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### *Third Transcultural Thematic Issue*

### *“Transcultural Impacts and Perspectives on the Future”*

**Perspectives from Finland, France, India, Italy, Japan, Sweden, the United States of America, and Venezuela.**

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## **The Future of Sports: Top Down, Bottom Up, or Both?**

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### **Introduction**

Two sports cultures—the “top-down” and the “bottom-up”—compete for the public’s leisure time and money. The top-down sports culture features entertainment by the athletically gifted for the vast majority with ordinary or poor athletic skills. The entertainment is akin both to movie and television drama and to war. There are multiple elements of drama in top-down sports. Will the rookie beat out the aging veteran for a place on the team? Will an injured star be able to return to his former greatness on the playing field, court, or rink? Just as a citizen hopes his country’s armed forces will win its wars, the top-down sports fan hopes his or her team will prevail over that of the rival school, city or country.

The bottom-up sports culture features anyone of any age, sex or physical condition testing his or her endurance, strength or flexibility in competition against others or himself or herself, simply trying to assure good health or just having fun. In the future, the two cultures may continue to co-exist and grow in popularity as they have in the recent past or one could marginalize the other. Economic conditions and social attitudes will be major determinants of whether the two sports cultures in the future will continue to co-exist and prosper. The following sections of this article describe the two cultures and the outlook for their futures.

### **The Top-Down Sports Culture**

The top-down sports culture is a multi-billion dollar global enterprise, incorporating and replacing national sports cultures. Four key factors have contributed to the global success of the top-down sports culture:

- High profile international competitions of which the Olympic Games are the most prominent and in which traditional dominance of countries in particular sports is disappearing
- The willingness and ability of professional and top amateur athletes to compete outside as well as within their home countries
- The willingness and ability of sports leagues and teams to market their sports and of investors to purchase ownerships in teams outside their home countries
- Vast amounts of money from ticket sales, media contracts, corporate sponsorships, and government support

The top-down sports culture remains successful worldwide despite a dark side that includes drug and gambling scandals, fan misconduct (especially soccer hooliganism), criminal behavior of athletes, and taxpayer opposition to subsidization of sports leagues and teams (especially publicly financed stadium construction). Sports governing bodies, leagues and teams have made significant efforts to police themselves (e.g., drug testing of athletes by the World Anti-Doping Authority). However, no one can say with certainty whether these actions will avert a global public backlash

### ***High Profile International Competition***

The Olympic Games are the most prominent of the many high profile international sporting events. They are held every two years with winter and summer games alternating. The next Winter Olympics will be in 2010 in Vancouver, Canada, and the next Summer Olympics in London, England, in 2012. Athletes will compete in 7 sports in Vancouver and 26 in London. Each sport has multiple events for a total of about 400.<sup>i</sup> Most sports have separate events for men and women, and women's participation nearly equals men's.

Cities vie years in advance to host the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. Once the International Olympic Committee (IOC) chooses a host city, that city and its national government make costly, elaborate preparations and subject themselves to intense IOC and media scrutiny to assure that preparations are adequate. The preparations include building venues for the sports competitions, upgrading infrastructure to accommodate the thousands of attending fans and athletes, and taking elaborate security measures. Britain has budgeted 9.3 billion pounds (\$15.3 billion) for the 2012 games.<sup>ii</sup>

The mass media, the general public, and national sports governing bodies focus mostly on the numbers of gold, silver and bronze medals each nation's Olympic team brings home rather than individual athletic achievement. National Olympic committees and sports governing bodies (especially in the major nations) strive to increase their medal counts, and they employ professional athletes and subsidize amateurs as necessary to do so. The competition to increase Olympic medal counts is a major factor in globalization of the top-down sports culture because countries import coaches, send athletes abroad for training, or naturalize foreign athletes to gain sports expertise they lack. For example:

- China dominates world competitive Table Tennis while in the U.S. table tennis is largely a recreational activity. The United States' 2008 women's Olympic table tennis team had two members who formerly competed for China—Wang Chen and Gao Jun.<sup>iii</sup>

- Baseball was invented in the U.S. but is practically unknown in China. To prepare for 2008 Olympic baseball competition at Beijing, China hired former major league player Jim Lefebvre as coach five years in advance. <http://www.nbcolympics.com/baseball/news/newsid=206853.html>

