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Wednesday, June 21, 2017

Welcoming Remarks:
Dr. Jeremy Larance, Conference Organizer (West Liberty University)
Dr. Stephen Greiner, President (West Liberty University)
Cory Willard, SLA President (University of Nebraska)

PANEL I: #Resist: Sport Literature in Trump's America
Chair: Matt Tettleton (University of Colorado)

Joel Sronce (Independent Scholar), joel.sronce@gmail.com
"Respite and Resistance: The Role of a Reporter in the Role of Sports"

In this time of relentless national tension and distress, the world of sports reflects the oppression and injustice that many face, as well as the connection and support they strive to find. The literature of sport — particularly that of sports reporting — now more than ever has a duty to address these issues of persecution when other media, politicians and everyday spectators remain willfully silent or forcibly helpless.

For half a year I've been a sportswriter and reporter for a weekly paper in Greensboro, North Carolina. In a city famous for oppression and brave defiance, I have endeavored to present the ways that its citizens use sports for respite and resistance. Stories have involved the role of sports in black communities where struggle and skepticism endure, a non-traditional sport that allow its participants to revel in community they may never otherwise have found, immigrants and refugees who strive to make a new home while maintaining tradition, the battle against North Carolina's oppressive HB2, and more.

This creative nonfiction piece is an introspective essay about the stories I've worked on, rehashing them within my presentation but also broadly addressing the discipline as a relatively new reporter, striving to cover sports in a progressive way and use sports to make effective and necessary political arguments.

Kyle Belanger (Springfield College), kbelanger2@springfieldcollege.edu
"America's Team: How the New England Patriots Unintentionally Volunteered as the Nation's Fractured Self-Identity"

Few modern North American professional sports franchises are more polarizing than the New England Patriots. A National Football League dynasty during an era in which such things are supposed to be impossible, the team is lead by a pair of seemingly-robotic figureheads: head coach Bill Belichick and quarterback Tom Brady, neither of whom appear capable human emotions.

The 2016 NFL season also coincided with the 2016 U.S. Presidential campaign. This election saw the anti-Belichick/Brady (bombastic, trash-talking and easily-rattled oligarch Donald Trump) slither his way to the most powerful office in North America. While their characters may seem diametrically opposed, the relationships between Trump, Belichick and Brady (as well as Patriots owner Robert Kraft) have left many Patriots fans conflicted about their support. Not to be lost in this twisted classist love affair is the presence of a handful of self-aware and understated African-American players, led by tight end (and children's book author) Martellus Bennett. Bennett's September National Anthem protest was the first indication to progressive New England fans had that this locker room was a true reflection of the current fractured national spirit.

This paper uses a cross-textual literary approach, drawing on the Twitterature of the athletes, Bennett's children's books, personal letters, photographs, and first-person accounts to critically analyze the similarities between the Patriots culture and the American culture for which they serve as a microcosm.

Matthew Tettleton (University of Colorado), matthew.tettleton@colorado.edu
"The Whole World's a Battle Royal: On Colin Kaepernick and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*"

In August of 2016, Colin Kaepernick kept his seat during the performance of the national anthem before an NFL preseason football game. Much ink has been spilled about Kap's protest, but what literary theory and criticism can add to the discussion are a critical lens removed from the pitched battles of cable news or social media commentary and the hot take culture on which they thrive. We have to ignore every misleading headline, strawman, and false equivalency and go back to the moment that started it all: a single overhead photograph of a half-empty stadium and Kap seated mundanely between two Gatorade jugs. This photograph and its subsequent

controversy reveal to us that in the context of an NFL football stadium, the society of the spectacle is alive and well and serves as a clever disguise for the trained surveillance of black bodies. With the Colin Kaepernick protest serving as a catalyst for a conversation about how sport enables surveillance to be disguised as spectacle, I examine Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and specifically its infamous Battle Royal scene.

A scene of pure spectacle, Ellison's Battle Royal is a literary deployment of an all-too-real sporting tradition that crystallizes the ways sport can serve to enforce hierarchies and American racializations; the Battle Royal is a powerful and unsettling reminder that the commodification of black bodies translates readily from antebellum to twentieth century America. My goal is to demonstrate how this landmark text in African-American literature can show us the way to both a reading of sport in our nation's racial history as well as a viable ethics for approaching politics in sport today. What becomes clear is that sport, spectacle, and surveillance are wrapped up in the exercise of power over persons of color in the United States who are always already criminalized.

PANEL II: Football and Fútbol: Prodigies, Parodies, and Priority

Chair: Don Johnson (East Tennessee State University)

Fred Mason (University of New Brunswick), fmason@unb.ca

"*NFL Superpro*: Comic Book Hero as Marketing Misstep and Media Culture Artifact"

This paper considers the brief existence of a sports-themed comic book hero, NFL Superpro. Written in collaboration with the National Football League, *NFL Superpro* had a 12-issue run, published by Marvel comics in 1991. The main character, retired NFL quarterback Phil Grayson, acquired superpowers in an incident involving chemicals and burning sports memorabilia. Sporting near-indestructible football armor, with the NFL logo prominently emblazoned on his chest and helmet, NFL Superpro tackled a number of sports-themed villains, including the assassin "Quick Kick," and "Instant Replay," who could time travel. Superpro fit generic comic conventions in being a quick-tongued "all-American" hero, and the series featured requisite crossover appearances of Spider-Man and Captain America.

