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Markets in Movement

Economic dimensions of the media sport spectacle

Showing the money, tracking the beneficiaries

Some snatches of dialogue in a small number of films enter popular consciousness and speech as catchphrases. In the 1983 film *Sudden Impact*, for example, Clint Eastwood's character (Harry Callahan) entreats an armed robber to 'go ahead, make my day', and it was not long before it was inserted into many and varied everyday conversations. The sports film genre has supplied its fair share of catchphrases, including *Knute Rockne* and *All American* (1940), with its famous call to 'win just one for the Gipper' (a reference to a gridiron player George Gipp, played in the film by the future US President Ronald Reagan, for whom it became a political slogan and nickname). The expostulation 'show me the money!' in the 1996 film about an eponymous sports agent, *Jerry Maguire*, is distinguished by both its frequent use in the media and in casual talk, and by its applicability to the economics of global media sport. That the agent (played by Tom Cruise) is made repeatedly to shout the demand, down the telephone and at ever increasing volume, by African American footballer Rod Tidwell (played by Cuba Gooding Jr), is a negation in popular film of the romantic notion that sport is played for its own sake (Rowe 1998). It is also, as will be argued below, something of an inversion of the wider structures of racialized exploitation that characterize much of the sports world. The money in global media sport is both highly visible and concentrated in a few hands. It is spread around the globe but tends to 'stick' in familiar places and rapidly to disappear in others. In the following discussion, I will revisit the history of the political economy of sport, also working outwards inductively from some instructive cases that throw light on how it has become progressively commercial, mediated and global.

In so doing, it is important not to reduce sport as culture to sport as capital accumulation, as if a grasp of the latter is sufficient to understand sport as a sociocultural institution and cultural form. The history of sport is characterized by continuing conflict over commoditization just as it is in other areas of popular culture, such as rock music, which both emerged under capitalism and retained elements of its formative ethos critiquing it (Frith 1978). Questions of community, authenticity and resistance consistently come to the fore across popular culture (Fiske 1989), with ambivalence about cultural capitalism symptomatic of the resilient strain of romanticization that jars with commercial exploitation when it is too starkly exposed. Contemporary sport contains what Raymond Williams (1977) describes as 'dominant', 'residual'

and ‘emergent’ elements within cultural forms that can be said in this context to correspond roughly with commercial capitalist, pre-modern communitarian and postmodern pragmatic values. The various combinations and collisions of these components within the global cultural economy of sport ensure that, when combined with specificities of history and place, there are highly variable, coexistent patterns and trajectories. These first developed, like capitalism itself, in the seemingly unpropitious setting of, first, English village life and, later, in its new urban environments.

Origins of the global media sport economy

This is a familiar story but one that needs to be retold – with brevity and perhaps in unseemly haste – because, in the swirl of frequent changes, it is easy to lose analytical bearings. The competitive physical play that became sport was, in its origins, highly localized, disorganized, intermittent and mainly amateur – what is typically called folk culture. As it mutated into the institution of sport in modernity under industrialization, urbanization and capitalism, all of these formative characteristics changed with it (Clarke and Critcher 1985). In moving across the centuries from the village green to the cathedral stadium, sport was not entirely deracinated but became much less anchored to place and so both multi-local and diffuse. Sports contests, initially based on communal propinquity, expanded in geographical scope with the advent of regional tournaments, travelling teams and touring circuits. As cities developed neighbourhoods and suburbs engaged in sports contests, and then cities played each other, first in their own countries and then across national borders. Nations themselves became sporting entities and competed with each other in ‘home and away’ sports events. The more that sports contests, participants and spectators became mobile, the higher the costs of attending them (Holt 1989). Transportation, accommodation and hospitality all demanded expenditure and planned provision, and the ‘performers’ began to demand the coverage of their expenses and appropriate remuneration for their efforts. In other words, an exchange economy based on capital began to emerge that contrasted with older relations of reciprocity and informal support. This innovation required the spaces of sport to themselves change, with the enclosure of playing areas and, increasingly, purpose-built stadia, enabling entry charges to watch increasingly elite sports contests between individuals and teams from widely dispersed places (Bale 1993). Within and immediately around those spaces of sport various forms of commerce could be conducted, including gambling and the provision of food and drink. Many of these sites had and still retain a strong sense of place or came to develop one (Vertinsky and Bale 2004), although later relocations to so-called green field sites to accommodate motor vehicle access and standardized stadium designs (including artificial grass) have in many cases militated against distinctive spatial identities (Inglis 2000).

This initial moving of athletes, sports administrators and spectators around a country was integral to the process of making sport global. It created the

incipient sports industry that emerged as part of the wider embrace of leisure time as an opportunity to spend some of the discretionary wage surplus that, in turn, fed back into the creation of the goods and services that constituted the labour of others (Tomlinson 1999, 2005, Part III). But taking people to event space is only a limited means of diminishing the importance of locality in sport. Of much greater import is taking the event to the people who weren't (or usually couldn't be) there when something unique happened in time and space. Witnessing actual events from a short distance means either being a local or a visitor (or even what later became known as a sports tourist – Hinch and Higham 2004; Weed and Bull 2004). But viewing from a distance came to mean more than holding a pair of binoculars with the advent of the television set. Sport could never become truly global – socially, culturally or economically – by relying on people movement. Taking people to sport is important in providing a sense of occasion and a lively event atmosphere, but it is time-consuming and comparatively inefficient. Turning images and sounds of sport into vibrant and artfully packaged communicative texts, whose reach is limited not by geography but by technology and consumption capability, is a very different proposition. Hence, as noted earlier, mediatization (used here in Nick Couldry's (2008: 377) formulation as the 'transformation of many disparate social and cultural processes into forms or formats suitable for media representation') has been essential to the evolution of global media sport.

In the first instance, the media were crucial as a means of sports reportage. Telegraph-relayed sport results could provide spare details of 'shots heard round the world', but news print could offer elaborate technical accounts of sports action and substantial observational descriptions of what it felt like to be there for those who weren't (Boyle and Haynes 2009; Rowe 2004a). Indeed, even diversions from the field of play to take in the crowd atmosphere or the surrounding natural and built environments could bear pleasurable, even educational witness to what had not been seen. These were attractive lures, especially for (in the first instance, mainly male) aficionados of sport, to buy newspapers and magazines from street corner vendors or, more conveniently, to subscribe to them. Specialist sports magazines and newspapers, increasingly enlivened by dramatic sports photography, and sports sections in newspapers that also enhanced typeface with action images, helped install sport across the everyday cultural spectrum, rather than confining it to a weekend pursuit. Later, radio broadcasts gave real-time sport event descriptions with 'actuality' sounds (which, if they could not be delivered because of technological limitations, were sometimes simulated). Radio, unlike magazines and newspapers, is limited by spectrum availability, and as likely to be dominated by public ownership (as in much of Europe) as by commercial control (such as in the United States). But, irrespective of the type of broadcast system or of broadcaster philosophy, sport's circulation through audio and print media enhanced both its cultural availability and commercial value/potential. When television supplemented and then dominated other media with live and recorded audio-visual coverage of actual sports events, its economic potential was plain for all, literally, to see (Weber 1996). When, later still, all types of text could be carried by the Internet and on mobile phones and other devices, mediated sport could be largely set

free of the constraints of place (Hutchins and Rowe 2009a) and begin to realize its often-proclaimed, but still 'under construction', global status.

