By 1999, the National Digital Library Program had over one million items on its web site (www.loc.gov). That is all to the good. But as more people engage in on-line research in 'virtual' primary sources, how many will realise that the virtual repositories offer but a tiny sliver of the sources available in the 'real' archives? More important, who will decide what 'real' sources should be scanned into a virtual archive, especially when budgets make the fractions almost infinitesimal? This is not quite the same as creating bound, hard-copy compilations of primary sources. Most of those are transcribed; many are annotated. Even the lay reader recognises they are processed by intermediaries. Virtual archives are different. They appear to offer everything but smell and touch. This is no small issue; it is one of the *major* questions that professional archivists are now addressing. Their concerns were shared with me by David Kelly, the Library of Congress's reference expert on sport (among other topics): 'I think a lot of people are going to use what's convenient. They might have used only their local library or university library and not gone the extra mile or two to use a

larger library, so now they can just sit at home and surf'. The question is: *which* experts will decide *what* the public researchers surf? Sports historians, as collectives, have been slow to jump into this issue. The future history of sport depends on the interrogation of diverse source material. To that end, sports historians must become more aggressive in their involvement with the growth of on-line archives.¹⁵

What about the questions that researchers ask of the source material? I suspect that an expanded army of internet researchers will ask diverse questions, even of a narrow range of on-line sources. This is less true among academic sports historians, where convergence and norming — especially on editorial boards — retard innovation, diversity, and the future, if by that we mean development. Here I offer another paradox, fashioned from all the biases of personal experience. At the very moment when mainstream academic historians have embraced sport as a worthy topic, they may restrict its development with that embrace. When I first encountered sports history, as a 'sport administration' masters degree student in 1972, two things were obvious: 1) the dominant question in the field was 'why the rise of sport in the late nineteenth century?' and 2) academic historians in social and cultural history were slowly accepting sport as a legitimate topic for dissertations and articles. This meant that physical education programs ceased to be the sole guardian of the subject. As someone who was also earning an MA in American History, I had my feet in both houses, and life was exciting. Over time, more graduate students and their advisers in History departments dug into archives and interrogated sources focussed on sports history. By the late 1970s, I enjoyed a sense of legitimation, a far cry from my experience in 1973 at Harvard's Widener Library, when a pompous professor sniffed that I was wasting my time on 'fun and games'.

But with legitimation came convergence. In the last two decades, publications and accolades have focused on research that sits upon frameworks constructed in social and cultural history, especially those addressing the intersections of gender, race, and class. There is nothing wrong with this; it has clearly produced some of the finest work in the field and has enhanced the credibility of sport as a topic. At the same time, I have concerns over increasing refrains about sports history *really* being a subfield of social and cultural history. Nothing should be further from the truth. If sports history — at least in its academic form — is to thrive and have a future, it must have a space of its own. In my mind at

least, there is a fundamental difference between a history of sport (e.g., cultural, economic, or intellectual) and *sports history*. It all lies in how the questions are generated.

Scholars generate a history of sport when they project (or let their advisers project) questions from their primary domain (e.g., cultural, social, or economic history) onto the sportsworld and its sources. The process goes something like this:

Well my friend, you're looking for a specific topic and I know you are interested in sports. How about using sports as a test case for the emerging theories about popular culture and social development in cities? Some of those recent studies on movie theaters and vaudeville suggest that screen and stage images helped to fuse a new, cross-ethnic, white male bourgeois ethos, but they did so at the expense of women and blacks. What role could baseball or basketball have played in this process?

This is a splendid question and one that a historian did ask in a larger study. It generated very interesting social and urban history.¹⁶

But I would argue that, for me anyway, *sports history* begins with questions arising within that domain of life we call sport. In fact, some of the finest sports history available is written by women who, as athletes, felt the very sense of alienation about which our academic friends above could only postulate. These sports historians might approach their research as follows:

People everywhere are now celebrating the Women's World Cup as a moment of liberation and triumph. Why now? How can this be a moment of triumph? Women still hold few positions of authority in the sport industry. Things are really no different from when I played. Has this always been the case? Have there ever been alternative models available to women, ones that they controlled?