It could be simply written off as a misguided licensing attempt memorable only for its lack of originality. However, the focus will be on considering the series in the context of wider marketing efforts and the pace of the commercialization of North American sport in the late 1980s and early 1990s, coincident with the "sneaker wars" and a surge in sportswear sales. For example, Superpro references multi-sport athlete and

endorsement star Bo Jackson, in the hero's expansion to other sports in later issues, including one cover with the line "Pro knows b-ball." Further, *NFL Superpro* had real-world impacts when one issue featured villains wearing Kachina masks, which offended the Hopi nation, leading to them banning outsiders at Sun Dances for a period. Seemingly ephemeral media products often give interesting insights into the broader culture of their time.

Shawn Stein (Dickinson College), steins@dickinson.edu
"Playing Fairly: The Satiric Tradition in Football Fiction from Latin America"

This talk explores the satirical legacy in the emerging corpus of literary football fiction from Latin America. By exploring the intersections between satire and the myth of *Fair Play*, I establish how, in recent decades, contemporary authors of football literature have been invoking the discerning trepidations articulated by eminent authors Jorge Luis Borges, Adolfo Bioy Casares and Mario Benedetti through critiques of practices of exclusion, intimidation, corruption and match fixing. In Latin America, no figure looms larger over the ugly side of the beautiful game than Borges. In addition to co-authoring with Bioy Casares what some consider an emblematic work of anti-football fiction in "Esse est percipi," Borges allegedly stated publicly, "El fútbol es popular porque la estupidez es popular (football is popular because stupidity is popular)," and "El fútbol es un deporte de imbéciles (football is an imbecile's sport)."

The use of the satiric mode in "Esse est percipi" offers a prophetic critique of the inherent venality of the spectacle of football, which is exemplified by the plethora of present-day corruption scandals surrounding FIFA and its organization of mega events like the World Cup. Borges' iconoclast and jocular posturing in the 1960s and 1970s helped to cement his anti-football status in the Latin American football imaginary. Several contemporary authors make use of satirical elements to lay bare the incongruences of public disdain for football culture, while still paying due homage to works of football fiction from previous generations.

Richard V. McGehee (University of Texas at Austin), rmcgehee@utexas.edu
"Fútbol is Forever: Roberto Fontanarrosa's *¡Qué Lástima Cattamarancio!*"

Roberto Fontanarrosa was a respected Argentinean author and cartoonist, one of that nation's most important writers of soccer stories. "¡Qué Lástima Cattamarancio!" involves the radio broadcast of a soccer match between River Plate and San Lorenzo in River's monumental Buenos Aires stadium. Broadcasters Rodríguez Arias and, mainly, Ortiz Acosta, relate the action and provide side chatter, while their colleague

Cabrini is responsible for commercials and some other duties. Other voices include an injured San Lorenzo player and San Lorenzo's masseur, both at the side of the field, and "foreign correspondents" engineer Santiago Collar, speaking from deep in a coal mine in Nevada, USA, and Don Urbano Javier Ochoa, reporting from Petrograd, USSR.

Collar and Ochoa inform the broadcasters of nuclear attacks that the U.S. and the Soviet Union seem to have unleashed on each other and appeal for the radio station's aid in helping put the presidents of the two nations in contact with each other to try to resolve this issue. However, Ortiz Acosta, although sympathetic to the plight of both nations, believes that the game in progress is too important to interrupt its broadcast in order to treat such disagreeable happenings going on far from Argentina. He puts engineer Collar (and the U.S. president who is with Collar in the mine) on hold and continues describing the action on the field.

PANEL III: Sport and War, Dollars, and Eagles

Chair: Michele Schiavone (Marshall University)

Darrin Cox (West Liberty University), dcox@westliberty.edu
"War as Sport"

Noble memoirs produced in late medieval/early modern France represent a body of literature that specifically portrayed war as sport in order to maintain the illusion of a nobleman's free will and right to violence. As kings passed laws in their continual bid for more power and authority, the state effectively began to enforce a monopoly of violence. Unfortunately for the aristocracy, the tripartite division of society between those who prayed (clergy), those who fought (nobles), and those who worked (everyone else) meant that war was the means through which they earned their elevated status. In this arrangement a knight's martial activities ought to be performed for glory, in the service of others, or in the defense of a noble's traditional rights, rather than any pecuniary reward. Yet by equipping and paying more and more of the peasantry to fight their battles, kings were unwittingly turning war into work instead of feudal obligation.