Transcending the local, though, could create nothing more than an untidy clash of practices if not accompanied by rationalization of sports organization and governance. The chaos of early forms of sport, with its lax rules and loose enforcement, was no more a solid foundation for a new industry than other primitive modes of production, practice and accumulation. Sport needed to be 'disciplined' if it were not to become unintelligible and ungovernable in each new context. Thus, as sport became less local, it also became more ordered so as to be transferable and exchangeable. In a manner analogous to the development of markets and currencies across the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sports produced evermore elaborate codes, rules and even laws overseen by national and then transnational governing bodies and monitored and measured in increasingly minute aspects of performance to produce sporting records that could be compared across space and time. Allen Guttman (1978: 16) has influentially, in adapting and applying the sociology of Max Weber, outlined this move from 'ritual to record' with seven abstract defining characteristics of modern sport: 'secularism, equality of opportunity to compete and in the conditions of competition, specialization of roles, rationalization, bureaucratic organization, quantification, [and] the quest for records'. Two examples of these characteristics are especially important for sport's economic development. 'Rationalization' of sport can, in economic terms, be regarded as equivalent to product standardization and differentiation – that is, a range of sports can be readily practised and displayed as recognizable, traceable components of the sports market. Without agreement, say, on the numbers of players, how scoring is calculated, which parts of the body can be used and in which ways, the dimensions and materials of sporting implements, how long the contest should be and so on, there could be no competitive sports event and so nothing, in a strictly sporting sense, to sell. This does not mean that rationalization has always, everywhere been a direct response to economic imperatives, but that it is a precondition of a modern sport and so a developed sports economy.

For example, Guttman notes of the 'invention of basketball' in the late nineteenth century that it emerged as an indoor winter sport for young people in the decidedly non-commercial environment of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in the north-east of the United States, an organization imbued with the principles of 'healthy spirit, healthy mind, healthy body' that provided an important moral rationale (Hargreaves 1986) for both compulsory sport in schools and voluntary physical activities in organizational contexts such as the YMCA, although the anticipated fitness and self-denial could also be connected (with a view to Guttman's aforementioned intellectual debt to Max Weber) to desirable characteristics of industrial workers and so linked to *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber 2003). What followed was what Guttman (1978: 41) calls 'amazingly rapid ludic diffusion' and the 'triumph of ludic rationality', as after James Naismith had produced the game 'prototype' in 1891, it spread and developed such universal rules as five-player teams and those

concerning the return of balls that had gone out of bounds. Although some rule variations (such as length of quarters) could be, and still remain, variable according to level of competition (e.g. national and international), there are only ever four quarters and there is never any confusion as to which rules apply in any given context. On the basis of this rationalization, basketball was able to become a global force in sport, being played at the Olympic Games, having its own World Championships and producing a league, the United States' National Basketball Association (NBA), which is amongst the most recognizable sports brands in the world (see Chapter 5), as well as one of the most renowned leagues in women's sport, the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) (Grundy and Shackelford 2005). Not only did basketball become a prominent global sport for men and women, it also spawned a 'female appropriate' (though now also played by men) variant in the nineteenth century that became especially popular among girls and women in the so-called Commonwealth countries – netball (Treagus 2005). In the late twentieth century, due both to extraordinary sporting ability and high pressure, and innovative sponsorship by the Nike sports good company, basketball also produced in Michael Jordan one of the most recognizable people in the world (Andrews 1996).

The second defining characteristic of modern sport to be foregrounded (following Guttman) in this section is 'quantification'. Unlike most other fields of culture, such as the visual arts or literature, quantification of performance or quality is not just a phenomenon that follows qualitative (predominantly aesthetic judgements), but it is integral to the cultural form itself. Winning the United Kingdom's Turner prize for contemporary art or the Nobel or Man Booker prizes for literature is, although important in aesthetic fields (Street 2005), not the result of direct physical, real-time contestation under agreed rules by artists and writers but the outcome of a process of nomination and then voting by a panel of judges. In the case of sport, however, each encounter is expected to provide a quantifiably substantiated result, without which it would not be deemed to be a sport. Of course, there is considerable variation between sport where scoring is based on judgements of style (such as gymnastics and ice skating) and observable accomplishments such as balls crossing lines/boundaries or entering nets (as with, in various permutations, rugby, gridiron, association football, baseball, basketball, cricket and hockey). But whatever the method by which the ultimate result is calculated, sports contests occur in real time before large numbers of spectators under codified rules administered by co-present officials with the responsibility of authorizing a score in precise numerical terms. Thus, as Guttman (1978: 47) puts it,

The Polynesians of Tikopia scored their dart game with a complicated system and similar systems existed for calculating points in many ancient ball games, but modern sports are characterized by the almost inevitable tendency to transform *every* athletic feat into one that can be quantified and measured. The accumulation of statistics on every conceivable aspect of the game is a hallmark of football, baseball, basketball, hockey, and of track and field sports too, where the accuracy of quantification has, thanks to an increasingly precise technology, reached a degree that makes the stopwatch seem positively primitive.

This emphasis on quantification provided sport with diverse, minute means of performative measurement that could also, by means of physiological measurement, training procedures, trends and records, give to sport a performative history and, following the standardization of procedures and rules mentioned previously, portability across territories. This trend was conducive to the maturation of a global sports economy whereby, for example, the expert labour power of champion footballers, basketballers and baseball players could be transferred between elite clubs and cheaper athletic labour sourced from the economic periphery in central America, Africa and parts of the Asia-Pacific, under what has been called 'the new international division of cultural labour' (Miller *et al.* 2001). As sport was increasingly permeated by the spirit of capitalism, the measures of athletic performance progressively intermeshed with other significant and economically crucial calculations, such as spectator numbers at sport contests, television viewer ratings, broadcast rights fees, sponsorship agreements and endorsement contracts.

Stock markets, batting averages and an underground economy

The sporting 'obsession' with performance numbers clearly echoes that involving shares, currency values and interest rates. The business sections of newspapers, magazines and websites carry copious data on share values, price movements, dividend yields, price-earnings ratios, currency exchange rates and so on (my personal favourite being Earnings before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA)). Their equivalents in sport carry league tables and collated statistics of teams involving points from games, goal differences and leading scorers, and there is a proliferation of such measures as gross production average (GPA – 1.8 times on-base percentage plus slugging percentage, divided by four) in baseball, player efficiency rating in basketball and strike and run rates in cricket. Michael J. Schell's (1999: 5) sophisticated statistical quest to establish (United States) baseball's all-time best hitters is symptomatic of the fetishization of sporting statistics that echoes that of business analysts:

There are many different baseball statistics. Batting average and slugging average both combine singles, doubles, triples, home runs, and outs into single measures. Batting average is computed by totalling the different kinds of hits and dividing by the number of at bats, while slugging average totals the number of bases that you reach on the hits before being divided by the total number of at bats. However, both of them ignore factors like the walk average, numbers of RBIs and less well-measured things like hit-and-run or clutch hitting ability. There are other ballplayer abilities as well, such as run scoring, base stealing, and fielding.

