Chapter 13

Sports and Media

Chapter Overview

In Chapter 13, we find an exploration of how sports affect our lives and how media representations influence our perceptions of sports. This chapter asks us to look at sports as a mirror on our identities, both personal and national, one shaping our hopes, our dreams, our wishes, and our understanding of culture. We can also look at sports as a catalyst—sports change us, create desires, and forge our identities. The media amplifies all these effects. The media is the lens through which we have access to sports, and the media continually tells us what to think about sports—from persuasive arguments about athletes (such as Michael Phelps is the best Olympic athlete or that Barry Bonds might be on steroids), to messages about our very identities (calling America a baseball and basketball culture)—the media shapes our thinking about sports and about ourselves.

The first part of the chapter, “Engineering a Better Athlete,” immediately arrests us with a visual examination of what makes for the perfect athletic form throughout the centuries. The section then turns to examine the abuse of steroids and other substances in both baseball and the Olympics before exploring performing-enhancing drugs, gene-doping practices, and sports technologies, including swimsuits and artificial shins. The section: Is it that athletes are necessarily able to achieve more or that the drugs are dangerous? Or is it that substances and technical innovations threaten the very notion of sport itself? These issues are explored from a range of perspectives, with ample discussion and writing prompts for students to come to their own research-based conclusions.

The second part, “Playing Against Stereotypes,” investigates the complicated relationship between the media and stereotyping in sports. Focusing principally on stereotypes of race and gender, the chapter provides a variety of texts—television commercials, New York Times articles, critical studies on hip hop, Sports Illustrated covers, and film transcripts, in order to uncover the way media representations of sporting events—from advertisements to newscasts—construct and perpetuate dominant stereotypes of black and female athletes.

How to Use This Chapter in the Writing Classroom

You can teach this chapter one section at a time or teach the readings out of sequence. You may also choose to work with a dominant theme that runs through both of these sections. Take, for instance, the issue of gender and sports. You could compare “Bigger, Faster, Stronger”—as a multimedia argument about the male body—to the WNBA’s attempt to negotiate female athletic identity through cosmetics as Shannon Ryan argues. For each article, use the “Reflect & Write” questions to focus student attention on the writing
strategies of the text, the relationship of the writer to the audience (and place of publication), and the effect of language and style on the argument.

Visit www.pearsonhighered.com/envision Student Resources Chapter 13: Sports and Media Resources and Readings; as well as the Student Writing module.

WRITING RESOURCES FROM PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Many of the articles in this chapter will serve as fodder for students to write multiple sides projects; for this they can return to Chapter 3. When selecting a topic to pursue a research project on sports and media, students will do well to return to Chapter 4 for help with narrowing a research question, and they can look to Chapter 1 for assistance in developing an effective thesis. Teachers might want to structure presentation assignments as lesson plans on the second section, “Playing Against Stereotypes,” and to that end, a refresher of Chapter 9 will help. Finally, there are many useful student papers focused on Sports posted on the Envision Website. Follow this click path: www.pearsonhighered.com/envision Student Resources Chapter 13: Sports and Media Resources and Readings.

CHAPTER OPENER CLASS ACTIVITY USING FIGURE 13.1

Ask students to conduct a rhetorical analysis of Figure 13.1, the Time special issue on the 1996 Olympics. They should complete the prewriting checklist from Chapter 5, which focuses on covers and contents (see page 112). Then, have students locate additional Time covers that feature athletes and conduct a comparative rhetorical analysis. If you are teaching in a technology classroom, students can locate covers through online archives available through links on the Envision Website. Go to www.pearsonhighered.com/envision Student Resources Chapter 5: Finding and Evaluating Research Sources Resources and Readings Covers and Front Pages. What arguments about cultural or national identity are made in such images? What arguments about the changing standards for the “ideal athlete” appear in these images? How do the covers both reflect and shape cultural values around sports? How do rhetorical strategies of visual design influence the reader and determine the text’s argument? Ask students to work in teams and design a new cover for an upcoming Time special issue on Sports and Media.