To combat this slow transition to standing peasant armies and concomitant loss of status, noblemen took up their pens and narrated their experiences and motivations, depicting their involvement in war as a pleasant diversion or sport to demonstrate that they were still living nobly. While the philosophical debate on "what is sport" will underpin the argument, this presentation primarily focuses on the ways noblemen narrated their experiences specifically to convince readers that for them war was

simply an unpaid pastime undertaken of free will for the benefit of the kingdom in the pursuit of glory.

Mark D. Baumgartner (East Tennessee State University), baumgartnerm@etsu.edu
"Elegy for the St. Louis Rams, 1995-2015"

The proposed conference presentation will discuss the NFL Rams' departure from St. Louis, as experienced by a native of the city. Although some anecdotal experiences will be explored, special attention will be paid to the economic fallout from the move. I am particularly interested in the relationship between debt and the language of ownership. (A previous essay of mine "Dollars Damn Us: Artifice, Debt and Inflation in Contemporary Fiction," MMLA 2013, approaches this topic.)

The Ram's departure from a publicly funded $280 million stadium has left a gaping hole in the city's budget. St. Louis claims it has incurred losses in excess of $100 million, and has recently filed suit against the NFL. The suit contains multiple counts, including breach of contract and fraudulent misrepresentation. It is my intention to explore the complex relationship between a team, a city and its fan base, and ask the question of what it really means when we call a team "ours."

Duncan Jamieson (Ashland University), djamieso@ashland.edu
"The Flight of the Eagles"

During the early days of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, the students at Ashland College, a small, private, church related, conservative college tucked away in north central Ohio, determined to change their sports teams' identity. Known for several years as the Purple Titans, something that had little meaning for the students, they proposed new ideas for a mascot, and following a campus wide balloting "eagles" won, perhaps because of the significance and the popularity of the National Recovery Administration's Blue Eagle symbol. Several years later, four college men trekked over to Wooster, Ohio, twenty miles east, to kidnap a four foot, cast iron eagle perched atop a globe. The eagle was the trademark of the Case Implement Company, loaned to dealers to put in front of their store to alert potential customers. With a confederate in Ashland ready with cement they helped their new found friend build a nest in front of Founders Hall among the pine trees planted to honor the birth of faculty members' children. Thus began the twenty-five year flight of eagles to Ashland to the delight of the students, the chagrin of the administration, and the annoyance of Case dealers throughout the Midwest. This paper will be a creative compilation of the student stories on why and how they brought these eagles to their campus.

PANEL IV: Baseball I — W. P. Kinsella: A Memorial Panel
Chair: Tim Morris (University of Texas at Arlington)

Canadian fiction writer W.P. Kinsella (1935-2016) was one of the most prominent figures in the history of sport literature. In particular, he put baseball fiction squarely into the realm of serious literature, working more prolifically and ambitiously in the baseball-fiction genre than any other writer. In this memorial panel, we offer a critical appreciation of Kinsella at the first SLA conference to follow his death.

Mark Noe (Pennsylvania College of Technology), "Shoeless Joe"
Scott Peterson (University of Missouri — St. Louis), "The Iowa Baseball Confederacy"
Tim Morris (University of Texas at Arlington), "Kinsella's Short Fiction"
Willie Steele (Lipscomb University), "Kinsella's Biography"

Thursday, June 22

PANEL V: Fiction I and American Fiction
Chair: Phillip Wedge (University of Kansas)

Scott Palmieri (Johnson and Wales University), spalmieri@jwu.edu
"Pete Rose Night"

In the summer of 1960, Charles Dinkweather, as a boy, watched Pete Rose sign his scorecard, when Rose was 19 years old, in his first minor league season, playing on the field that later became the home of Dinkweather's college summer baseball team, the Geneva Knights. In the summer of 1996, Dinkweather invited him back and hoped that this night would turn around the season of his failing franchise.

Given Rose's lifetime ban from Major League Baseball, perhaps throwing out the first pitch on this July evening, just a few hours north of Cooperstown, would lift Rose's spirits and those of Geneva, which didn't have many heroes to call its own. Perhaps the people would remember Charles Dinkweather too, not just for DinkSoda, his successful soft-drink company, but for this moment, when a hero came home. All of this was possible, but as game time approached, he and his fellow Genevans wondered, would Pete Rose actually show up?

Joyce Duncan (East Tennessee State University), joyced1001@cs.com
"The Diary"

Jessica Libow (Emory University), jessica.libow@emory.edu
"Disability as Sport's *Nemesis:* Philip Roth, Athleticism, and Ability"

This essay turns to Philip Roth's 2010 novel *Nemesis* in order to bring a critical disability studies lens to bear on the study of sport in literature. Pushing back against the pervasive and at times insidious medicalization of impairment, disability studies draw out the ways in which social and physical landscapes are constructed to include only certain bodies and minds. In *Nemesis*, this dynamic plays out in the athletic arena. Detailing a fictional polio outbreak in 1944 New Jersey from the perspective of local physical educator Bucky Cantor, the novel distorts the already troublesome dichotomy between able and disabled bodies by equating athleticism with ability.