In addition to such arcane performative measures in sport (to which baseball is historically attached) consistent connections between share market activity as a predictive practice and betting on the outcomes of sports events are evident,

with sports-betting companies providing a welter of statistical odds not just on event outcomes but also regarding so-called spot betting that breaks sport contests down into their component parts and enables gambling on a range of outcomes within individual events. Thus, acquiring insider information and/or corruptly manipulating outcomes are ways of generating illicit gains from sport that undermine its foundational competitive uncertainty and arise directly from its reliance on intricate quantification. New communications technologies that transcend national boundaries make regulation of such practices more difficult than when gambling on sport was mainly restricted to national contexts using paper-based transactions through a restricted number of high-street betting outlets.

A story from cricket, 'broken' in 2010 by the now-defunct British newspaper *News of the World*, is an illustration of the globalization of a legal and illegal sport gambling economy. In a classic tabloid 'sting', representatives of the newspaper allegedly gave £150,000 to a 'go between' who indicated, with perfect accuracy, when three front-foot 'no-balls' were to be bowled by Pakistan in a test match with England at Lords in London (BBC 2010c). Such collusion would enable insiders betting on these specific mini-outcomes (in this case, a bowler 'accidentally' overstepping a line monitored by umpires) to make a considerable profit on the bet, with communication technologies and betting opportunities enabling (alleged at the time of writing) illegal transactions of this kind to occur in any time zone – and, indeed, to overcome restrictions imposed by individual nation states:

Gambling is illegal in cricket-mad Pakistan and highly restricted in India. But that doesn't stop criminal gangs setting up illegal markets eager to exploit the recent explosion in satellite television coverage of live cricket from around the world. So people in Mumbai and Lahore find it as easy to bet on English one-day matches as they do on domestic fixtures. Somewhere in the world there is always likely to be a match on which to bet. (BBC 2010d)

An important point that can also be made here is that illegality and impropriety is a significant feature of the global media sport economy (Hill 2010). There is an understandable tendency among the promoters of sport to concentrate only on its favourable side – such as large, passionate audiences consuming a range of legitimately produced goods and services – rather than its undesirable and/or illegitimate features. In these terms also, the growth of global media sport is only ever represented as desirable, with, seemingly, nobody losing and everyone benefiting from a 'bigger pie'. For example, the deleterious environmental consequences of the global motor-racing circuit or of the building of water-, fertilizer- and chemical-intensive resort golf courses in sensitive habitats (and also sometimes with negative social ramifications by displacing the people who live in and around them) (Miller *et al.* 2001) disappear from view in 'boosterist' rhetoric. In the case of illegal activity, the globalization of sport can be said to go hand in hand with the globalization of crime. This is not to argue that globalization is inherently undesirable but to demand scrutiny of the blithe assumptions constantly circulated by 'sportsbiz' advocates concerning commercial sport diffusion and its beneficial,

readily governable effects. As Chris Rojek (2010: 156) argues with regard to contemporary leisure,

The evolution of a global economy in leisure, media and entertainment produces leaky policing. For the police force in a given territory face not only the threat of domestic supply chains of illegal leisure commodities re-defining themselves, but new sources of production and exchange in territories beyond their jurisdiction. Arguably, from the moment of the industrial revolution it was ever so. But the digital order and air transport network enhance the flexibility and contribute to the semi-transparency of illegal leisure and recreation channels of supply. In the era of the internet there is no credible system for police to monitor and detect illegal activity.

Sport is not, of course, uniquely subject to quantification. Production, exchange and consumption of various kinds can be converted into numbers, especially under the 'digital order' that depends, ultimately, on compulsive building on the binary division of the values of 0 and 1. But a key characteristic of modern sport, to return to Guttmann, is that sport is not just available for quantification but that it cannot exist as a cultural formation without it. Sports practices of necessity produce statistics not as bi-products of accounting but as inscriptions on all its visible features, without which it would not be recognizable as sport. Keeping the score and measuring performance is, then, integral to the conduct of the business of sport.

It is no coincidence, then, that the sport and business sections, described above as resembling each other in terms of their fixation on numerical performance, regularly appear next to each other in broadcast news, newspaper supplements and on news-oriented websites. Furthermore, the discourses of sport and business have substantially permeated each other. As I have previously argued (e.g. Rowe 2004a), sport has supplied commerce (as well as politics) with a vibrant everyday language that represents often abstract, complicated economic phenomena in easily decodable ways. Debates about business regulation, for example, are regularly discussed in terms of the need for 'level-playing fields' and 'hurdles', or takeovers as 'slam dunks', and ill-fated share purchase positions as 'own goals'. It is rather less common to see sports events described in terms of 'leveraged buyouts' or 'collateralized debt obligations'. What sport has taken from commerce is not so much language as rhythm. As it moved out from the local and was progressively rationalized and quantified, sport came to mimic the continuous process production associated with industrial manufacturing. Sports contests were originally rather irregular, sporadically occurring on certain days of the year or taking place at considerable intervals when motivation and resources merited. The new framework of sport demanded a more regular flow of 'product' – just as the media that covered it emerged as a space that needed to be filled on a daily basis with content irrespective of actual degrees of 'newsworthiness'. The sports calendar became busier and, while still guided by its seasons (which first followed and then increasingly straddled those of the earthly calendar), could transcend them as athletes and teams criss-crossed the hemispheres for scheduled events, as both carbon and satellite footprints extended across the globe.

Exhausted markets, new horizons and sport celebrity labour power

This 'mass production' and global circulation of sport created a problem that was very familiar in more traditional spheres of commodity exchange. Once a market for sport had been developed, it needed to be of a size and consistency of activity that would assure expansion and profitability, including a ceaseless search for new sporting labour and consumer markets (Miller, Rowe and Lawrence 2010). Production downtimes are to be avoided where possible and preferably limited to routine maintenance and, if strictly necessary, scheduled holiday shutdowns. But the more that is produced, the less 'special' the product becomes. If standardization produced economies of scale and lowered marginal cost, it also created an increased familiarity that needed to be countered by constant novelty – or at least its appearance through functional and stylistic innovations. At any one time the production of goods and services in various markets and market segments, especially for discretionary leisure and entertainment items, is in transition, with an establishment phase demanding high levels of standardization, consolidation requiring broad acquaintance and use, and then diversification to prevent boredom, exhaustion and redundancy. Here, advertising, marketing and promotion are especially important, as in the absence of major technological advances or other product innovations, old products can be 'badged' in ways that make them look and feel radically new and improved, or novel uses and applications proposed for familiar goods and services. So, for example, just as chemically similar shampoos are promoted as 'green' or contain a familiar substance with a different name, or cars and computers can be identical 'under the bonnet' but have rather different looking chassis and casings, each season launch of a major sport proposes both continuity and innovation. Similarly, an item of technology like a computer that was first sold as an educational or work-oriented device can become used for leisure purposes such as sport gaming, and mobile phones sold on the basis of enhancing personal security can become an essential tool of social networking and live sport viewing.