As a result of high profile international sports competition, country teams no longer automatically win world or Olympic championships in their national games. For example:

- Americans invented baseball, but Japan won the first two world baseball classics. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_Baseball\\_Classic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Baseball_Classic)).
- Canadians invented ice hockey, but Russia won the 2008 International Ice Hockey Federation world championship.<sup>iv</sup>
- Cricket originated in England. But, teams from Southeast Asian and Caribbean nations of the former British Empire, where cricket has become enormously popular, often win international competitions such as Pakistan's victory over Sri Lanka in the 2009 International Cricket Council World Twenty/20 at the famed Lords cricket ground in England.<sup>v</sup>

### *International Mobility of Professional Athletes*

Professional athletes play where they can earn the most money, including outside their home countries, and professional sports teams recruit players internationally for high salaries as a matter of course. The international flow of athletes has been principally from emerging economies to North America and Europe. For example

- Over 25% of Major League Baseball players and over 45% of minor leaguers come from outside the United States. The largest foreign contingent is from the Dominican Republic—88 major and 1,636 minor leaguers. Dominicans like Juan Marichal, Pedro Martinez, Miguel Tejada and David Ortiz have been among baseball's greatest stars, and Major League Teams have established scouting operations and baseball academies in the Dominican Republic.<sup>vi</sup>
- Over half the members of the Ladies Professional Golf Association (L.P.G.A.) tour are from outside the United States and include 45 South Koreans. Korean players continue to be among the top money winners on tour including Se Ri Pak, who has won 24 tournaments and earned over \$10 million in her career.<sup>vii</sup>
- European teams have signed hundreds of Brazilian soccer players. A Brazilian firm, The Office of Traffic, buys player contracts of players, lends the players to teams to let them showcase their talent, and reaps a share of the transfer fee if European teams recruit the players.<sup>viii</sup> European teams pay huge sums to secure Brazilian stars. In 2009, Real Madrid paid 80 million British pounds for transfer of Cristiano Ronaldo from Manchester United and 56 million pounds to sign Kaka.<sup>ix</sup>
- Russian and European hockey players like Alexander Ovechkin and Evgeni Malkin star in North America's National Hockey League (NHL). In 2008, 28 percent of NHL players were from outside North America compared to 9.2 percent in 1984. The Cold War's end allowed many fine hockey players freely to seek N.H.L. contracts.<sup>x</sup>

- 20 percent of National Basketball Association (NBA) players come from outside the United States. Perhaps, the best known is Yao Ming, the Chinese 7'6" Center for the Houston Rockets. He is at least partly responsible for the popularity of N.B.A. basketball in China. <sup>xi</sup>

### *International Sports Marketing and Investing*

Economic globalization has facilitated international sports marketing and investing, and sports leagues, teams and investors are taking full advantage of the new opportunities. Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Football League (NFL), the National Hockey League (NHL), and the National Basketball Association (NBA)—are expanding internationally. All except the National Football League have Canadian franchises, they all have played regular season games in Canada, and all but the NBA have played regular season games outside North America.

MLB's association with Japanese professional baseball dates from 1908. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, U.S. all-star teams played, and usually won, exhibition games, against the Japanese. More recently, Japanese players like Boston's Daisuke Matsuzaka and Seattle's Ichiro Suzuki have become MLB stars, and, in 2005, former major leaguer Bobby Valentine, Manager of the Chiba Lotte Marines, led them to the Japanese Series Championship—the first foreign-born manager to do so. The 2000, 2004, and 2008 MLB regular seasons opened in Japan with series between the New York Mets and Chicago Cubs, New York Yankees and Tampa Bay Rays, and Boston Red Sox and Oakland Athletics. <sup>xii</sup>

The NFL has been trying to internationalize American professional football for the past two decades. It founded and supported the World League of American Football, later renamed NFL Europa, from 1991-2007. In 2007, the NFL adopted a new strategy of playing up-to-two regular season international games, and, following that policy, the New York Jets played the Miami Dolphins and the New Orleans Saints played the San Diego Chargers at London's Wembley Stadium. That game attracted over 80,000 spectators and was telecast on Sky TV and the BBC. London considered bidding for the 2014 Super Bowl, but the NFL chose New Orleans instead. <sup>xiii</sup> Beginning in the 2008 season, the NFL's Buffalo Bills began playing one regular season game per year and one pre-season game every other year in Toronto, Canada. <sup>xiv</sup>