For the young boys in the novel, polio poses a threat not only to their lives, but also to the able-bodied masculinity they perform on the athletic field. Bucky's role as a physical educator is thus legible as that of a health professional, and he positions himself against the disease, which becomes his *nemesis.* The novel's suggestion that athleticism and disability are necessarily at odds invites us to think critically about the ableism that undergirds athletics as a social institution. By focusing our attention on the way Roth constructs ill and disabled bodies in opposition to athletic ones, we might begin to register sport as a site of disability production. Disability, I argue, is created in the athletic sphere not only through physical injuries on the field, but also through ideologies that designate value based on physical performance.

PANEL VI: Fiction II
Chair: Richard McGehee (University of Texas at Austin)

Bruce Pratt (University of Maine), "Reading from 'The Serpents of Blissful'"
Don Johnson (East Tennessee State University), "Reading from 'Yard Sale'"
Scott Peterson (University of Missouri—St. Louis), "Fiction Reading and Presentation from Works-in-Progress"

Friday, June 23

PANEL VII: Putting it in the Net: Fishing and Lacrosse
Chair: Duncan Jamieson (Ashland University)

Cory Willard (University of Nebraska—Lincoln), coryglenwillard@gmail.com
"A Ballad for the North Raven"

"A fly fisher usually finishes a day on the North Raven [River] tired, bruised and sweaty — physically worn out from tramping through the willow morass and emotionally drained by the intense nature of the fishing. He rarely returns feeling smug; humble is usually a better word." – Jim McLennan, Trout Streams of Alberta

It was probably around 2006 when I first stepped up to the banks of what is affectionately known among knowledgeable fly fishers in Alberta and beyond as "the Creek from Hell." The North Raven River, commonly also known as Stauffer Creek, bubbles up from clear underground springs in central Alberta approximately seventy-five kilometers west of Red Deer—Alberta's third largest city. This creek is special. While Montana, Idaho, and—believe it or not—even Nebraska are blessed with true spring creeks, Alberta has precious few. While to the uneducated eye it may not look it, the North Raven is the crown jewel of all Alberta's small streams. And it was there I fell in love. It was on the North Raven that I underwent the transformation from a novice fly fisher to a disciple of an aquatic religion that stretches back over half a millennia.

But, as with so many spiritual practices, fly fishing the North Raven requires sacrifice. "A Ballad for the North Raven" is a creative nonfiction piece that explores my personal connection to the North Raven River in central Alberta where I fell in love with the art and sport of fly fishing.

Charmayne Mulligan (Davenport University), cmulligan@davenport.edu
"'Girls Lacrosse': A Search for Young Adult Literature"

Despite the existence of women's lacrosse in the United States since the 1800s, the sport rarely is the focus of young adult literature. While lacrosse, and especially girls lacrosse, has seen a significant increase in the number of players, a focus on girls lacrosse in young adult literature has not kept up. The American Library Association's Young Adult Library Services Association validates the need for relevant, engaging, and appropriate reading material that reflects the self and identity of young adults (ages 12-19 for this presentation) in this age group as important to their development from children to adults. Bookstore, database, and internet searches reveal a diverse, but limited, number of works reflecting the presence of the sport in widely-available publications; additional publications featuring the sport are older, not widely available, or not well publicized.

Girls lacrosse is featured in a substantial way most often not in literature but in playing, parent, or coaching guides. When included in fictional texts, the sport is often

only a backdrop for other issues affecting teens such as friendships or romance. Three works warrant discussion as strong fiction for girls relating to lacrosse: *Live Love Lacrosse*, *Cross Manage*, and *Little Sisters of War*. This presentation examines the themes and purposes of these existing works and the need for relevant topics in young adult literature.

PANEL VIII: Baseball II — Baseball at Home and Away

Chair: Mark Noe (Pennsylvania College of Technology)

Andrew Kaplan (Independent Scholar), ank7by@virginia.edu

"Day Games and Night Games: Baseball and Early Modern Theater"

The relationship of sports to theatrical spectacle is well documented. But beyond simple observations on the performative aspect of athletics, the role of spectators, and the power of sports narratives, the two have more concrete connections in modern times. Many professional sports as we know them today are made possible by artificial illumination which was, until the late nineteenth century, an impossibility.

A similar story can be found in the history of English theater, where illuminated indoor performances — originally a novelty within the insular world of royals and noblemen — are now the norm for all classes of theatergoers. This paper seeks insight into the relationship of sport and spectacle by contrasting two parallel stories which unfolded two hundred years apart: the incorporation of artificial lighting (and, later, indoor stadiums) into major league baseball; and the move from open-air to indoor performance spaces undergone by William Shakespeare's company, the King's Men, in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Shakespeare and his contemporaries seem to have been fascinated by the possibilities of artificially illuminated performances (and their wealthy audiences) as well as perplexed by the distortions of reality that occur when, in Thomas Middleton's words, "torchlight makes an artificial noon." Conversely, night games began as experiments among baseball's minor leagues (themselves full of unusual theatrical elements) before rising into the Negro Leagues, the majors, and the mainstream.