As noted earlier, the practice of sport was initially local, seasonally dependent and intermittent, a break in the routines of rural and then early urban, industrial life. As sport became established through professionalization and marketization, and proliferated in terms of types, levels and sites, there was not just an increase in demand for it, but it was necessary to maintain and enhance its supply in order to support its growing infrastructure, including dedicated stadia, management, transport, travel and payments to officials and athletes. Under a regime of amateurism, compulsory sporting activity in schools and voluntary sporting participation outside it was extensive, but by definition it was of a non-marketized nature (although, of course, it requires sports clothing and equipment). A genuine, capital growth-oriented sports business needs to find multiple, continuous sites of commodity exchange (Horne 2009), hence the expansion of leagues and competitions occurring on an annual and multi-year basis across many territories and, as is strikingly the case with college sport in the United States, bringing ostensibly amateur institutionalized sport

into a commercial orbit that has de-emphasized educational values (Bowen and Levin 2003) and even investing voluntary junior and youth sport with a proto-professionalism that facilitated, for a minority, entry into a sports career and so a deep engagement with its market (Messner 2009). It was in the United States that the full commercial and ultimately global potential of sport was appreciated and activated by adopting its pioneering 'business practices and marketing strategies' and a 'new kind of corporate integration in the media and entertainment industries' involving a combination of transnational expansion and vertical integration (i.e. control of both content and distribution). By this means, sport was woven into the fabric of corporate promotion in a manner that made it increasingly difficult to 'unpick' and isolate from branded entertainment packages (Whitson 1998: 38–9).

The early organization of sport was chaotic in nature, and emergent markets also have a propensity to be so. As a result, modern sport, with its heavy reliance on rule-based quantification and performative hierarchies, required governmental discipline in its scheduling and dedicated circuits in order to prevent undesirable breaks in the production cycle. Thus, as with stock markets and gambling regimes, at any one time somewhere on the globe a major sport is being practised. Tennis players, golfers and other sportspeople organize their schedules by 'following the sun', and elite association footballers have their already crammed and extended competitive seasons supplemented by promotional tours and exhibition matches in developing markets, especially in the Asia-Pacific region and North America. The progressive loss of down time for routine maintenance on the engine of sport – the athletic body – has, as noted above regarding the ATP season, resulted in considerable strain and sometimes catastrophic injury. In the case of the increasingly busy international cricket calendar, in November 2010 the England team travelled to Australia to play five five-day test matches, two Twenty20 and seven one-day games (plus five other games), before returning home for three-day turnaround before departing for the World Cup of cricket hosted by India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh that would last until early April (BBC 2011). It is unsurprising, then, that the team was afflicted by several player injuries and signs of 'burnout'.

Innovations in sports science and medicine have attempted to manage this risk and 'inefficiency' in the management of sporting labour through technological (including pharmacological) innovations and, crucially, has handsomely rewarded the small number of sport celebrities who have been willing to trade their long-term physical and psychological health for spectacular, often short-term, returns. So, for example, when a footballer or basketball player travels from game to game over considerable distances without proper rest, preparation and acclimatization and suffers injury, or when a champion rugby player is 'given the needle' to deaden the pain of an injury that would otherwise prevent them from playing, they are doing so in the knowledge that many workers in much less glamorous occupations – and in which, without sport, many of them would be working – also get injured 'on the job' and do not receive equivalent compensation. They are also aware that previous generations of amateur, semi-professional and professional sportspeople suffered serious, even career-ending injuries that left them without the necessary resources – educational and

occupational – to prosper either in or outside sport. The collective organization of players in originally amateur team sports such as cricket and rugby, and in those that commercialized at an earlier stage of development such as gridiron and basketball, as well as in individual sports like tennis and golf, followed the realization that a considerable capital surplus was being built in sport and that owners and administrators were not in general disposed to share it equitably with them. The ‘star’ power of mostly male sports figures could be mobilized effectively because it was integral to the heroic myths that have infused and animated sport as a competitive arena where extraordinary physical powers could be recognized as meriting extraordinary esteem and material reward (Whannel 2001). Barry Smart (2005: 196) notes the following:

As modern professional sport has developed the importance of individual action has not diminished, it has grown, as has the value of charismatic star players. Modern sport organizations continually search for potential stars, for players with charisma, those with an apparent ability to rewrite the record books and set new standards by doing the unheard-of.

It is here that the tightness of the media-sport nexus is most clearly exposed. The lionization of certain sportspeople and teams would be severely limited if they were required to generate their own publicity and to pay like most other commodity producers for their own advertising and promotion. Sport is strikingly well positioned to be its own news – effectively to sell itself *as* news. Continuous sport production articulates the routine and the remarkable – staple quantifiable information about what has occurred, visual and text-based description and depiction, and the extraction of certain people from the common sporting weal – such as a Michael Jordan, Serena Williams, David Beckham or Tiger Woods – who are able, at least temporarily, to cross over into a wider media sphere that is bigger than sport (Andrews 2006; Andrews and Jackson 2001) and which comes to the attention of those with barely a passing interest in it. The media, then, are critical to the global economy of sport and, while not exactly achieving parity of power (in survivalist terms, the media would have greater independent resources than sport in the profoundly unlikely event that their relationship were to be severed), sport has supplied the media with a large number of celebrities who provide compelling content across its full spectrum from news and current affairs to unalloyed entertainment.

Yet, of necessity, not all sportspeople are ‘special’. The majority of members of this athletic labour market is far less ‘aristocratic’, with rewards and risks as unevenly distributed as in all commercial corporate-dominated cultural industries and with a much larger cohort of would-be entrants than those currently making even a minimal living in them (Hesmondhalgh 2007; Rowe 1995; Ryan 1992). Most aspiring sportspeople, like actors and musicians, never ‘make it’, and most of those who become full-time professionals are, even in the most affluent sports, more proletarian than bourgeois, foot soldier than general, journeyman than leader. The apparently chaotic sporting labour market, in fact, rigorously sorts sports and sportspeople into elites and the rest along lines including gender, race and position regarding the global core and periphery. Indeed, it draws considerable energy from the constant jostling for

position and fame that its own celebrity system stimulates. In summary, there is never any shortage of people who want to play in Major League Baseball or the Indian Premier League. Sports academies and training programmes, whether run by the state, educational establishments or private enterprise, mine the globe for athletic talent, seeking to source the cheapest human ‘raw materials’ for elaborate transformation in the most lucrative markets (Miller *et al.* 2010). Often, as in the case of international football academies, the families of young aspirants in developing nations devote precious scarce resources to the slim chance of breaking through into the tightly sealed world of elite professional sport where highly paid, internationally lauded sport celebrity awaits (Miller *et al.* 2001). For encouragement, they need look no further than the sport and entertainment media.