Resources on the Readings, ENGINEERING A BETTER ATHLETE

SECTION OPENER CLASS ACTIVITY

The image in Figure 13.2 shows a statue of the “ideal athlete” as imagined in 450 B.C.E. The statue, Diadobulos offers what we often think of as “classical body features.” Have students discuss the visual rhetoric qualities of the image: what does it persuade us to think is “ideal”? Then, ask students to conduct an Internet search and locate additional images that correspond to their own ideas of the “better athlete” for various sports. Organize group presentations to the class to kick off this section.
WORKING WITH THE VISUAL READING ON PAGE 433, FIGURES 13.3–13.4: CHRISTOPHER BELL, “BIGGER, STRONGER, FASTER”

The posters and film synopsis in this reading for Christopher Bell’s documentary film provide an opportunity for students to compare textual and visual composition strategies. Figures 13.3 and 13.4 employ similar graphical representations of bodies while the fonts and placement differ. You could have students use a comparison of these two posters in conjunction with any of visual design strategies in Chapter 8. With the text, have students compare the pathos of the image to the pathos appeals of the synopsis. Based upon the posters, why would situating Bell’s film with Bowling for Columbine and Fahrenheit 9/11 be effective or ineffective appeals? What other differences between the textual and visual representation can your students locate? You could also have students examine the video strategies of representation in the Bigger, Faster, Stronger trailer available through the Envision Website at http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision/434. This assignment could be given in relationship to the Creative Practice on page 434 related to Bell’s film.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

• Major League baseball and the issue of performance enhancing drugs came to a culmination in the delivery of the Mitchell Report to the U.S. Congress in 2007. Ask students to compare the ideal connotations of one of American’s favorite pastime with the connotations of baseball in the steroid era. What factors contributed to the rise in frequency of the use of steroids?

• Use the posters to discuss the issue of multiple representations for advertising companies. In relationship to Bell’s conversation about performance and masculinity, students could compare another iconic masculine power symbol such as the Harley and how it is marketed in India. Visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlnOLcO0TE.

SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Students might compare Figures 13.3 and 13.4 to additional images of steroid abuse available at www.anabolicsmall.com/images/steroid_abuse.gif. Which one would be more persuasive to a college audience? Why? Now, ask students to design a counter-argument poster in which they offer healthy alternatives to steroids for activating each part of the body labeled by the poster. For example, what would enhance concentration? What would make muscles gain in strength without the consequence of cramps and stunted growth? Have them follow the Guidelines in Chapter 8 on creating op-ads (p. 183) and hold a class exhibit or poster session for all the new projects.
WORKING WITH THE VISUAL READING ON PAGE 435, FIGURES 13.5–13.6: STEROIDS AND BASEBALL

The three cartoons included in this visual reading offer differing perspectives on the doping scandal that recently tarnished the image of professional baseball. From a rhetorical standpoint, each cartoon relies on slightly different strategies of development: comparison-contrast (Figure 13.5), illustrative example (Figure 13.6), and classification and division (Figure 13.7). Discuss with students how each presents a critique of doping and baseball, although each one suggests a slightly different result of steroid usage (i.e. Figure 13.5 argues that the great home-run hitters are empowered by drugs, not by their own strength; Figure 13.6 seems more concerned with the tarnished image of baseball; Figure 13.7 makes an argument about the negative influence of baseball superstars on impressionable youth). To further enrich your class discussion, have students conduct a comparison of these images with additional recent cartoons on steroids in sports, available through the Envision Website at http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision/455.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

- If Peanuts characters are not as familiar to the generation of students in your class, then ask them what cartoon characters or childhood icons might they use to make an argument about steroids. Why and how would they do so?