A number of women wrote an excellent history of basketball based on these questions. Their work demonstrates that sport is not divorced from social, cultural, or economic life — far from it. Their version of history is not 'better' than the other but their approach made the sport experience central rather than derivative. Sports history must be its own field, with (at the least) its own set of questions. It may draw upon models and methods from other fields, but it should not simply be a test site for

‘weightier’ questions. That would surely spell the ‘end’ of the field, because the scholars in the parent fields will surely move onto greener pastures - popular fiction, clothing, cosmetics, and food.¹⁷

Level Three — Conveying the Story: Or, Whose Story Will be Heard?

Regardless of their questions or methods, historians must tell their story, and then hope that someone consumes it. As Eric Hobsbawm put it: ‘It takes two to learn the lessons of history or anything else: one to give the information, the other to listen’. At this level, sports history is livelier than ever, with more people producing stories for a growing audience of readers, viewers and listeners. This vast market place may be divided into three segments:

1. academic historians writing for an audience of fellow scholars.
2. public historians — including writers, museum curators, radio producers like Amanda Smith, and filmmakers like Ken Burns, packaging the past for a wider audience that includes the educated layperson. Academic historians are sometimes engaged in this segment, as consultants and producers.
3. commercial interests, especially television and film producers, using historical images to reach (and sell products to) the mass market.

These basic divisions have existed for over a century, ever since academic historians developed professional associations and began staking their claims to purity. When we are not busy attacking each other, we take aim at public history, eager to point out flaws in methods and especially in ‘facts’. Public historians respond that we certainly know our stuff, but we can’t tell a good story to save our lives. When cornered, they echo Theodore Roosevelt (who, in no small part, supported his family on royalties from his popular writing) who once referred to academic historians as ‘conscientious, industrious, painstaking little pedants’. Much of this bickering is misdirected. Producers of public history should be our strongest allies. While they frustrate us when they twist a ‘fact’, ignore a new interpretation, or fail to give us enough credit, they usually read our work. Moreover, they often give us platforms for direct delivery of our scholarship to a much wider audience. Amanda Smith’s ‘Sports Factor’ is a good example. In New Hampshire, the Humanities Council has sponsored an ongoing series of public lectures and slide shows by John Allen, a well-known academic historian of skiing. To his credit, Allen has

spent hundreds of hours repackaging and presenting his scholarship to mill workers in Berlin and software engineers in Portsmouth. A number of ASSH and NASSH members have been similarly active. Our field would be better off if more of us jumped into the public arena.¹⁸

Public historians, often with our help, build their stories from a historiography and discourse that academics generate and sometimes control. What I call commercial history is another matter entirely. Here we see few concerns about historiography, method, or fact. All that advertisers, screenwriters, or media executives know or care about is that nostalgia and historical images sell products. Elsewhere in this issue, David Andrews paints a compelling picture of such corporate interests 'rendering history a vast, yet random, archive of events, styles, and icons that can be appropriated in any combination or sequence'. While I doubt that human interest in such a jumble of images is, as David argues, a *result* of postmodern or post-Fordist structures (this all has a much longer history), today's vast media conglomerates surely know how to push our buttons with disembodied history.¹⁹

It all comes down to telling stories. The people who control today's mass media understand how efficient they are for conveying stories and triggering emotions. Listen to Dick Ebersol, long-time President of NBC Sports, who learned his craft at the side of Boone Arledge. Both men have been successful marriage brokers for television and the Olympics. For Ebersol, it is all about stories: 'Most of all, I love television, because it's the medium that allows you most quickly to hear a story, visualise a story and then tell a story. So I guess storytelling and the immediacy of television have made all of those things great fun. Historical images are especially efficient because they contain multiple stories that require little explanation to elicit emotions. And the *whole* game of corporate, commercial television and advertising revolves around emotions. Who cares if the images and their related facts don't conform to the canons of academic or public history. As long as they trigger emotions, they have served their purpose. History sells.'²⁰

Academic and public historians must focus some of their energy on this commercial arena, where the real battle is raging. A love of the past was quite evident in the United States in the spring of 1997, when the MLB celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of Jackie Robinson's historic achievement. For several years, academic and public historians had been gearing up. Oxford had reprinted Jules Tygiel's scholarly (but elegantly

written) history of baseball's reintegration. Tygiel also edited a compilation intended for a wider audience. Ken Burns had recently produced his 18-hour television documentary on the history of baseball, with race relations as a central theme. Academic historians, including Tygiel, pummeled Burns in a roundtable review, published in the *Journal of Sports history*. Meanwhile, ESPN had the rights to televise the 'official' anniversary game, which pitted Robinson's (now Los Angeles) Dodgers against the Mets, live from New York.²¹