Media as sport stimuli

The media, as noted earlier, are highly dependent on continuous sport production. In every news market, proprietors and spectators dread the end of major sport competitions and tournaments, worrying as to how they are going to retain audience interest. The answer, just as with sport’s stretching of playing seasons and circulation around time zones, has been to maintain coverage of premium sports at a high pitch even when their main competitions have ended. The team sports labour market, in particular, is especially useful in this regard as an area of spectatorship in its own right. Unlike most spheres of work, the recruitment, retention and separation of players take place largely in public and, given that their performativity is minutely and relentlessly scrutinized, and that their affiliation to a particular club is highly significant regarding symbolic identity, there are manifold opportunities for media coverage of player movements. Of course, this coverage need not have any legitimate foundation – much media coverage of potential player movements are classic examples of slow news day gossip and speculation, using unnamed sources to stir up an instant controversy in the certain knowledge that any mention of a sports celebrity, especially in relation to their mobility between sports clubs, is inherently newsworthy for the more obsessive followers of that sport (Boyle 2006). Indeed, such sources often include player agents ‘planting’ stories about interest from other clubs and even sports (Michael Jordan’s unusual and unsuccessful temporary switch from basketball to baseball notwithstanding, cases such as player movements in Australia between rugby union, rugby league, Australian rules and association football are an indicator of an incipient pan-code football labour market for those with transferable skills) during contract negotiations in order to improve their final terms. That sports journalists seem prepared to be used in this way (sometimes in return for a ‘scoop’) is ethically questionable but does not appear to trouble those for whom the principal imperative is popular attention in a crowded general and sports news market (Boyle, Rowe and Whannel 2010; Rowe 2007a).

It is not even necessary, though, for the airing of player transfer matters to occur in comparative downtimes, such as during the pre-season player draft

deliberations in various sports (especially American) that provide structured opportunities for discussion in the sports media. When the action on the field of play is intense, and massive amounts of mediated sports coverage already available, the volatile sports labour market nonetheless receives concentrated, often hysterical attention. For example, when in October 2010 the leading Manchester United footballer Wayne Rooney announced his intention to leave the world's most valuable sports club (according to Forbes business magazine valued at US\$1.84 billion (£1.2 billion) ahead of a top ten of the Dallas Cowboys, New York Yankees, Washington Redskins, New England Patriots, Real Madrid, New York Giants, Arsenal, New York Jets and Houston Texans – Callow 2010) by not renewing his contract with it, the result was enormous, global media coverage in the middle of the football season. The following excerpts from a British newspaper commentary of the time effectively capture the melodramatic flavour of contract negotiations conducted through the media (White 2010a):

Claim, counter-claim, fevered speculation, seething discontent, banners, chanting, internet forums going into meltdown, a nocturnal rattle of the security gates by a bunch of balaclava-clad heavies: what a way to conduct contract negotiations ...

The comments were workshopped up in the media as evidence of a gaping rift between player and manager, there was talk of the old disciplinarian, tiring of his former favourite's wayward personal behaviour, dispatching him from the inner circle. He was, so the rumour insisted, being frozen out ...

For those who report on the game, there was something teasingly appropriate about such a conclusion. It beautifully articulated the plotline of the modern game. It had everything. Here were United, their prominence largely built on money, latterly suffering from acquisition by foreign raiders, unable to keep possession of their most valuable property. The loss of it to their significantly more endowed rivals down the road [Manchester City, owned by the Abu Dhabi United Group for Development and Investment] was particularly poignant. Ferguson's noisy neighbours were drowning out the waning Old Trafford roar.

As for Rooney, well what did we expect from a modern footballer? Mercenaries all, they were motivated only by finance. It was a drama almost Greek in its certainties. Whatever happens, everyone agreed, he could not now stay at United.

Jim White's article in the sports pages of a conservative broadsheet newspaper vividly reveals the conflicts and contradictions surrounding contemporary sport in which the media, while expressing distaste, are deeply implicated. It highlights the frenzied, multifaceted nature of player/agent and club manoeuvring in the media spotlight. Both sides of the negotiating table used the media, seeking advantage by gaining public support. International capital, celebrity branding, sexual scandal and passionate fandom (tipping over into the threatening graffiti message 'Join City and You're Dead' on a billboard outside a Nike store in Manchester in a strike also against his sponsorship by that company) were all involved, with an opportunistic media simultaneously acting as an instrument for the contending parties. In themselves deriving economic benefit from increased sales and circulation, broadcast ratings and

web traffic, the media are commercially compromised by capitalizing on while decrying the process in which they are willing actors. As disturbances such as these reverberate across the global media sports cultural complex, the inner workings of its industrial machinery are exposed.

As noted earlier, there is a danger that such saturation media coverage of sport-related matters can result in over-familiarity and 'exhaustion'. But in economic terms mainstream media corporations thrive, stagnate or decline according to their capacity to mediate content for their audiences. As sport is probably the most efficient and adaptable cultural form yet devised to generate primary and secondary content (i.e. actual broadcast content and then all the discursive content about that content) that can be turned into convertible media currency, the more common calculation is not that familiarity breeds contempt but, as with other areas of news content (the term 'news' being used loosely), that it is perilous to be left behind in a 24-hour news cycle characterized by media 'herd' behaviour. In a chapter originally written in the late 1980s, Robert W. McChesney (2008: 229) notes in relation to US sports television (and the failure of some new leagues in sports, including ice hockey, team tennis, basketball and gridiron) at the time that

[m]ore than a few analysts have looked at these casualties and predicted that sports, in general, were being overexposed on television and that eventually public sentiment would turn against them. That has yet to happen, at least in the minds of all important advertisers who have subsidized the boom. Not that revenues and profits have increased without upheaval; as with any industry, there have been ups and downs for specific firms and general excesses caused by speculative frenzy. Nevertheless, the general pattern has been upward. In the 1980s several cable networks have been established that have given sports coverage prominence: indeed, they rank among the few cable operations that have had any success. Specifically, ESPN was established to broadcast sports 24 hours a day. Upon its creation, one ESPN executive remarked, 'We believe the appetite for sports in this country is insatiable.'

Over two decades later, there is much more broadcast sport around the world, and it is being substantially supplemented by web-based and mobile platforms. But, as has been discussed above, and is acknowledged by McChesney (2008: 230–1), what counts as sports content in the media far exceeds actual 'live' and recorded sports action, now sprawling across the entire media apparatus and taking on many guises. In a previous work I discussed this phenomenon (prompted by an observation of the journalist Paul Sheehan) as the 'strategic chaos of media sport' (Rowe 2004a: 80–8). In tracing this transition from relatively disorganized folk and proto-professional sport to the increased rationalization of formal amateur and fully professional sport, it is not intended to impose a rigid processual order on a resistant context. Instead, it is suggested that the organizing logic that has powerfully influenced how sport is practised, organized and experienced is responsible for creating the conditions for rapid change and sudden disruption. This is the familiar logic of the commodity – in this case that of sport under hyper-rationalization, mediatization and globalization – that eats itself as part of a capitalist compulsion to be remade and to accelerate its growth.