- Use the cartoons as a launching pad for a discussion about audience and medium—what are the benefits and drawbacks of using cartoons as a medium in the discussion about steroids? How does the argument it creates differ rhetorically from a more print-based argument? How does the audience for the argument change? You might fruitfully return to the lessons of Chapter 1 on cartoons for this discussion.

SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

- Ask students to develop their own counter-arguments to those found in the cartoons and then draft their own cartoons to represent their positions.

- Using the cartoons in the textbook as well as the counter-argument cartoons that students create, have students complete the multiple sides project from Chapter 3, exploring different perspectives on steroids in baseball. See the example multiple sides projects on the Envision Website by following this click path: www.pearsonhighered.com/envision › Student Resources › Chapter 3: Composing Arguments › Student Writing.
Steven Shapin, “Clean Up Hitters: The Steroid Wars and the Nature of What’s Natural”

In this review of Jose Canseco’s book, Juiced, Steven Shapin goes beyond the book to look more broadly at the tarnished image of baseball and sports culture in recent years. He begins his essay with an anecdote from the book, a striking one in which two men huddle in a toilet stall. Shapin draws us into the suggestive scene, finally revealing that the two men are Jose Canseco and Mark McGuire and that what they are doing is sharing anabolic steroids. Shapin then moves into a scientific explanation of how steroids work, as well as what impacts they have on the body, both positive and negative.

Shapin next provides a history of performance enhancing drugs, cribbed from John Hoberman’s book, Testosterone Dreams, concluding that what is “normal” is no longer obvious. He asks if the real question is whether using drugs in sports is fair, but then he concludes by claiming that we all decide what is fair and what is normal.

To fully understand the article, students might need some context about Jose Canseco, the baseball-doping scandal, and even cycling—which Shapin draws in as one of his examples. However, the central issues of steroids and sports should be one that they can readily engage with and should produce a useful discussion. The article also provides rich grounds for rhetorical analysis, from its suggestive opening, to its genre-bending form (moving from book review to commentary), to its use of evidence and example.

**TEACHING THE TEXT AS WRITING**

Have students highlight the topic sentence of each paragraph to see how Shapin’s voice shifts from opening narrative to reportage to scientific explanation, to history, to concluding argument. Then, ask students to map the strategies of arrangement and argumentation in this review, using the At a Glance boxes from Chapter 3 and Chapter 6 to help them. Have students look at when and where Shapin introduces “I” in his writing and how this works for his overall writing strategies and argument.

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:**

- What are the characteristics and definition of a book review? How does Shapin move his essay from being a book review to being a larger discussion about the nature of sport? Should a book review engage the larger issues, or should it limit itself to just focusing on a review of the book? What is the place of personal commentary in the review of a book?

- Why does Shapin begin his essay with such a provocative and sexually suggestive scene? What is the effect on the reader and how does that affect the reader’s understanding of the steroid argument? How would the tone of the piece have been different if the opening had been suggestive of a shady drug deal? If it had focused
on a home-run hitter race? If it had used as an example two kids idolizing José Canseco?

• Steven Shapin teaches at Harvard and published this essay in The New Yorker. How does an author’s credentials influence how we read an essay? Certainly it influences how we view the reliability of the information, but what about the rhetorical power of the author’s argument?

• What does Shapin mean when he asks, “Do we put an asterisk next to the sexual revolution?”

• In what ways are we all complicit in the current steroid scandals? How, through our desire for bigger, better athletes, our desire for records to be broken, our demand for the new, do we fuel the fire?

**SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

• Shapin talks about such drugs as Viagra, Provigil, steroids, attention deficit disorder drugs, and such procedures as gastric stapling as changing the way we think of ourselves as sick or deficient, or at least in need of improvement. Ask your student to write an essay in which they argue for or against the use of these drugs or procedures. Follow the guidelines for position papers in Chapter 3.