NHL teams have played exhibition games in Europe irregularly since 1938, but recently they have begun playing regular season games and participating in international tournaments there. The Los Angeles Kings and Anaheim Ducks opened their 2007-2008 seasons in London, the Ottawa Senators and Pittsburgh Penguins opened the 2008-2009 season in Stockholm, Sweden, and the New York Rangers played the Tampa Bay Lightning in that season in Prague. The 2009-2010 season will open with games between the Detroit Red Wings and St. Louis Blues in Stockholm and between the Chicago Blackhawks and Florida Panthers in Helsinki. The Victoria Cup in which an NHL team plays the best European club team has become an annual event. In September 2009, the Chicago Blackhawks will play the European champion Zurich Lions. <sup>xv</sup>

The NBA is developing professional basketball in China and India. It has formed NBA China with former ESPN executive Heidi Ueberroth heading the effort. In 2008, the league announced a project to build several arenas in China to open the possibility of association with a top Chinese league. In a May 2009, Ms. Ueberroth said the Chinese project is on track despite the economic recession, the NBA is trying to do customized programming in India including development of a website with content in Hindi and English, and it has opened several offices in Europe. <sup>xvi</sup>

Wealthy Russian, American, United Arab Emirates and Icelandic investors own Ten English Premier League soccer teams – Arsenal, Manchester United, Liverpool, Portsmouth, Aston Villa, Chelsea,

Fulham, West Ham, Sunderland, and Manchester City. This phenomenon has evoked considerable resentment in Britain because soccer is such an integral part of British culture, but it continues because traditional British owners lack the capital for successful modern team operations.<sup>xvii</sup>

### ***Big Money***

The top-down sports culture requires and gets a lot of financial support. Staging international and domestic sporting events, building and maintaining stadiums and training facilities, and paying player salaries require vast sums of money. Principal revenue sources include media rights, ticket (including seat license), and stadium naming rights sales, corporate sponsorships, and government subsidies. Only since the start of the current serious economic recession have sports begun to lose the financial support they have used so effectively for growth and success in recent decades.

Media rights are internationally marketed, even for sports that are played wholly within a country, and contracts are in effect for several years at a time. For example:

- The IOC has raised over \$10 billion from sale of Olympic broadcast rights since 1984, including \$1.7 billion for the 2008 Beijing summer Olympics and \$833 million for the 2006 Turin Winter Olympics. Although Olympic broadcast rights are sold in many countries, U.S. broadcast rights are the most important. In 2003, NBC paid \$2.2 billion for broadcast rights to the 2010 and 2012 Olympics.<sup>xviii</sup>
- Television rights to NFL games are the most lucrative and expensive of any sport. 4 U.S. networks—CBS, NBC, Fox, and ESPN—are paying \$20.4 billion for the rights to telecast NFL games through the 2011 season and through the 2013 season for ESPN.<sup>xix</sup>

Major sports event tickets are expensive. Ticket sales include tickets to single and multiple games, and personal seat licenses (PSLs)—rights to buy season tickets to a team’s home games, which are usually sold to help pay for stadium construction. At least, 15 NFL, 5 MLB and 2 NHL teams and 3 auto racing tracks have seat licenses.<sup>xx</sup> For example:

- Tickets to 2010 Olympic events range in price from \$25 for some Nordic events to \$1,100 for the opening ceremonies, not including service charges, taxes, delivery fees or transportation to mountain venues outside Vancouver.<sup>xxi</sup>
- In 2008, NFL game tickets ranged in price from \$51 to \$118 each, not including expenses like parking and refreshments, which can bring the price of attendance a family of 4 to a league average of \$396. Premium 2008 prices including amenities like luxury seating and parking ranged from \$160 to \$567.<sup>xxii</sup>
- The Dallas Cowboys are selling seat licenses for their new stadium at prices ranging from \$16,000 to \$150,000. Good for 30 years, the seat licenses are the most expensive in professional sports.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Sports teams also defray stadium costs by selling naming rights to private corporations. Corporations receive the benefit of having stadiums called by their company names for widely varying periods of time for widely varying costs per year. For example, Federal Express pays the NFL’s Washington Redskins \$7.6 million per year for having the team’s stadium called FedEx Field until 2025 and the NBA’s Memphis Grizzlies \$4.5 million a year for having the team’s arena called FedEx Forum until 2023. North American sports teams have sold naming rights for about 70 sports stadiums and arenas.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Corporate event sponsorships are another major revenue source. The professional golf tours and NASCAR are especially dependent on sponsorships. Sponsorship of a race like the Coca Cola 600 at Lowe's Motor Speedway can cost \$500,000 to \$2,000,000. For this, the sponsoring company gets perks such as having the event bear the company's name, venue signage, being the Grand Marshal and giving the trophy to the winner.<sup>xxv</sup>