There are still those who find something shocking about the flourishing of the commodity form in sport. This is because, more than in most forms of popular culture, sport is constitutively attached to the romance of transformative mythology and to a moral order that still finds elements of paying to play and to watch a little repugnant. There is nothing particularly unusual about the regret that sport is no longer an uncommodified expression of folk culture (Rowe 1995). Across the whole sociocultural spectrum, folk life ('the world we have lost', in the memorable phrase of the historian Peter Laslett (1965)) progressively disappeared with modernity. Nostalgic yearnings for simpler, more 'authentic' times are understandable though obviously flawed (it is only necessary to consider such issues as life expectancy, representative democracy, political rights, gender equity and literacy to give pause for anyone not among the contemporary world's most disadvantaged people to hark back to a better life in pre-modernity). But modern sport is residually infused with the ethic of amateurism, which specifically proscribes professionalized labour (except among educators and elements of the administrative strata). Amateur sport has not disappeared, but its place within its institutional hierarchy of ethics and practices has slipped substantially as sport industrialized, to the extent that 'amateur' is often used pejoratively as connoting sporting inferiority (McKay *et al.* 2001). Yet its ethical residue remains whenever 'the love of the game' is celebrated and given primacy, and when distaste is expressed concerning the economic motives of athletes, sports bodies and the many organizations benefiting from the selling of sport in a multitude of ways, from player contracts to media deals to sponsor branding.

Laments for the love of the game

Residual elements of anti-commercialism in sport are related to the justifications of its installation as compulsory in the curriculum of schools after schooling itself became compulsory. Deployed first in British elite, fee-paying, all-male schools attended mainly by boarders to keep the pupils occupied and to discharge energies that could be put to 'unsavoury' uses, sport was also used to encourage school identity and cohesion in contests with rival schools and as a micro-system of preparation for adult living deemed to instil respect for cooperation, leadership, goal-directed cooperation, unselfishness, nobility and bodily competence that could be used in all walks of life including, above all, commanding military combat in the service of Empire (Hargreaves 1986). These values coalesced around the desirable qualities of discipline and mental and corporeal fitness that then spread to government-funded and other less exclusive schools and, despite their close association with masculinity, also found expression in the routines of girls at school. The close, systematic connection to formal pedagogy meant that sport was to some degree set apart from the world of labour and industry and when organized in civil society experienced difficulty in maintaining a boundary between voluntary, unremunerated leisure (amateur sport) and contracted, paid work (professional sport). Graham Scambler

(2005: 36) notes the awkward dilemmas posed after 1850 (as industrialism and capitalism took firm hold) as the “cult of athleticism” ... epitomized by the concepts of “manliness” and “muscular Christianity” ... spread from the major public schools to a wider, if still privileged, public arena’. In examining the establishment of the English Amateur Athletic Association (AAA), he notes the problems of maintaining the ‘amateur/professional dichotomy’:

[It] had very different connotations for the Greeks than it came to have for the gentlemen of Victorian England. It is in fact a dichotomy with a complex history ... In British athletics the first ‘amateurs’ were spectators, equivalent to late twentieth-century fans. Its usage in relation to sportsmen derived from rowing. Lovesey (1979: 22) writes ‘In 1835 *Bell’s Life* defined an amateur as anyone who rowed and was not a waterman or otherwise engaged in rowing for a living’. (Scambler 2005: 39)

Scambler quotes Lovesey’s observation that by the middle of the century, the division had been drawn more exactly in relation to social class: ‘An amateur was a gentleman’ drawn from approved organizations such as universities, and absolutely excluded ‘tradesmen, labourers, artisans or working mechanics’, while the Amateur Athletic Club (which later became part of the AAA) shifted between lesser (though nonetheless significant) qualifications for amateur status like never having ‘taught or assisted in the pursuit of athletic exercises as a means of livelihood’ to the qualification that ‘[a]n amateur is any gentleman...’ (Scambler 2005: 39). This aristocratic claiming of the amateur was patently class based but, as in the wider society, folded into the aspirations of the emerging bourgeoisie and lower middle class and came under increasing pressure as the development of the sport market produced skilled practitioners who could not support themselves by inherited or other means and whose services were much in demand. As Coakley *et al.* (2009: 317–18) argue with regard to that once great bastion of aristocratic amateurism, the modern Olympics,

The wealthy aristocrats who organized the Olympic movement and sponsored the modern Olympic Games even used their power to establish a definition of *amateur* that privileged athletes from wealthy backgrounds around the world. This definition excluded athletes from working class backgrounds, who could afford to train only if they used their sports skills to help them earn a living. The definition of *amateur* was revised over the years and, by the 1990s, amateur sport was largely a thing of the past. The loosening of the definition of the ‘amateur’ and the professionalization of most sports has increased the chances of participation. However, money and economic power now operate in different ways as training opportunities for developing high-level skills has become increasingly privatized in many countries. Additionally, powerful corporations use the Olympics to expand profits by linking their logos and products to particular athletes and global sports images that serve their interests.

This pattern of development of sport from the initial domination of amateurism among local elites sharply differentiated from the folk pursuits of the subordinate classes, followed by an increasing professionalization and commercialization that partially ‘popularizes’ institutional sport while creating other, corporate–commercial inequalities, has been replicated (with

considerable contextual variations) as sport diffused across the globe (Maguire 1999). Coakley *et al.*, though, in noting this important shift, rather play down the important development, evident in most countries, of a *mixed economy of sport*, through which the state underwrites strategic elements of the development of private athletic careers and subsidizes the expropriation of athletic labour power by private capital in exchange for powerful signifiers of national identity and prowess. However, they do demonstrate how class relations in sport have changed to some degree, with at least a semblance of sporting meritocracy appearing through which a tiny number of mostly male athletes from outside the upper strata – and, indeed, from beyond the most affluent countries in the world – can exercise their labour market power to sometimes extravagant effect.

Nonetheless, sport – especially its affluent individual forms such as tennis and golf – is skewed upwards in terms of socioeconomic class in ways that mirror the social structure of the amateur sport order and which demonstrate the articulation of inherited social and sporting power. As already noted, most participants (indeed, competitors in every sense) in the sports labour market don't 'make it', get by for only a short time or leave their sports career with only modest returns. Their chances of doing well in sport are, as before, greatly enhanced by inherited class privilege and, at least as important, their masculine sex/gender (see also McKay *et al.* 2001). Thus, the limited 'democratization' of the sports industry by no means affirms that it is open and equitable but merely that, as it has industrialized and become subject to commodity logic, the dominance of the aristocratic class has been partially ceded to that of corporate capital of an increasingly global and mediated kind. In this accelerated passage through the emergence of the global media sports industry, I have attempted to demonstrate how it exceeded, while never entirely transcending, the limitations of space and time; standardized some aspects while diversifying others and used numbers as its universal, convertible language; and produced an almost hyperactive global market revolving around events, celebrities, collective identities and multiple points of exchange. Although the preceding discussion was peppered with exemplars, it has been necessarily abstract in places, and it would be useful to illuminate pivotal, concrete features of contemporary global media sport in order to reinforce just how much has changed in the two centuries – no more than a sliver of human history – since sport became the social, cultural, political and economic phenomenon that seems, illusorily, always to have impinged on the collective consciousness. The following discussion takes in the point of origin of modern sport and the sport that most persuasively assumes the mantle of the world game – association football in England.