• Turn the position paper into a multiple sides project by adding several additional voices and composing an introduction as well as a closing synthesis. Students might visit and analyze the many multiple sides projects about sports posted on the Envision Website by following this click path: www.pearsonhighered.com/envision Student Resources Chapter 3: Composing Arguments Student Writing.

• Have your students select one of the drugs or procedures mentioned in the previous question and research its development and subsequent marketing. Was the drug developed for the purpose it is currently in use for? What drugs or procedures are in development that might replace it in the future? Will that be an improvement? Will it get rid of any misgivings critics have of the drug and its use? Students might develop this into a research project, looking at Chapters 5–6 for guidance.

**WORKING WITH THE COLLABORATIVE CHALLENGE ON PAGE 440**

The purpose of this activity is to provide students a chance for deep learning of the ideas in the readings through a hands-on activity. Have them return to Chapter 5 for guidelines on designing interview questions and conducting field research. You might ask students to record interview or survey answers in their research logs. Realize that an important part of the project is the rhetorical analysis of answers to the interview questions. In this way, they move towards synthesis and work with the multiple perspectives to discern the arguments made within the responses. You might have students compose a formal synthesis essay,
following the guidelines in Chapter 3. Alternatively, they could construct charts about their findings and then generate a PowerPoint presentation to share their work with the class, following the advice in Chapter 9. Advanced students might post video interviews on YouTube, using the technology as a research log, and then construct a montage or synthesis in multimedia format, including themselves as moderators.

**Mike Sokolove, “Drug in Sport: The Shape to Come”**

Mike Sokolove’s article, which appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, provides a comprehensive overview of the baseball-steroid scandal and makes a fine case for how destructive steroids and other drugs in sports can be. Sokolove starts off with the origins of one of those drugs, in a university laboratory. The mild-mannered researchers publish their work, and are bombarded with requests from the sports world. The author goes right into the scandal-ridden world of elite sports, from track and field to bicycling to baseball. He shows, with numerous examples, how rampant these illegal substances are, but he cautions that the line between legal and illegal is “fuzzy.” Sokolove asks whether it is fair that Nike-sponsored athletes get to live in a pressurized bubble in Portland. It’s legal, but the effect is the same as taking a banned substance.

**TEACHING THE TEXT AS WRITING**

Have students compare the use of the first-person pronoun in this piece to the use in Shapin’s piece. How does the use of “I” help to establish either’s *ethos* as a writer? In particular, what does Sokolove gain by describing the physical surroundings at the beginning of a report on science for a public audience? Then, ask them to characterize the writer’s tone, pointing to specific words and phrases. You might also ask students to read the piece out loud, assigning one paragraph to each student as you go around the classroom. In this way, students will hear the specific and engaging writing style of Sokolove’s prose.

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:**

- What is the rhetorical effect of giving such a range of examples in this article rather than simply focusing on the effects of drug usage in a single sport?

- Look at the techniques that Sokolove uses in the opening and the closing of the essay? In particular, how does Sokolove’s use of narrative in the introduction and conclusion affect the overall persuasiveness of the piece or its effect on the reader?

- Sokolove suggests in paragraph 20 that achievement equals determination and character. This comes after his claim that “for fans, the issues are largely philosophical and aesthetic.” Explain his argument here in your own words. How has his language shifted? Does he provide enough evidence to support his claim? Is his argument convincing?
Sokolove writes that, “A narrow tunnel leads to success at the very top levels of sports.” Why would he use this metaphor to make his point? What other figurative or non-figurative language might make a similar point?

**SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

- Write a synthesis essay that connects Sokolove’s article to the issues raised in the first section of Chapter 12, “Imagining the Ideal Body.” Are the pressures on athletes similar to the pressures young girls and women feel to have a “perfect” body? Cite specific articles from Chapter 12 in developing your essay.

- Ask students to compare the style of Sokolove’s examples to those found in an academic journal such as the *American Journal of Sports Medicine* or *International Sports Studies*, available in your library or online. How does Sokolove narrate difficult scientific concepts for a non-scientific audience? Ask students to reflect on the choice of descriptive examples that they feel drawn to offer as proof of their authorial ethos in their majors.

