

## Lecture 3: Sport Spectacles

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### REVIEW - Characteristics of "Post-modern Culture":

#### 1) From 'mass culture' to 'niche culture'

#### 2) 'Culture of the Image'

- Televisual and beyond (meanings, feelings, experiences)

#### 3) 'Simulation'

- Represented and interpreted through technology

#### 4) 'Hyperreal'

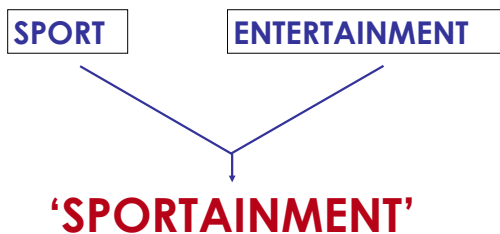
- Increasingly difficult to discern between 'reality' and simulations/technological representations

#### 5) 'Sportainment'

- Merging of sport and media toward entertainment product

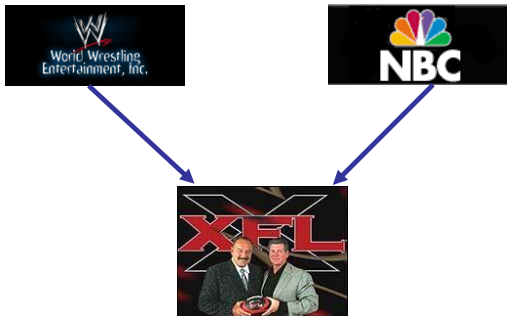
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Within late capitalist, post-modern culture, the convergence of sport and media has resulted in a *blurring between sport and entertainment*, or '**sportainment**':



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### XFL: The 'Pinnacle of Sportainment'?



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While we can point to the merging of entertainment into sport, there has also been a *sportization of primetime television*: recognizing the inherent 'reality' of competition, the attributes and expressions of sporting contests have become an important part of the network media environment.



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### Sportization of Primetime: "Man vs Beast"



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## Topic 2: Theories of the Post-Modern 'Spectacle'

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### Theory of the Spectacle I: Guy Debord

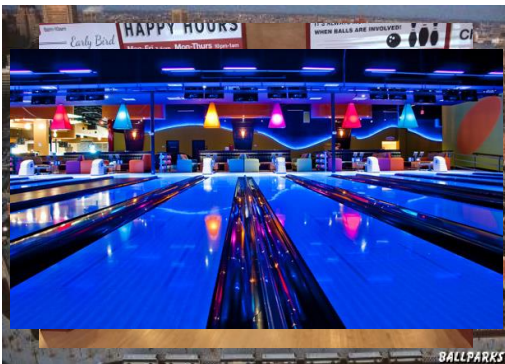


- Debord was a social theorist concerned with the increasing commercialism of everyday life

- He believed the 'spectacle' was an organized entertainment event that was a part of the political, economic, and social reality of life

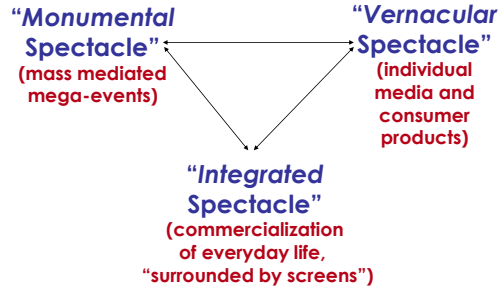
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### Society of the (Sport) Spectacle



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Theory of the Spectacle I:  
Debord's 'Society of the Spectacle'



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Theory of the Spectacle I:  
Debord's 'Society of the Spectacle'



"Vernacular Spectacle"

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Theory of the Spectacle I:  
Debord's 'Society of the Spectacle'



"Integrated Spectacle"

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## 'MONUMENTAL SPORT SPECTACLE':

A high profile, mass interest,  
commercially-oriented  
sporting event



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## NFL Super Bowl: The *American* Sport Spectacle



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### Sport as Spectacle: 5 Key Reasons/Rationales

**Reason #1.** Its explicit and '**telegenic physicality**' (in regards to both hetero/homoeroticism of *physical bodies*).