National, regional and local governments provide various forms of financial support for top-down sports. National government guarantees against financial loss have become an issue in the competition to host the 2016 Olympics. The governments of Spain, Brazil and Japan have included such guarantees in Madrid's, Rio's and Tokyo's proposals, but Chicago, hoping to be able to purchase insurance against any loss, has not. In the United States, local governments have either paid for new stadiums themselves and then rented them to teams as Washington, DC, did for MLB's Washington Nationals, or helped finance infrastructure improvements and lower borrowing costs as New York City and State did for the Mets' Citifield and the new Yankee Stadium.

For the first time in recent memory, the severe economic recession of 2008-2009 has cracked holes in the revenue raising armor of the top-down sports culture, and all sports have been affected. For example:

- The Arena Football League cancelled its entire 2009 season.<sup>xxvi</sup>
- The L.P.G.A. lost 4 tournaments as a result of withdrawn sponsorships.<sup>xxvii</sup>
- The Phoenix Coyotes hockey team went into bankruptcy and faced the possibility of a new owner moving the team to Canada.<sup>xxviii</sup>
- Sports teams and leagues such as the Washington Redskins laid off administrative personnel.<sup>xxix</sup>

Whether such impacts will be lasting depends on the length and ultimate severity of the recession. The economic downturn came so suddenly and quickly that long-term revenue raisers such as television and naming rights contracts were not substantially affected, and impacts on season ticket sales were not immediately felt.

## **The Bottom-Up Sports Culture**

The bottom-up sports culture is one of mass participation in a wide range of sports and fitness activities by people of all ages and both sexes. The need for people to be physically active to assure good health; changing laws, regulations and social attitudes; improving technology; and increasing opportunities for participation (especially after college and high school) have been principal causes of this mass participation.

### ***Physical Activity to Assure Good Health***

Physicians used to think some people should refrain from physical activity, but they now unanimously advocate more physical activity for everyone, even including heart attack patients and pregnant women on bed rest. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) publish guidelines for physical activity appropriate for children and adolescents, adults, and older adults.<sup>xxx</sup> The guidelines emphasize sports and fitness activities like brisk walking, jumping rope, and gymnastics for children and adolescents; bicycling, tennis and weight lifting for adults; and dancing, yoga, and working with resistance bands for older adults.

Many people do not engage in enough physical activity for good health. The World Health Organization estimates that physical inactivity causes 1.9 million deaths per year worldwide<sup>xxxii</sup>, and the CDC estimated in 2005 that a majority of Americans did not engage in enough physical activity for good health<sup>xxxiii</sup>.

Some American children and adolescents get too much physical activity, and many do not get enough, because American youth sports rely excessively on the competitive sports model. Except in basketball, the number playing on organized teams exceeds those playing pickup games. Playing on organized teams encourages an ethic of winning the next game or league championship rather than participation by all. Thus the most athletically talented children get the playing time while the less athletic sit on the bench or quit in favor of inactive pursuits such as computer games and television watching. The most athletically talented children and adolescents get too much physical activity by specializing in a sport and playing it year round on multiple teams. This causes serious overuse injuries and mental burnout that discourage young athletes from exercising enough in adult life. Girls are especially vulnerable to ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) tears and concussions from over-competing in sports. Michael Sokolove portrays this pervasive problem in American youth sports culture in vivid and heart breaking fashion in his 2008 book *Warrior Girls: Protecting Our Daughters Against the Injury Epidemic in Women's Sports*. Diverse organizations and individuals like The American Academy of Pediatrics, MomsTeam, Michael Sokolove, and Fred Engh, President of the National Alliance for Youth Sports and author of *Why Johnny Hates Sports: Why Organized Youth Sports Are Failing Our Children and What We Can Do About It*, are actively attempting to change the American youth sports value system in favor of inclusiveness and fun. However, those pushing for change face an uphill climb because:

- The top-down sports culture—professional and top college sports teams and leagues and national sports governing bodies—have an interest in and support keeping the youth sports culture as it is to assure a continuing supply of talented athletes.
- Parents, often mistakenly, believe allowing and encouraging their children to participate, frequently to the exclusion of other extra-curricular activities and at a sacrifice of family life, will improve their chances of admission to college, preferably with accompanying athletic scholarships, and prepare them well for adult life.

Many agree that most adults should devote some leisure time to sports and fitness activities to be sufficiently active. Theoretically, they can be active enough in three phases of life—paid employment, domestic chores, and transportation—besides leisure. However, employment is becoming increasingly sedentary as machines take over work from people, automation and mechanization of the home eliminate physical activity in domestic chores, and urban design in favor of transportation by private automobile precludes walking and bicycling for transport.

### ***Changing Laws, Regulations and Social Attitudes***

Changes in laws, regulations and social attitudes are making more sports and fitness participation possible for more people. The most significant recent change in recent decades has been substantially increased female participation. In the United States, this has been a direct result of compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which requires equal opportunity for women and girls in school and university sports programs. Since passage, the proportion of girls participating in high school sports has grown from 1 in 27 to 1 in 2.5<sup>xxxiii</sup>, and their numbers have grown from 300,000 to 3 million<sup>xxxiv</sup>. High school girls now even participate in the traditional male sports of wrestling and weightlifting. About 5,000 high school girls wrestled in the 2006-2007 school year, often against boys.<sup>xxxv</sup> Since 1997,

Florida has officially sanctioned girls' weightlifting as a school sport, and girls' school weightlifting clubs have come into existence around the nation.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Title IX appears to have made female school and college sports participation a permanent part of American sports culture. Moreover, women have carried over their participation in school sports and fitness activities into adult life to such an extent that they are in the majority of participants in some sports such as swimming, volleyball, and inline skating and a significant minority in others such as bowling, cycling, and canoeing.

The traditional belief that old age is a time of frailty, ill health and sitting in a rocking chair is slowly changing. One of the factors leading to this change is the medical community's scientifically supported advice for people over 65 to exercise. In fact, the CDC recommendation in the guidelines cited above is for people over 65 to spend as much time exercising as younger adults. And, data show that people in mid-life and beyond are significantly affecting total growth in American sports participation. A 2006 Consilience Group study showed that total participation and participation by Americans over 45 was growing in 21 sports and fitness activities, total participation was declining but participation by Americans over 45 was growing in 13 sports.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

### ***Improving Technology***

Improving technology has made increased sports participation possible for more people by providing better means for preventing and recovering from injuries; keeping people comfortable, connected, and entertained while they exercise; and measuring and recording athletic performance. For example, Nike and Apple offer the Nike+iPod Sport Kit consisting of a sensor that fits into a Nike shoe and connects wirelessly to an iPod Nano. It plays a runner's or walker's choice of music to him or her as he or she runs or walks, records the runner's or walker's performance, and announces it every few minutes. After the workout, the runner or walker can download the performance data to his or her computer.

### ***Increasing Participation Opportunities***

American adults have a wide and increasing range of opportunities to participate in sports and fitness activities. They can compete against members of their own sex and age group or just participate non-competitively in organized events such as triathlons, marathons, shorter distance runs, walks, bicycle rides, golf tournaments, and multi-sport adventure races. Charities offer participation in many of these events as a way to raise money, and cities and regions offer them as a way to promote tourist visits. Consider these data points:

- The number of U.S. triathlon races grew from 897 in 2004 to 1769 in 2008.<sup>xxxviii</sup>
- There are about 70 annual marathon races in all regions the United States.<sup>xxxix</sup>
- The National Multiple Sclerosis Society sponsors about 100 MS Bike Rides nationwide.<sup>xl</sup>
- The United States Adventure Racing Association (USARA) sponsors about 100 multi-sport adventure races annually. (In adventure races, teams of 2-5 members engage in a varying mix of such sports as biking, orienteering, hiking, and canoeing over varying distances.)<sup>xli</sup>