How does something as unnatural as a day game played at night become the norm in both sports and theater? What are the real consequences for the product on the field or stage? Finally, what do reactions (both current and historical) to artificial illumination reveal about the relationship between sports and theater, real action and scripted performance–or between the real and the unreal?

Emily R. Rutter (Ball State University), errutter@bsu.edu
"Archives of Feeling in August Wilson's *Fences* and Denzel Washington's Filmic Adaptation"

August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Fences* (1985) is perhaps the most famous work about black baseball published to date. While much has been written about the play and of Wilson's "century cycle" more generally, less attention has been paid to the significance of *Fences* in terms of its documentation of the affective experiences associated with the Negro Leagues and their ultimate dissolution. In the proposed essay, I will argue that Wilson's play and, in turn, Denzel Washington's 2016 filmic adaptation emphasize the importance of feeling as a way of knowing an African American past that cannot be easily called forth through artifacts and official documents.

Their representations of black baseball, I suggest, are consonant with affect theorists, whose work in recent years has been productively cross-pollinating with theories of the archive in order to create affective modes of understanding marginalized historical experiences. In distinct ways, Wilson and Washington educe the tangle of unresolved feelings about both racial apartheid and Jackie Robinson's crossing of the color line. If, as Ann Cvetkovich proposes, "the quest for history" can be understood "as a psychic need rather than a science" (*Depression* 268), then Wilson and Washington offer a window into the past that artifacts and relics in the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum or, for that matter, the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum cannot. That is, both Wilson and Washington fill a "psychic need" to grapple with the legacy of black baseball, shedding light on the emotional residue that is left behind.

Richard V. McGehee (University of Texas at Austin), rmcgehee@utexas.edu
"Quisqueya Dreams: Tales of Pelota Dominicana"

Baseball is the national sport of the Dominican Republic, so it's not surprising that Dominican writers would incorporate elements and language of the sport into their creative work. "Círculo de Espera" is a collection of the winners and honorable mentions in the Dominican Republic's national baseball short story competition, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and published in Santo Domingo in 2012. This paper describes the three winning stories and five of the others.

"Tigre y cachorro" consists of a man's description of his professional and financial accomplishments, along with memories of his father's influence on him as a child. His

father took him to many games in the Quisqueya Stadium and instructed him on how to live and be successful, largely through the use of baseball metaphors. Now the man basks in his successes but realizes he's neglected his family, and instead of sharing baseball with his son, the boy spends all his time closed up in his room with his electronic gadgets and video games. The man resolves to change his life and become the tiger with his cubs.

"La vida es juego" involves a young man's memories of baseball games seen at the Quisqueya and heard on the radio from the early 1950s to 1960s and how they get mixed up with important political happening in the nation at that time.

In "Te la comiste, Vejiga," the Dominican air force's baseball team arrives at a small town to play the locals, who everyone assumes will be trounced. The game ends up very competitive largely due to the heroic efforts of the locals' left fielder, Vejiga. Vejiga is offered a place on the air force team, but negotiations fall through when it's discovered that he can't write or sign his name. The other stories involve fans, players, and radio broadcasters, as well as a young woman who detests baseball.

PANEL IX: Sport and Literature: American and English Connections

Chair: Bruce Pratt (University of Maine)

Dennis Gildea (Springfield College), dgildea@springfieldcollege.edu

"Salter on Skiing, Spider, and the Sundance Kid"

A "writer's writer," the *New York Times* called him, and for readers who loved equally the thrill of good writing and good skiing, James Salter (1925-2015) was the undisputed champion of the genre in the last half of the 20th century. Lyrically and lovingly, Salter conveyed his passion for the sport to the printed page and even to the screen. This essay is a close reading of four of Salter's nonfiction pieces, "The Skiing Life," "Classic Tyrol," "Europe's Longest Run," and "Immortal Days." In spirit and in theme, these pieces resonate with his screenplay, *Downhill Racer*, a Robert Redford film that Redford and Salter loosely based on the career of American maverick skiing star Spider Sabich. For Sabich, life after skiing was a short run. He was shot to death in 1976 by singer Claudine Longet, an event that Salter discusses in "The Skiing Life."

Philip Wedge (University of Kansas), pwedge@ku.edu
"Sport in the Novels of Thomas Hardy"

While the sporting reference most often quoted in Hardy scholarship—"'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess" (Hardy 451)—alludes to an abstract notion of play, Thomas Hardy's novels often reference sport, from childhood games to rowing, cricket, and, more often, shooting and hunting. Sporting characters such as Sergeant Troy, in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, or Lord Mountclere, in *The Hand of Ethelberta,* at times play central roles in Hardy fiction so that sport goes beyond the place of metaphorical figures of speech, of "sporting" with characters. Besides using sporting metaphors, Hardy often associates childhood games with a time of innocence and sometimes with a disappearing rural past. But sport can also take a thematically central position in Hardy's fiction, particularly in regards to the romantic themes of many of his novels, including *Far From the Madding Crowd, The Mayor of Casterbridge,* and even *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