The global, organized, continuous and commodified

Having traced, in summary, the emergence of the institution of sport and its interconnected transformation into a global industry intimately related to the mass media that grew along with it, it is helpful to take stock of the

contemporary economics of sport. It was noted earlier that the world's richest sports club is Manchester United, with sports magazines such as *Forbes* continuously tracking the economic fortunes of both sports entities and sports celebrities (such as the aforementioned Wayne Rooney), some of whom have become only their own brands, as signified by the frequent use of only their surnames (such as Ronaldo, Zidane and Beckham). Thus the media, which are indispensable elements of the global sport economy, report on clubs and athletes as particularly glamorous cases of companies and entrepreneurs, as, for example, below:

[Manchester] United's lofty standing is in spite of the club's heavy load of debt, with *Forbes* factoring in endorsements, merchandise sales, sponsorship and television revenues when considering a company's value.

Forbes rates Tiger Woods as the top earning athlete, with an estimated annual income of \$30m. The world No 1 golfer is followed by the boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr in second and the basketball star Kobe Bryant in third. (Callow 2010)

Such discourse is now remarkably unremarkable, but it is important to register how comparatively quickly it became so. As discussed above, professional association football first developed, like most sports, in Britain in the late nineteenth century. It was historically associated with a male, working-class player and fan base that was deeply territorial, if not aggressively parochial. Now globally famous clubs, such as Manchester United and Liverpool, were established in the industrial heartland of north-west England, often growing out of teams formed first around factory workers. Over the twentieth century, as was addressed earlier, football became more professional and highly capitalized, developing a private ownership structure, a transfer system to manage (on almost a feudal basis) its labour market, acquiring sponsors as important income streams and participating in a major television market that offered both profile and broadcast rights revenue. Following the rationalization and quantified 'grading' of club teams using systems of promotion and relegation, Liverpool and Manchester were well established in the First Division of the English Football League, but like other large clubs they became increasingly dissatisfied, towards the end of the twentieth century, with having to share profits, especially from broadcast rights revenues, with 90 other clubs. Here, the weakening of collectivism and solidarity among leading clubs indicate the heightened intrusion of individualism and material competition. In 1992, these clubs joined with an elite group of clubs to form the English Premier League (EPL) and benefited enormously from the additional television rights provided by the newly established subscription service BSkyB, controlled by the media proprietor Rupert Murdoch. Again, the movement from a free-to-air to a restricted platform of sport on television and the sharp rise in ticket prices in refurbished stadia signify a 'farewell to the working class' among elite football clubs. Both Manchester United and Liverpool developed substantial international fan support and, like others in continental Europe such as Real Madrid, Barcelona (a club in which members also exercised

substantial ownership rights) and AC Milan, sought to capitalize on them, especially through the sale of licensed merchandise and by drawing subscribers to their in-house television services.

At the same time, the EPL was actively pursuing broadcast rights well beyond its home base in the United Kingdom and parts of Europe, especially targeting the Asia-Pacific region, the most populous and fastest growing media sports market in the world. This is now a familiar story of 'sportsbiz' expansion, but it is also one in which sport's claim to be somehow set apart from more 'mundane' areas of commerce (the legacy of long-lost amateurism and now degraded myths of sporting ennoblement) was exposed. Clubs were publicly listed on the stock market and/or traded as publicly limited companies by multinational capital, with the EPL substantially departing from received notions of 'Englishness' in terms of players, managers (now often called coaches) and owners (Horne 2006; Taylor 2008). The United Kingdom's membership of the European Union (EU) ensured that barriers to regional transnational movement were greatly weakened (King 1998, 2003), and a more far-reaching Europeanization and globalization diversified and enriched a game whose *embourgeoisement* and cosmopolitan character contrasted starkly with the largely homogeneous working-class culture that preceded it. Football's integration into global capitalism meant that it was also more directly subject to its vicissitudes, including the forms of debt financing that either created or exacerbated the global financial crisis that began in 2007 (Stiglitz 2007).

By October 2010, both Liverpool and Manchester United had accumulated massive debts. Liverpool's American co-owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett Kop Holdings company owed £280 million and were set to be purchased by another US concern, New England Sports Ventures (NESV), owners of the Boston Red Sox baseball team, for £300 million (BBC 2010a). Manchester United was in a better position but had just posted an £80 million loss (BBC 2010b) and also was experiencing considerable fan discontent with its own US owners, the Glazer family, which had purchased the club (via substantial borrowings) for £800 million in 2005:

Critics say the family has saddled the club with massive debts, and this has led to protests by supporters' groups ...

Many fans are continuing to boycott the team's traditional red shirts and scarves, and instead wearing green and gold, the original colours of Newton Heath, the amateur side which was founded in 1878 and went on to become Manchester United.

A group of wealthy Manchester United supporters known as the Red Knights also proposed making a takeover bid. (BBC 2010b)

The original purchase by the Glazers had also prompted the in-protest establishment in 2005 of a breakaway club (starting out again in the lowest divisions of English football), Football Club United of Manchester (2010), positioning itself as the authentic heart of the club in declaring 'This is how it feels to be FC. This is how it feels to be home'. Although such traditionalist, topophiliac sentiments are common in British football (Rowe and Gilmour

2009; Rowe, Ruddock and Hutchins 2010), they are deeply at odds with the powerful economic structures of the game that have moved far from 'home', while locally owned and managed capital like the Red Knights has found it difficult to match the resources of foreign owners and bidders. As noted above, the EPL was overtly set up as a financial elite that would benefit directly from greatly increased broadcast income gained through the monopoly subscription service of the other major beneficiary, BSkyB (Horsman 1997). Its broadcast income constantly rose, sometimes running into trouble with European regulators who believed the close connection with BSkyB to be anti-competitive, but 'riding out' periodic political and market turbulence, such as the collapse of Kirch Media (which acquired FIFA's World Cup rights), ITV Digital and the UK division of Setanta (with the United States' Disney-owned ESPN taking over its EPL broadcast rights in 2009 – a year before, ironically, Setanta closed its US operation) (Mason and Moore 2009; Rowe 2004a).