- Write a letter to the high school coach Sokolove mentions in paragraph 7 explaining why the desire to use the Penn researcher’s work is unethical.

- Research the historic 1998 home run race between Sammy Sosa and Mark McGuire. Primary sources might include video reports, newspaper articles, magazine articles, or other media. Use steroids as a key search term, and consult Chapter 5 on Locating and Evaluating Sources to help you explore a range of possible texts. Develop your findings into an essay that emulates Sokolove’s in arrangement of evidence and writing style.

- In paragraph 57, psychiatrist and NASA scientist Paul Root Wolpe introduces the term “nutraceuticals.” Design and market a nutraceutical. Compose an internal memo to your imaginary drug company in which you argue for whether the “drug” is ethical or not.
Margaret Munro, “Dressing for Success at the Olympics; Is it ‘Doping on a Hanger’ or is it just a Swimsuit?

Amid the exclusive focus in athletics on performance-enhancing drugs, Munro’s perspective is refreshing. She exposes the underexamined phenomenon of body-suits (so-called “technological-doping”) and other prosthetics in sports to call our attention to non-chemical advantages. Munro begins by listing a range of prosthetics in sports including those used by a double-amputee runner. She then shifts to an exposition on swimming and competitive regulations in relationship to specialized suits. In addition to providing an opportunity for students to reflect on sports beyond steroids, she also calls attention to the importance of examining the relationship between commercial interests and athletic ethos. For instance, athletes who endorse the LZR suit represent, in one source’s opinion, “a remarkable example of marketing of products without accountability for any claims” (paragraph 26).

TEACHING THE TEXT AS WRITING

Munro begins with a series of examples and she delays her claim until the phrase “All of which gives a glimpse…” Have students examine several recent written essays to see if they can identify their own tendencies along these lines. Is an exhaustive list of examples without a main claim an effective approach? Munro also does an admirable job of maintaining her objectivity as a writer. Have students identify the sentences in her piece where she identifies a controversy without necessarily advocating one side or another.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

- Ask your students if they think that the analogy between drugs and clothing holds up under scrutiny. Re-examine the slippery slope fallacy from Chapter 2 and ask students to reflect upon how legislation should prescribe these rules related to any performance enhancement in sports.

- What about Munro’s claim in paragraph 8 that “it may not be long before gear will be tailored to the individual athlete”? Is this “part” of the competition? To what extent does equipment produce the athlete and vice-versa?

- Ask students to discuss the ethics associated with the cost of these suits. Munro lists several expensive body suits. Do these sorts of technologies give advantages to wealthier nations in international competitions?

SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

- Have students search the Internet for “Michael Phelps bodysuit.” Give students a limited amount of time to quickly identify the range of opinions that exist on the world’s most identifiable swimmer’s 2008 decision to don a body suit.
As this article avoids taking a clear stand, have students form their own opinions about the topic of technological-doping by bringing in more examples than those that Munro lists (especially from non-Olympic professional sports and high school sports).

**Kieron Murphy, “Engineering a Better Olympic Athlete”**

Murphy focuses on the closing ceremonies in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games in order to make a point about the so-called “engineering” of athletes in general. Not only is it possible to “manufacture” athletes through training, but some countries, he notes, are even expanding gene doping from its origins as a therapeutic aid. Murphy lists a range of perspectives from industry personalities, professional swimmers who use the banned suits, and famous commentators who follow swimming. The suits are effective, he suggests, as Canada has spent millions on new technologies and consequently improve the number of medals its athletes have earned.

**TEACHING THE TEXT AS WRITING**

Murphy’s essay is taken from his blog. Have students discuss the difference in writing styles between academic writing and blogging. How can one anticipate audience when potentially anyone is a reader? What sort of research demonstration and quality of sources is typical for blog posts such as these?