PANEL X: Sport, Race, Politics and Gender
Chair: Kyle Belanger

Daniel Anderson (Dominican University), danderson@dom.edu
"Escaping the Iron Cage: Claude McKay and Sports in the Harlem Renaissance"

American sports reached unforeseen levels of popularity and influence in the 1920s, not only in the dominant culture but also amid the African-American cultural renaissance associated with Harlem. Still, sports are largely absent from most of the literature of the Harlem Renaissance. As most artists and intellectuals looked the other way, however, the African-American periodicals of the era embraced sports while asserting a role for the press in the movement's attempts to re-define a culture, driven in large part by Caribbean-born writers even more inclined than were their American-born counterparts to question cultural traditions. Virtually alone among the major artists of the Renaissance, the Jamaican-born poet and novelist Claude McKay recognized the popularity and the importance of sports. Like other self-proclaimed Bohemians of the era, he intertwined his desire to write about Harlem honestly and realistically with an unabashed promotion of internationalism and opposition to American capitalism. For McKay in particular, sports seemed cages of capitalism, imprisoning the African-American athlete.

In two separate, book-length works of nonfiction — the Marxist treatise *The Negroes in America* and his autobiography, *A Long Way from Home* — he faced a conundrum, finding opportunities in sports for art and freedom, only to accept Max Weber's controlling metaphor for sports in the capitalistic industrial machine: the "iron cage." McKay's writing on sports, especially boxing, attempts to subvert the Weberian metaphor with Marxist analysis, stressing the freedom of performance and play while critiquing the modern emphases on professionalism and profit.

Kasey Symons (Victoria University), kasey.symons@live.vu.edu.au
"Fan-tasy Figures and Gone Girls: How Gendered Performances Create Borders Between Female Fans of Elite Male Sports"

The stories told about sports fans tend to focus on the experiences of privileged male fans, with other groups either neglected or added as footnotes. My work builds on this issue by focusing specifically on the position/s of female fans of the Australian Football League, and thus explores the experiences of women in a fan culture in which men predominantly occupy multiple spaces within in it — either in the stands as fans, in the board rooms as executives or on the field as athletes. How female fans enveloped in this patriarchal system then perform and negotiate their gender and fandom, not only in relationship with these privileged men, but also in relation to the other women who enter these spaces is significantly complicated. By looking at these gendered performances through the lens of the "Cool Girl" concept made relevant through Gillian Flynn's 2012 novel, *Gone Girl*, I will explore how sporting arenas can be somewhat panoptic and force expected behaviors and how these behaviors are enforced by fans themselves. How female fans then police their behavior and, although sometimes subconsciously, adopt it to the expected behavior of the dominant participants, provides interesting insight to the predisposed perceptions of gendered stereotypes in sport. This is a common but unexplored process for women and other minorities who enter traditionally white, male spaces such as spectator environments of elite male sports.

Banquet and Evening Poetry Reading

Chair: Jeremy Larance (West Liberty University)

H. R. Stoneback (SUNY—New Paltz), "Sports Poems, Mostly New"

Saturday, June 24

PANEL XI: Boxing

Chair: Joyce Duncan (East Tennessee State University)

Todd Snyder (Siena College), tdsnyder@siena.edu

"12 Rounds in Lo's Gym: Boxing, Coalmining, and the Contradictions of Appalachian Manhood"

In this presentation, I will read two selections from my forthcoming boxing memoir "12 Rounds in Lo's Gym" (West Virginia University Press) — a collection of short stories that focus on my experiences growing up in and around my father's small town boxing gym in Cowen, West Virginia. My father, Mike "Lo" Snyder, was a fifth generation coalminer who had given up on a promising amateur boxing career to follow the family trade. After years of regret, he eventually opened a one-room boxing gym in the back of a Baptist community center and decided to use boxing as a tool to help mentor troubled youth in the area. "12 Rounds in Lo's Gym" highlights the stories of a generation in transition, foreshadowing the downfall of the coal industry in West Virginia. These are stories of ambition and hope in the face of cyclical poverty.

The two selections I plan to read for this presentation, "Fighting Noah Milton" and "Appalachian Underdogs of the Squared Circle," contain research on boxing history in Appalachia, as well as scholarship on working-class constructs of Appalachian "masculinity." While this project continues my work in the field of Appalachian Studies, this manuscript differs from my previous work in that it more traditionally fits within the fields of Working-Class Studies, Masculine Studies, and Sports Literature. At the heart of this presentation is a discussion of how the socio-economic realities of life in rural West Virginia impact the identities of young men.