Thus, the first rights agreement with BSkyB of £304 million over five seasons more than doubled in value over the next four (£670 million, 1997–8), and then exceeded a billion pounds sterling (£1.024 billion) over the next three, with the next broadcast rights deal involving BSkyB and Setanta reaching £1.7 billion, with further income coming from broadcast organizations such as the BBC. Of particular interest in this context is international broadcast rights revenue, which was £320 million for the seasons 2004–7 but grew very considerably afterwards, doubling from £625 million in the following triennium to £1.4 billion for 2010–13. As was discussed earlier, this global economic appeal was not accidental but the product of astute marketing in both mature and key emerging media sport markets that, in the latter case, made its branded consumption an attractive signifier of global cosmopolitan identity, to the detriment of the local game (Rowe and Gilmour 2009 – and discussed in Chapters 3 and 5). As one journalist notes, not only has the EPL become a significant part of media development in other parts of the world, it also produces some of its own packaged content directly, so beginning to bridge the organizational–operational divide between sport and media:

The overseas rights bonanza underlines the global appeal of England's top football division, and has been fuelled by intense bidding wars in key areas, mainly between pay-TV rivals in Asia.

The Abu Dhabi royal family, from which Manchester City's owner Sheikh Mansour hails, has also played its part. The ruling elite's Abu Dhabi Media Company has won the rights for Premier League matches across the Middle East and North Africa from the incumbent holder, Showtime Arabia.

The League has 98 broadcast partners, as well as its own new TV station, Premier League TV, which will provide 'viewer ready' action, commentary and analysis for nations wanting to buy rights 'off the shelf'.

In the future, the League hopes PLTV can attract non-traditional buyers to the market, for example entrepreneurs who want to enter the football market but don't have broadcasting capabilities themselves.

The Premier League's live domestic rights for 2010–13 raised £1.782 bn when sold last summer. With such enormous growth in international sales, and room for expansion, foreign rights should overtake home sales in the future. (Harris 2010)

That (setting aside diagnoses that television is a dying 'old medium') a nationally based football league should earn more broadcast rights income in distant territories than at 'home' lays bare the economics of contemporary global media sport. It is not floating entirely free of history and place but has, through a combination of the old, the new and the futuristic, created an economic framework founded on the 'live broadcasting of history' (Dayan and Katz 1992) – that is, the unrepeatable, real-time sports contest – with myriad mediated uses and forms. It attracts not only advertising and subscription-based commercial media but also publicly funded media outlets as well as sponsors, sport and leisure goods providers, and diverse ancillary industries (such as tourism and hospitality – Hinch and Higham 2004; Weed and Bull 2004).

The globalization of English football takes many forms – the aforementioned foreign ownership of clubs (including Chelsea, owned by the Russian oil oligarch Roman Abramovich), of managers (such as, in the 2010–11 season, Italians Carlo Ancelotti, Roberto Di Matteo and Roberto Mancini, to which could be added the Italian coach of the England national football team, Fabio Capello) and of players (although more accurately there is a strong, legislated regional framework given the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union and, in particular, the renowned Bosman Ruling that reaffirmed freedom of player movement within it), meaning that by 2010 fewer than 40 per cent of EPL players could qualify to represent England in an international tournament (Jackson 2010). This growth imperative has meant that, for some parties, even the EPL and its equivalent leagues in Spain (La Liga), Italy (Serie A), Germany (Bundesliga) and others, plus the existing club-based European competitions (the two largest being the Union des Associations Européennes de Football (UEFA) Champions and Europa Leagues, both of which have been restructured and expanded in terms of numbers of teams and/or games), have been insufficiently lucrative. Hence, there has been frequent agitation for a European Super League that would enable even greater concentration of clubs, brands and capital (see, for example, Hawkey 2009). Of course, association football is by no means the only instance of the intensification of the economics of sport, with, for example, the NBA holding games in London in 2011 (BBC 2010e) and Major League Baseball underwriting the revival of the Australian Baseball League in 2010. Both initiatives demonstrate that sport, having escaped the confines of the local, haphazard, occasional and the amateur, now traverses the globe in finding new sites for action and in the certain knowledge that it will – indeed, must – be digitally encoded and displayed on screen everywhere that a viewing market exists or can be cultivated. This 'pulling power' of sport, furthermore, has had an increasingly 'sportifying' impact on other areas of culture, notably television, and especially in its 'reality' and quiz show genres, infiltrating and cannibalizing popular culture in sometimes bizarre, hybridic evocations, adaptations and parodies of sport in such programmes as *Beat the Star*, *Wipeout* and *Shaque Vs.*

Thus, it is important not to have too narrow a focus on the economics of global media sport, given that the general cultural prominence of sport also creates conditions that naturalize its ubiquity. The ‘unconscious’ market power deriving from the presence of ‘sport-like’ elements in diverse cultural contexts makes it especially difficult to pin a critique of sport on a constantly shifting target, while maximizing the opportunities for the cross-promotional exploitation of a range of cultural commodities. For example, the ready recognition of sport logos and celebrities in non-sporting contexts diffuses the operations of the sport market across news, entertainment, fashion and so on. It is, therefore, easier to turn this quotidian investment in sport into related forms of consumption and to advocate public expenditure on sports mega events that advantage the sport market as committed to the collective national interest.

The core business of contemporary sport, though, is arranging, playing and televising contests. It has been shown above that behind this seemingly simple remit there is much struggle and uncertainty – and potential financial reward and risk. By March 2011 NESV had completed the acquisition of Liverpool, but its former owners were pursuing a £1 billion damages claim against the Royal Bank of Scotland and three directors of the club at the time of the sale, and Manchester United have the same owners, a debt of over £1 billion (in the same month that, symbolically in terms of EPL-initiated inequality in English football, saw League 1 team Plymouth Argyle go into administration and subsequent relegation with a debt of £17 million, only to be purchased subsequently for £1), and have denied rumours of a takeover bid by the investment arm of the Qatari Royal Family. At the same time, the UK Culture Secretary had given permission for News Corporation to prepare an £8 billion full takeover bid for the remaining 61 per cent of BSkyB that it does not own (Sweney 2011a) and which, if successful, would have entrenched the dominance of British sport television by the Murdoch family. As is now history, the subsequent phone ‘hacking’ scandal (*Guardian* 2011) saw in July 2011 the takeover bid withdrawn, the *News of the World* closed, and various current and former employees of News International charged. Both Rupert and James Murdoch appeared before the British House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, at which the former stated, “This is the most humble day of my life”. In sport’s world of screens, as this chapter has amply shown (and is developed in Chapter 5), fortunes are made and lost, but it is also one in which there is continuing contestation over its priorities. Here, the injunction is not only that the money be shown but that it should also be justified. The case of the EPL highlights how, in some respects, it is a case of classic cultural imperialism, a Western export that colonizes and crowds out manifestations of local cultures (in this case, the football systems of, especially, the Asia-Pacific). But it also shows how it has been a global ‘attractor’ (Urry 2003) that at the same time has substantially eroded the Englishness of English football (Magee and Sugden 2002), as a combination of transnational capitalism and cosmopolitanism has re-fashioned the form that is being exported across the world. This paradox of global media sport is explored next in addressing the dream of every media sport corporation – to establish a powerful, profitable global television operation.