I tuned into ESPN on that April night, eager to see how this slick and sassy network would package history. Robin Roberts, an ESPN personality, introduced the show with clips of the housing project that sits on the site of Ebbets Field, where Robinson had made history. She noted that Robinson had sparked the post-war civil rights movement on 15 April 1947. Then came a 70-second montage that combined still and moving images with gospel music and clips from Martin Luther King's 'I have a Dream' speech. The images alternated between baseball, political, and social history. The baseball scenes were largely heroic — Jackie's home steal, Willie Mays's over-the-shoulder catch, Cal Ripken's salute after breaking Lou Gehrig's record. Some of the images were predictable — Abraham Lincoln, the Civil War, the KKK, a lynching, a fire hosing in Birmingham. Others made little sense except as chronological touchstones — the Wright brothers, World War I doughboys, a battleship, John F. Kennedy's funeral, Richard Nixon's resignation. The envelope for all of this was a large script from the Declaration of Independence: ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL.

How does one make sense out of all this? There was a chronology, but most viewers would not even recognise that. What was the theme? Much of it was obviously the struggle for equality that African-Americans have faced for almost four centuries. But ESPN seemed to be going beyond race relations. Gerald Early, a well-known scholar in African-American Studies (and a consultant to Burns's baseball movie), felt that the whole Jackie Robinson 'golden jubilee' celebrated 'our democracy's ability to absorb all'. ESPN seemed to parallel Early's theme: 'Sports are the ultimate meritocracy'. This could even explain the images of Richard Nixon's resignation or Pete Rose, triumphant after his 4192nd hit? Nixon and Rose both ended up in exile! Nixon for Watergate and Rose for gambling. On ESPN anyway, American sport and maybe even America, despite all of its flaws, despite all of its bloody, racist past, offers a chance

to make it on merit. Here in America, you get what you deserve. All of this packed into 70 seconds of fast-paced story-telling.²²

In an increasingly visual age of mass media, such disjointed images may become the mainstream ways of telling stories of the past. And television may soon play second fiddle. A casual 'click' through internet web sites devoted to sports will reveal the central importance of historical images. The relative simplicity of web site publishing, combined with the interactivity offered to fans on the major commercial sites, makes the internet *the* emerging market for sports history. When Michael Jordan announced his retirement in January 1999, the major sports web sites — NBA.com, CNN.com, ESPN.com, Sportsline.com — quickly added massive links commemorating the career of 'His Airness'. More than 55,000 fans responded to two ESPN.com on-line polls in the first day! It was all about history.²³

Sports history and sports historians face interesting challenges in today's marketplace, where tomorrow's past will be made, rediscovered, and told. Sports history will certainly stay alive, but vast, multinational, media conglomerates and new technologies will play greater roles in shaping the past. Consumers will be bombarded with images and narratives. Many will dig into on-line archives and tell their own stories on web sites. What role will academic historians play?

Notes

- 1 One of the best articles on the interaction of past and present is Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Social Functions of the Past', *Past and Present*, vol. 55, 1972, pp. 3-17. I have examined the role of memory and history in the making of ice hockey in 'Performance, Memory, and History: The Making of American ice Hockey At St. Paul's School, 1860-1915', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 1997.
- 2 Frances Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York, 1992, p. 56. For a good discussion of Fukuyama, see Timothy Burns, ed., *After History? Francis Fukuyama and his Critics*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, MD, 1994.
- 3 For a good introduction to the 'sports mirror' debate, see Rick Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1983, reprinted, Human Kinetics, Champaign, 1999.
- 4 I offer expanded discussions in, 'Entrepreneurs, Organisations and the Sportmarketplace', *Journal of Sports history*, vol. 13, 1986, pp. 14-33; in 'Adopted by All the Leading Clubs: Sporting Goods and the Shaping of Leisure', in Richard Butsch, ed., *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1990, pp. 71-101; and in Bernard Mullin, Stephen Hardy and William Sutton, *Sport Marketing*, 2nd edition, Champaign, Human Kinetics, 1999.
- 5 Paul Much, 'Corporate Ownership Overview', in Paul Much and Alan Friedman ed., *Inside the Ownership of Pro Sports Teams, 1997*, TMR, Chicago, 1997, pp. 12-13;