Daniel Taradash (New Mexico Holocaust & Intolerance Museum), danieltaradash@gmail.com

"'If only for the sake of understanding': Floyd Patterson, Sonny Liston and the Limits of Black Heavyweight Champions in the early Civil Rights Era"

While existing literature, research and anecdotal evidence has provided ample evidence that Muhammad Ali was the first truly "free" Black heavyweight champion, there has been limited serious, scholarly analysis of the two champions who preceded him. Floyd Patterson and Sonny Liston, often cast as the "Good Negro" and "Bad

Nigger," respectively, found themselves in possession of the most coveted title in boxing during one of the most racially turbulent eras in American history. Biographers, fiction writers, sports journalists, activists and literary critics alike have all analyzed each man's career in some form or another, and each has drawn their own conclusions about the depth and meaning of each man's legacy.

However, when we analyze the words and actions of the men themselves, we are left with a somber, almost tragic set of conclusions about what it meant to be a Black heavyweight during the early years of the civil rights era. More specifically, we learn that even the most physically powerful man on the planet could be restrained, controlled and even neutralized should he find himself on the wrong side of certain groups, both Black and White. What the literature, and the words of the men themselves, reveal are portraits of men who were far more complex, informed and realistic concerning the power of a title that could simultaneously limit social access as well as grant it.

Michele Schiavone (Marshall University), schiavon@marshall.edu
"Adrian Matejka's Jack Johnson and the Shadow: An Examination of *The Big Smoke*"

Several African-American poets, including Yusef Komunyakaa, George Barlow, Cornelius Eady, and Kevin Young, have written about boxer Jack Johnson, the first African-American heavyweight champion. In *The Big Smoke*, published in 2013, poet Adrian Matejka creates a three-dimensional, nuanced portrait of Johnson. Johnson's driving forces are his ambition, acquisitiveness, and narcissism; some recurring topics are Johnson's blackness, his boxing genius, his relationships with white women, and his inner doubts. In many of the poems in the book, Johnson himself is the speaker, but several poems come from the point of view of Etta Duryea, Johnson's first white wife. Another perspective is that of Shadow; the "Shadow" poems, functioning as inner dialogues, challenge Johnson's assumptions and puncture his self-aggrandizement. The narrative ends with Johnson appearing as an attraction in a freak show. In a sense, he has always been a freak: a well-dressed, articulate African-American man who openly flouts the mores of early twentieth century America.

PANEL XII: Sport, Writing, Journalism

Chair: Scott Peterson (University of Missouri—St. Louis)

Tristan Ireson-Howells (Canterbury Christ Church University), tristan.ireson-howells@canterbury.ac.uk
"The Sporting Metaphor"

Sport as a metaphor for writing seems like the most clichéd idea in sports fiction. Authors drawing lazy analogies between the craft of writing and the dedication of athletic competition do little to promote the reputation of sports writing. Philip Roth brilliantly parodies this in the opening to *The Great American Novel* (1973). However, when dealt with imaginatively the metaphor can prove incredibly revealing. In *Fiesta* (1926), Hemingway wrote about Pedro Romero's grace in the bullring where the illusion to the act of writing was overt yet powerful. American authors have followed Hemingway's lead but have often taken original and experimental adaptations of the association. For example, Lawrence Shainberg draws parallels with the sportsman's and writer's need to succeed as comparable quests for moments of transcendence. In *Solo Faces* (1979) James Salter finds a link between the mountain climber's pursuit of the clearest route towards the summit of a cliff-face and the novelist's search for perfect clarity of expression.

It is intriguing to explore how far this simple metaphor can extend. In a progression of this concept writers such as Sherman Alexie and John Edgar Wideman show how passion for the freedom of street basketball mirrors the artistic liberty in their subversions of traditional literary form. When the characteristics of writing can reflect the sport in question then a new aesthetic can be developed. Rather than a limiting platitude I will explore the potential of sporting metaphor to expand with innovative sports writing.

Thomas Fabian (Western University), tfabian@uwo.ca
"George Plimpton: The Paper Lion and his Legacy"

This essay is a review of George Plimpton's classic of participatory journalism, *Paper Lion*, and its literary legacy. By providing a brief outline of the history of the sports journalism that both inspired Plimpton and that which was subsequently inspired by him, there is a better sense of the historiography of the text. Plimpton's day-job of literary critic informed his sports writing, allowing him to call on a range of metaphor and literary allusion absent or unavailable to most sports journalists in the 1960s. The review casts a critical eye on Plimpton's project, quoting the doubts of professional players and Plimpton's fellow literary critics as to the value of his work.

Plimpton's approach, however, would not be possible in today's hyper-commercialized NFL. The main theme of the book is the amateur-professional divide in American sports; however with the twist that amateur, here, refers to the non-athletic, as opposed to the unpaid sportsman. Plimpton presents himself — both in

this book and his others — as an amateur “everyman” seeking to experience sport from the perspective of the professional player. Novel to the field of sports journalism, Plimpton’s participation in professional sports — and other intriguing professions — would create an indelible mark on journalism, professional sport, and the way in which fans consume sports.