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:**

- Ask students to discuss the opening question of the article. Hold a class debate, with students taking the pro and con sides. Each team should cite from the article itself as well as from research or examples they bring in, found on the Internet or from their own lives.

- Murphy’s short piece makes a key claim that physicians and governments need an expanded role. You could discuss the rhetoric of individualism and moral accountability weighed against the temptation to cheat when the “reward is so great” (paragraph 10). What is the importance of ethics in sports science?

**SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

- Have students go to Blogger, WordPress, or another popular blogging site. Have them search for keywords related to steroids and professional sports and then choose three entries to engage with. Have students post comments on these three blogs and then come to class ready to reflect on their contribution to the blog conversations.
• Have students base a research paper on a related topic to be dealt with by Murphy and Munro. The two essays cover a wide range of arguments and perspectives on technological doping and they provide a fruitful contemporary context for research-based arguments. Have them review Chapter 6 on outlines and Chapter 5 on responding to the “conversation” in a research argument.

Andrew Tilin, “Ready, Set, Mutate!”

Andrew Tilin’s piece offers an engaging essay written for Wired magazine. He introduces the topic with a tongue-in-cheek tone: why are we agonizing over doping in sports and engineering apparel? Why are we trying to keep things equal on the playing field? He claims that it is a losing battle. He then explains seven current product innovations and five products still in development to demonstrate the range of ways in which inequality in sports is just plain cool. Tilin includes in the mix high-tech prostheses for amputees who might wear them in the Paralympics.

TEACHING THE TEXT AS WRITING

Ask students to highlight their favorite phrases or words to analyze how Tilin works carefully with writing style to forge a fast-moving piece. Then, ask students to compare the opening section to the later short paragraphs. How does each of the product descriptions have its own unity as a paragraph? Assign one student to each paragraph and have them explain how the paragraph offers a strong opening line, substantial research-based information in the body, and a powerful conclusion.

Ask students to find a copy of this article in the library or online through the Envision Website at http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision. You could also bring photocopies of these different versions to class. Talk about the effect of different formats—the striking visual aspect of Wired’s print layout or the compact Web design—on the argument and on how the persuasiveness of the argument changes based on the format. Which format seems most effective for Tilin’s argument?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

• Does this essay seem more like an Internet surfing session than an essay? What are the formal and rhetorical properties of this essay that make us think this? Would it seem more appropriate to read this piece online than in print? Why or why not?

• What is the rhetorical effect of including products designed for amputees among those that seem included only for their overall coolness? Does it affect the ethos of the essay, the credibility of the author, or the argument’s persuasiveness? Does it raise the argument above simply a detailing of what’s currently trendy and cool?
Do you agree with Tilin’s proposition, “Screw purity—what we want is possibility”? Could you imagine an athlete saying this? An official in one of the international doping agencies? What is the purpose of this statement? Do you think Tilin is kidding, or do you think he is at all sincere?

It seems as if most of these innovations are being developed by large corporations. Why might this be the case? Explore the business aspect of sports innovations, considering, for example, how Adidas makes money by coming up with a shoe that only a handful of people are going to wear.

**Suggested Writing Assignments:**

- Invent your own athletic innovations for a specific sport. The entire class can pick a sport, such as swimming or a sport within track and field, and discuss briefly the mechanics of that activity. What wild new ideas can you come up with? Write a description of the sport, taking into account the probable response from the various groups that might object to its use. Then, compose a short paragraph for each innovation, modeling your writing strategies on your analysis of Tilin’s techniques.

- This essay was written on the occasion of the end of the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia. Do some research to discover what the innovations were used in the 2004 games in Athens, Greece, the 2008 Games in Beijing, China, and the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada. Write a blog entry on your findings.

