Cheerful player

Apathetic player

Cheerful player

Euphoric courtside reporter

Photo: Reuters

Eurobasket 2011
• Interpretive commentary in TV sports broadcasting spans between 27-41% \[^{1,2}\] 
• Nationalized coverage—attracts stronger ratings \[^{3}\] 
• Differential descriptions: “home” athletes’ qualities exaggerated, emblematic of nation’s character. Success attributed to immeasurable qualities. \[^{4-6}\] 
• Ethnicity/race: Black are “natural” athletes, White have superior intellect, perseverance, and hard work \[^{4,7,8}\]
Sports broadcasts on TV Slovenija [9,10,11]

• Interpretive dialogue:
  – Olympics: 44%
  – Team sports: 30%
  – Largely attributing success (7/3); constant through nationality, ethnicity, gender

• Slovenian representatives: [10]
  – More about talent/ability, extroversion (immeasurable)
  – Less about age, experience, past results (measurable)

• White athletes: more about talent/ability
• Black athletes: plenty about athletic speed/strength, past results, and performance expectations. Notions of physical superiority?
Some examples

• “In lane 7, um... Huh, let me try reading this: Nirinahar...ifidy Ramili...jaona from Madagascar. I made it! I nearly broke my tongue.”

• “Nothing in particular, the group is still compact. Just one athlete, Min Thu Soe from Myanmar cannot, of course, keep up to this pace. Namely, the representative of Myanmar has a personal best, well, average for a women’s competition, 15:16.23. He probably wouldn’t even win the Slovenian national championship.”
Some examples

• “The best asian runner, Yoshitaka Iwamizu. By ‘the best Asian runner,’ I mean, of course, from that true Asia, not those imported runners from Africa who compete for Gulf countries.”

• “The Black imported Norwegian, Ezinne Okparaebbo, is also very fast. Okparaebbo actually comes from Nigeria and is one of the almost two million immigrants from other continents in Norway. When you walk through the streets of Oslo you feel as if you were in Nairobi and not in a Scandinavian capital.”
Some examples

• “We’ve watched countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Virgin Islands, Guyana, the Netherlands Antilles, Micronesia, Turkmenistan, American Samoa, Myanmar, Cambodia, Sudan, Palestine, Tajikistan, the Maldives, Rwanda, Guinea, Malawi, Seychelles, Tanzania, Antigua and Barbuda, Laos, Yemen, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Congo. So, a whole bunch of, we could say, non-swimming countries. But it’s passed now.
Announcers’ feedback

• Author: exoticism, sexiness etc. are ‘facts’
• Other announcers: wordings were inappropriate
• Editor: “You can apply some sanctions, but the thing has already been said, anyway; the damage has been done.”
Announcers on patriotism

• Veterans: ‘Certain amount’ of bias is ‘normal.’
• Former sports journalist association president: “The public does not accept unbiased commentators well.”
• Editor: Veterans argue that commentators on public television should not use personal pronouns to denote competitors as ‘ours,’ or say that ‘we’ are playing. Personally “in doubt” regarding what approach is suitable, but “thinks” sportscasters should avoid sentences such as “our athletes” and “we are playing”.

?
Why this matters?

• TV cultivates the way people see the world; it precedes and increasingly preempts reading as a source of information-gathering [12]

• For sports fans, TV is king, and are heavier users of all media than non-sports fans [13]

• Practical concern: driving away viewers that enjoy (merely) sports? What happens when ‘home’ team loses/plays badly?
Why this matters?

• Bias and fandom in sports journalism:
  – Public media and shifting notions of public
  – When have ‘fans’ uncovered foul play? → Ghanaian journalists barely managed to suppress news about match-fixing. [14]
  – Individuals enhance their self-esteem by identifying with social groups [15,16]

• Slovenian Minister of education and sport: doping, match-fixing marginal phenomena. [17]
What is your view?

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