H. R. Stoneback (SUNY—New Paltz), hrs714@gmail.com
"Winner Take Nothing: Jack London — *Our First Celebrity Sportswriter* — and Ernest Hemingway"

This paper examines sportswriting and sporting imagery in the work of Jack London, "our first celebrity sportswriter." It is hard to believe, given the past half-century of neglect of London's work in canonical circles, that he was, a century ago, one of the best-known American writers, ranked very high in both popular and critical esteem. This paper studies London's writing on sport, ranging from such pieces as "A Piece of Steak" (1911, boxing) to "The Madness of John Harned" (1913, bullfighting), from "A Royal Sport" (1911, surfing) to the "Lepers of Molokai" (1908, games at Kalaupapa), from "Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Winner Take Nothing" (1913, amateur athletic competition) to "The Most Dangerous Game" (1911, hunting). In addition, the wide range of London's personal sporting activities–hunting, fishing, boating, boxing, fencing, etc.–is considered. In that last sentence, we could replace the word *London* with *Hemingway.* Indeed, though neglected in Hemingway studies, the long shadow of London's writing and public persona falls across Hemingway's life and work, from the subjects of London's writing to London as mythic figure of adventure, from his alcoholism to his rumored suicide. My concern here is more with affinity than with influence, though there is more influence than we have noted. Will it suffice to say that London was, during Hemingway's boyhood, the most obvious model of what a famous writer could be? And then the echoes: London's 1913 "Winner Take Nothing" — Hemingway's 1933 volume *Winner Take Nothing*; London's "The Most Dangerous Game" — Hemingway's "The More Dangerous Game" — one of his rejected titles for "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber."

PANEL XIII: Sport and Literature — The French Connection AND Poetry
Chair: Thomas Bauer (University of Limoges)

Rebecca Wines (Cornell College), rwines@cornellcollege.edu
“Embodying National Debates: Sex, Gender, and French Rugby Calendars”

When the Stade Français rugby team of Paris debuted their Dieux du Stade nude calendar series with its 2001 edition, not everyone was impressed in the world of traditional French rugby union. Many were already ill-disposed towards Stade Français's club president, Max Guazzini, because of his outsider status to rugby and his introduction of a sense of spectacle to the Parisian team. However, Guazzini's marketing and business strategies worked and Stade Français rose through the ranks of the Top 14 on the pitch as its popularity grew off of it. Guazzini stepped down as artistic director of the Dieux du Stade series in 2012 and François Rousseau, who had photographed previous calendars, took control. In that year's installment, the (all male) athletes were portrayed as survivors of a disaster who were setting out for distant horizons; the following year continued that story-arc by showing them constructing a settlement.

Rousseau introduced a twist to their homosocial world, however, by including a woman in images at the end of the 2013 publication. According to the official Stade Français website, these final mixed photographs represent a "hopeful note" in the calendar's "allegory of life." Through their pictures recounting an apocalypse and the founding of a new civilization, the narrative in the 2012 and 2013 calendars participated — whether consciously or not — in the political discussions that were taking place during the time of the photographs' conception and production. Themes of colonialism, gender, and sexuality permeate the glossy images and when read in the context of the calendars' contemporary cultural setting, can be seen as allegories for France's shifting identity and for debates about *le mariage pour tous*, adoption, and medically assisted procreation. This paper will explore those links and how they impact French rugby union's traditional constructions of sex and gender.

Thomas Bauer (University of Limoges), bauer.thomas@orange.fr
and **Yohann Fortune** (University of Caen)
"Revisiting the Myth of Emil Zatopek: *Running*(2008) by Jean Echenoz"

'ZA-TO-PEK! ZA-TO-PEK! ZA-TO-PEK!' The mantra resounded throughout all European stadiums in the early 1950s. In an atmosphere of euphoria at such easy dominance, the chant of tens of thousands of spectators rang out in step with the races of the triple gold medalist at the Helsinki Olympic Games. Could his name and its three punchy syllables possibly have played a part in building his glory or, at least, made a powerful contribution to 'the myth', as suggested by French novelist Jean Echenoz? The latter raises a decisive question and one which engages the attention of the sports historian: can a myth be created from a sportsman? A daunting question given its complexity. So how did Jean Echenoz engage with the idea of a myth? While

showing clear intentions to trace the athlete's life and reposition it within the context of a country successively under the yoke of Nazi Germany and the USSR, why did the author seek to portray a rather sombre image of a man who was mostly presented as being cheerful and popular by the international sports press? Why, when reading the novel, did this informed and expert reader in the sporting aspect and history of athletics have the feeling that while it admittedly told the story of a famous runner, it presented the latter as a simple-minded young man, rather than as an exceptional athlete?

Answering these questions requires that the three main characters of the author's trilogy of biographical novels (Maurice Ravel in *Ravel*, Emil Zatopek in *Running* and Nikola Tesla in *Lightning*) be compared, since a common point arises between the musician, sportsman and inventor: that of a genius fallen from his pedestal. By adopting the principles pertaining to the social history of representations, as well as those of romantic transposition, the investigation method chosen here aims to understand how a novelist succeeds in challenging a sporting myth and turning it into a bookstore success, translated into twenty languages and with 109,000 copies published, of which 98,000 have already been sold.

Ron Smith (St. Christopher's School), "Poetry Reading"