Exercise vacations are popular. Many companies offer tours in which bicycling and walking are the means of transport. For example, Country Walkers offers tours in many parts of the United States, Australia, Europe and South America, and Vermont Bicycle Touring offers bicycle vacations throughout North America and Europe. These exercise vacations are expensive, but they do provide excellent opportunities for sports participation for those who can afford them.<sup>xlii</sup>

New sports and adaptations of old ones result in continued growth in participation. Gentle sports friendly to women and older people such as yoga and Pilates have become extremely popular. New sports like bicycle polo and underwater hockey combine two or more traditional sports and fitness activities. A particularly interesting trend is adults playing sports originally intended for children such as kickball, dodgeball and pickleball. Some participants in these sports take these games seriously, but most play them purely for enjoyment.<sup>xliii</sup>

Recreational trails all over America provide excellent places to hike, walk, run, ride bicycles, roller skate, ski cross country, snowshoe and ride horseback without interference from cars and at no or low cost. Nobody knows for sure how many miles of such trails there are, but they probably total over 200,000 (mostly in rural areas). The most important trails for encouraging Americans to exercise are those in urban areas where most Americans live. Many are rail trails built on abandoned or shared railroad rights-of-way. In 1986, there were fewer than 200 rail trails. Today, there are 1,500 covering totaling over 14,000 miles in length.<sup>xliv</sup>

## **The Future Outlook**

### ***The Top-Down Sports Culture***

Even though playing sports at a high level is for a very small minority, the top-down sports culture is doing a lot of things right in competing against other forms of entertainment, including the bottom-up sports culture, for the consumer's leisure time and discretionary funds. One of its greatest strengths has been fostering sports traditions like the Olympic Games, baseball's World Series, and soccer's World Cup. People want to be part of these traditions and are willing to pay high ticket prices and cable and television fees to feel that they are part of them. They will give up their vicarious participation only gradually or not at all. Top-down sports governing bodies, leagues and teams have moved aggressively to broaden their popular appeal by expanding internationally, both physically and through old and new mass media, including some like the NFL network they directly own. And, the media have been willing to pay handsomely to join the top-down sports culture. Corporations have seen association with sports as a valuable marketing tool and have bought expensive sponsorships and stadium naming rights, and governments, eager for national and regional prestige, have also provided generous support. Economic globalization has helped by facilitating cross border investment in sports and international migration of athletes. One might think that the dark side of the top-down sports culture (only briefly dealt with here!) could ultimately jeopardize its future. However, despite much adverse publicity over matters such as former Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick's illegal dog fighting business, top-down sports remain popular, partly perhaps because of the power of sports traditions and efforts of sports authorities to police themselves.

It's clear that the most important variable in the top-down sports culture's future is the continued inflow of lots of money. Only the most serious economic recession since World War II has slowed that vital flow. From the outside, the sports business response appears to be confined only to short-term cost cutting measures. If the recession deepens, especially if it lasts for several years or more, top-down sports will have to find new ways of doing business. On the other hand, a quick world economic recovery would put them back on the path they were following until the recession began. All indications are that the top-down sports world is prepared only for the former. As a result, a continued deep recession could result in a lengthy unsettled period in top-down sports resulting in a top-down sports culture unlike any in recent memory.

### ***The Bottom-Up Sports Culture***

The greatest strength of the bottom-up sports culture is that the medical community is unanimously urging everyone to exercise more because of the many proven health benefits of exercise, and leisure time is the only phase of life in which most people can exercise enough. This prevailing medical opinion seems unlikely to change because it is based on a large body of scientific research. Moreover, social attitudes that once prevented large segments of the population like women, older people and people with disabilities from exercising are disappearing partly because of the force of laws like Title IX and partly because of the willingness of some people to break stereotypes. Also, opportunities for adults to exercise competitively and for enjoyment have grown steadily. The momentum of all these trends seems unlikely to change.