- Michael Kinsley, 'TSN's Power 100: All Rupert All the Time', *The Sporting News*, 14 December 1998, pp. 19-32; Daniel Kaplan, 'Finance world needs sports expertise', *Street and Smith's Sports Business Journal* (hereafter cited as *SSSBJ*), 22-28 February 1999, p. 20 and p. 29.
- 6 David Schwartz, 'Growing industry consolidates its gains', *SSSBJ*, 28 September - 4 October 1998, p. 20; Erik Spanberg, 'Global giant making its mark in U.S.', *SSSBJ*, 28 September - 4 October 1998, p. 22; Steve Cohen, 'It's not your father's ski business anymore', *Hemisphere*, January 1998, pp. 62-66; 'Let's hit the slopes', *Sports Business Daily* (hereafter cited as *SBD*), 24 April 1998, p. 11. The *SBD* and the *SSSBJ* are the two best sources for tracking the American sport industry's big-time and infrastructure.
 - 7 Bruce Schoenfeld, 'Will cross-ownership hurt sports fans?', *SSSBJ*, 26 October-1 November 1998, p. 1, and p. 37; G. Scott Thomas, 'Norfolk primed for the pros', *SSSBJ* January 11-17, 1999, p. 18.
 - 8 'Marketing plateau', *NCAA News*, 13 April 1998, p. 2; 'The Daily-Fox Sports/TMG Poll: Who should finance stadiums?', *SBD* 1 July 1998, p.16; Andy Bernstein, 'Movies gobble up fast-food promotions', *SSSBJ*, 11-17 January 1999, pp. 14-15. For other pessimistic prognoses, see Dan McGraw, 'Big league troubles', *US News and World Report*, 13 July 1998, pp. 40-46; Dennis Howard, 'The Changing Fanscape for Big League Sports: Implications for Sport Managers', *Journal of Sport Management*, vol. 13, 1999, pp. 78-91.
 - 9 On Ecclestone and his Formula One empire, see Robert Frank, 'Driving Ambition', *Wall Street Journal*, 3 December 1998, p. A1 10. For a good look at old-school sports owners' concerns about Murdoch, see Roy Johnson, 'Take me out to the Boardroom', *Fortune*, 21 July 1997, pp. 42-47. For details on the sports mall concept, see Bernie Mullin, Stephen Hardy, and William Sutton, *Sport Marketing*.
 - 10 For Clara Baer, see Joan Paul, 'A Lost Sport: Clara Gregory Baer and Newcomb Ball', *Journal of Sports history*, vol. 23, 1996, pp. 165-174. On Fred Lebow's enormous achievement, see Pam Cooper, 'The 'Visible Hand on the Footrace: Fred Lebow and the Marketing of the Marathon', *Journal of Sports history*, vol. 19, 1992, pp. 244-57. Nebiolo quoted in John Andrews, special report 'The World of Sport', *The Economist*, 6 June 1998, p. 20; Eduardo Galeano, 'All the World's a Ball', *The Nation*, 10-17 August 1998, p. 42.
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- provided in William Casey, 'The Changing Mission of Libraries', *Washington Post*, 10 January 1999, p. C3. For the issue among professional archivists, see the statement by the Society of American Archivists at: www.archivists.org/governance/resolutions/digitize.html. See also: www.clir.org/pubs/reports/hazen/pub74.html. The otherwise excellent article by Richard Cox and Mike Salter, 'The IT Revolution and the Practice of Sports history', *Journal of Sports history*, vol. 25, 1998, pp. 283-302, does not seriously address the issue I raise about on-line archives. Still, their article should be required reading.
- 16 David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements*, Harvard University Press, New York, 1993. The dominance of social history is almost a given these days. See, for instance, Doug Booth's 'Sports history: What Can Be Done?', *Sport, Education and Society*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1997, pp. 195-6.
 - 17 Joan Hult and Marianna Trezell, eds., *A Century of Women's Basketball*, American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, Reston, 1991. For a similar debate over questions in sport psychology, see Dan Landers, 'Whatever Happened to Theory Testing in Sport Psychology', *Journal of Sport Psychology*, vol. 5, 1983, pp. 135-151; Rainer Martens, 'Science, Knowledge, and Sport Psychology', *Sport Psychologist*, vol. 1, 1987, pp. 29-55. I thank my colleague, Heather Barber, for these last references.
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