**Reason #2.** Its '**innate competitive structure**' (which encourages empathy inducing particular *narratives*).

**Reason #3.** Its nurturing of '**deep-rooted individual identifications and loyalties**' (and the connection between this process and *both community and corporate branding*)

**Reason #4.** Its relatively '**straight forward and inexpensive production demands**' (especially compared with *equivalent programming and content* lasting more than two hours).

**Reason #5.** Its potential for '**generating visceral excitement**' (created by the *uncertainty, real or imagined*, surrounding the outcomes of live sporting contests)

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Reason #1. Its explicit and **'telegenic physicality'** (in regards to both hetero/homoeroticism of *physical bodies*).



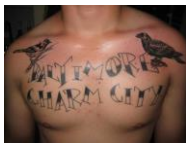
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Reason #2. Its **'innate competitive structure'** (which encourages empathy inducing particular narratives).



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Reason #3. Its nurturing of **'deep-rooted individual identifications and loyalties'** (and the connection between this process and both community and corporate branding)



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Reason #4. Its relatively 'straight forward and inexpensive production demands' (especially compared with equivalent programming and content lasting more than two hours).



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### Sportainment & 'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle

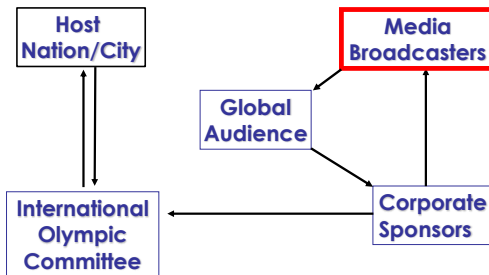
Within the form of the monumental spectacle, "the media have no inherent interest in sport - it is merely a means for profit making."

- For newspapers and magazines, sport sells the publications
- For TV and radio, sport gets consumers in front of their sets to hear and see commercials (TV and radio sport broadcasts 'rent' their viewers and listeners attention)

These spectacles are 'manufactured' through the deployment of particular symbols, narratives, techniques and methods of representing sport as entertainment.

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**'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:  
The Cultural Economics of the Olympics**



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**Sport as Monumental Spectacle:  
'Media Rights Fees' for Major US Sports**  
(in millions, paid by broadcasters)

| SPORT | 1986 | 1991 | 1996  | 2001  | 2005  |
|-------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| NFL   | 400  | 900  | 1,100 | 2,200 | 2,200 |
| MLB   | 183  | 365  | 420   | 417   | 558   |
| NBA   | 30   | 219  | 275   | 660   | 767   |
| NHL   | 22   | 38   | 77    | 120   | 120   |

Cookley, J. J. (2014). *Sport in society: Issues and controversies* (p. 414). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

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**Sport as Monumental Spectacle:  
Media Rights Fees and Major US Sports**

Sport (both 'mega-events' and regular coverage) is a lucrative proposition for network programmers because it attracts advertising revenue, *in particular due to the quantity and quality of sport audiences:*

**Audience QUANTITY:**

High profile events generate large viewing figures

**Audience QUALITY:**

More specialist sport programming attracts high concentrations of the demographics most attractive to advertisers (including the 'most important', 18-45 year old males)

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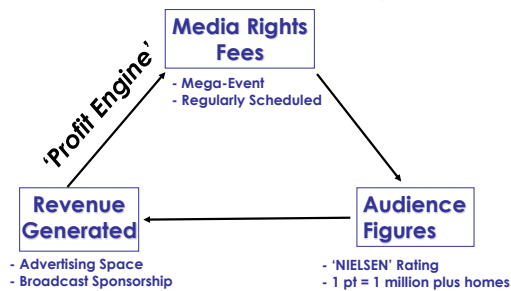
## Monumental Sport Spectacles and the 'Profit Engine' of Advertising Revenue

Exclusive rights to broadcast high profile sporting events (and their high audience ratings) have resulted in exorbitant costs to advertisers and sponsors:

- \$250,000 for a 30 second spot on ESPN's World Cup (Brazil)
- \$300,000 for a 30 second spot on ABC's Monday Night Football
- \$550,000 for a 30 second spot on NBC's Torino Olympic coverage
- \$615,000 for a 30 second spot on NBC's Sydney Olympic coverage
- \$730,000 for a 30 second spot on NBC's Athens Olympic coverage
- \$2.9 million for a 30 second spot during the 2010 Super Bowl
- \$4.0 million for a 30 second spot during the 2014 Super Bowl

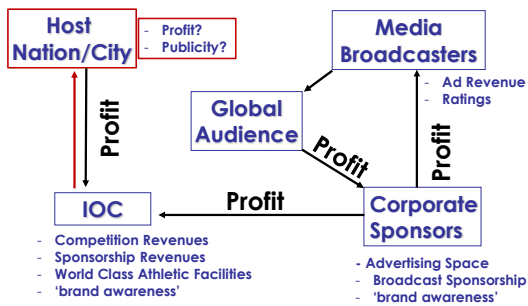
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### Sport as Monumental Spectacle: The Economics of Televised Sport



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### 'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle: The Cultural Economics of the Olympics



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### 'Manufacturing' the Monumental Spectacle: NBC and the Olympic Games



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### 'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle: NBC and the Olympics

"These are *NBC's* games, and by now we should know how they're played. The network sees the Olympics *less as sports than as spectacle*, at least in prime time, and it packages them accordingly into a sort of athletic variety show.

Events are delayed, results are hidden, and while bad news is not ignored, it's not stressed, either. *The game is not the thing.*"

Bianco, R. (2006, February 13). Prime-time Olympics: A variety show. *USA Today*, p. 1D.

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### 'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle: NBC and the Olympics

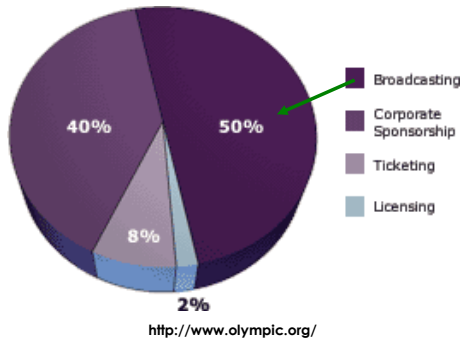


#### NBC and the 2004 Athens Olympics:

- NBC paid **\$793 million** for rights to broadcast the Athens Games in the US
- To sell advertising 'space', **NBC guaranteed advertisers at least a 14.5 rating**
- NBC **planned** for approximately 1,210 hours of Olympics coverage, during both daytime and primetime hours
- Coverage was based not only on the 'home channel' but also on other platforms under the umbrella of NBC's 'parent company' GE (now Comcast): Telemundo, MSNBC, CNBC, USA, Bravo, and online

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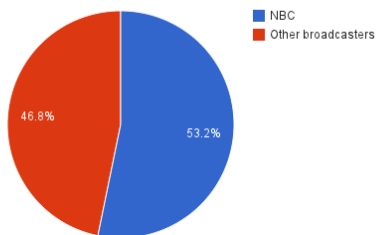
**'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:  
Olympic Marketing Revenue 2001-2011**



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**'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:  
Olympic Broadcast Revenue – Athens 2004**

IOC's Athens Broadcast Revenues



<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-switch/wp/2014/02/10/nbc-single-handedly-pays-for-a-fifth-of-all-olympic-games/>

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**The relationship between the Olympics and television broadcasters means that the media have a strong influence over the organization and presentation of the Olympic Games.**

As former IOC vice president Richard Pound explained, the current relationship means that NBC and other media broadcasters are 'business partners' with the International Olympic Committee, and media directly affects the structure and experience of the Games.



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We can say that we do not watch or experience the actual Olympic Games...

For us, the Olympics is a 'monumental spectacle' and a form of 'sportainment', presented and produced by NBC Universal...



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