The biggest weakness of the bottom-up sports culture is that a lot of people are not sufficiently active, and the proportion of insufficiently active people changes only slowly. Passive entertainment, including the plethora of top-down sports culture events on television and the Internet, is a strong competitor for the average person's leisure time, and habits of inactivity are hard to break. Moreover, a youth amateur sports culture based on the competitive sports model adapted from the top-down sports culture is not the best for building exercise habits for a lifetime. Nevertheless, even the most ingrained habits can change radically given enough time. The clearest example is the public view of smoking—once (within the lifetimes of many still living) considered glamorous, now widely banned indoors and considered disgusting, even by smokers. Similarly, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, who would have thought that today women would be running marathons, weightlifting and wrestling and 80-year old men would complete triathlons or even that triathlons would be a popular activity. Yet, these changes have happened, they are socially embraced, and they portend slow, but continually positive change in the bottom-up sports culture.

*Ken Harris served in various analytic posts in the United States government, including several years as a futurist for the Federal Aviation Administration, from 1964 until his retirement in 1997 at which time he received the Secretary of Transportation's Distinguished Career Service Award. Since his retirement, he has been an active member of the World Future Society and its Washington DC chapter. Currently, he serves as the Society's Secretary, chairs its development committee, and leads the local chapter's futurist book discussion group. In addition, he operates his own futurist consultancy, The Consilience Group, LLC, specializing in sports and fitness and transportation futures. He received a BA degree in Government cum laude from Harvard University in 1961 and an MPIA (Master of Public and International Affairs) degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1965.*

**POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM** (send comments to [forum@futuretakes.org](mailto:forum@futuretakes.org)):

- *Harris states that “Just as a citizen hopes his country's armed forces will win its wars, the top-down sports fan hopes his or her team will prevail...” To what extent will counterpoint-based identity (“us” vs. “them”) drive the futures of the two sports cultures that he describes? (Also see discussions of identity in other articles this issue.)*
- *As Harris observes, the MLB, the NFL, the NHL, and the NBA are expanding internationally. What sports or other entertainment or leisure activities are other nations exporting? Also, for what reasons are US sports attractive to people in other nations?*
- *In what ways will an economic recovery, or lack thereof, influence the relative interest in the two sports cultures that Harris describes (top-down and bottom-up)?*
- *Considering possible alternative living and working patterns that may emerge in your part of the world, together with other factors, will your friends, neighbors, and colleagues devote more time or less time to sports and fitness activities in 2018 than they do now,,*

*and why? What will be the impact on the bottom-up sports culture in relation to the top-down one?*

- *Harris discusses the possible impact of a deepening or prolonged recession on the top-down sports culture. How will possible alternative futures of the world economy or your region's economy impact international expansion of sports and the relative prevalence of the two sports cultures?*
- *Football, a dominant sport in the US, is characterized by explosive action. In contrast, soccer, which is more prevalent in Europe and other parts of the world, involves sustained action. What cultural factors, if any, underlie these regional preferences, and with what implications for sports of the future?*
- *To what extent is Harris' analysis applicable to other leisure activities including mass entertainment?*

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<sup>i</sup> **Summer sports:** Aquatics, Archery, Athletics (track & field), Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Canoe/kayak, Cycling, Equestrian, Fencing, Football (Soccer), Gymnastics, Handball, Hockey, Judo, Modern Pentathlon, Rowing, Sailing, Shooting, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Tennis, Triathlon, Volleyball, Weightlifting, Wrestling.  
**Winter sports:** Biathlon, Bobsleigh, Curling, Ice Hockey, Luge, Skating, Skiing.

<sup>ii</sup> Mark Whitehouse, "U.K.'s Budget Woes Put Olympic Dream in Crosshairs," <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124509802628416217.html>.

<sup>iii</sup> "Table Tennis," <http://www.nbcolympics.com/athletes/athlete=1074/bio/index.html> and "Table Tennis," <http://www.nbcolympics.com/athletes/athlete=827/bio/index.html>.

<sup>iv</sup> "Goal No. 24 for Big Red Machine," [http://www.iihf.com/channels/iihf-world-championship/news/news-singleview-world-championship/article/gold-no-24-for-big-red-machine.html?tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=552&cHash=d85731cea0](http://www.iihf.com/channels/iihf-world-championship/news/news-singleview-world-championship/article/gold-no-24-for-big-red-machine.html?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=552&cHash=d85731cea0).

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