- Write a position paper in which you compare doping to innovations in sports technology. If both are producing “enhanced” athletes, should they be treated equally by the media, sports organizations, athletes, and fans? What is the difference between them? Take a strong position on the differences—or similarities—between these modes of performance enhancement and a suggested course of action. Follow the guidelines in Chapter 3 to help you compose this assignment.

**Working with the Collaborative Challenge on Page 454**

The collaborative challenge asks students to transfer their analysis from verbal and visual texts (articles and cartoons or posters) to moving image texts such as videos. In this way, they can develop both visual literacy skills and sharpen their abilities to interrogate films for strategies of persuasion. You can conduct the activity in a technology classroom or ask them to complete the activity on their own and bring their storyboards back to class. Students who have access to video equipment might also decide to create their own short films as visual arguments and share them with the class.
Resources on the Readings, PLAYING AGAINST STEREOTYPES

SECTION OPENER CLASS ACTIVITY USING FIGURES 13.8–13.10
Have students examine the image sequence from the Nike ad on page 457. Figures 13.8 and 13.10 suggest that the being the best should be the motivation for young girls to perform well at tennis. This attitude that Nike wishes to reinforce marks a clear shift from a focus on sports as part of community, health, and social bonding to an extreme valuation of the individual superstar. As this section shifts our focus from performance enhancement to the social and cultural construction of athletic identity through the media, the analysis of this Nike ad is an excellent place to begin a conversation about the impact of sports on identity in general. This image sequence would also provide a good opportunity to revisit Chapter 2’s conversation on brand ethos and celebrity endorsement.

WORKING WITH THE VISUAL READING ON PAGE 458, FIGURE 13.11: CARLOS SERRAO, “ANYTHING YOU CAN DO”
Carlos Serrao’s image calls our attention to the association of the idea of athletes as those with “whole” bodies. Even a cursory glance at the focus on media outlets demonstrates this bias. His title asks students to fill in the clause often coupled with “I can do better” to engage viewers’ preconceived notions that those with prosthetic limbs are somehow “inferior” or lacking in athletic ability. His target is clearly a sports audience that intentionally and unintentionally excludes non-traditional athletes.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:
- Building on the questions on page 458, asks students to pretend that they were going to attempt to make a similar statement without capturing an action shot visually (turning a disability into an ability). How might they go about creating a visual equivalence between disabled and able bodies that can challenge viewers’ preconceived assumptions?
- The general idea that national attention in sports focuses on able bodies is ripe for conversation. Ask students to search their university Website s for information about whether their institution offers athletics at the collegiate level for the disabled. Is there an equivalent for Title IX for college para-athletics?

Thad Mumford, “The New Minstrel Show: Black Vaudeville with Statistics”
The title of Thad Mumford’s article, which was originally published in the New York Times, introduces the topic effectively. Mumford analyzes the dark side of African American dominance in sports. He does this by looking back, toward black vaudeville. Black vaudeville made fun of minstrel shows, but it also perpetuated a pernicious one-dimensional image of blacks that whites found palatable. Mumford argues that black athletes are keeping “alive these shopworn condescensions,” and doing so without the satire. He doesn’t blame the
athletes entirely—that honor goes to the television media. But he doesn’t let athletes off the hook. He says that when black athletes “mug for the camera” or act boorishly, they provide the same old familiar image to white America that makes it difficult to be taken seriously. He cites touchdown dances by football players as analogous to black comics strutting and cakewalking across a stage.

Students might feel very strongly about this essay, as it attacks everyone: the fan, the athlete, whites, blacks, the media. Nobody gets out unscathed. Everyone, including students, seems to be implicated.

TEACHING THE TEXT AS WRITING

Have students create a reverse outline of this article and identify the argument in every paragraph. Then, have them assess the style. Discuss whether the tone is appropriate for the content. What writing techniques work best in the essay? What might Mumford have done differently and why?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

- What is Mumford’s thesis? Why does he place his thesis where he does in the essay? Since Mumford’s thesis is controversial, or has the potential to upset people, should he soften it? Why or why not? How would it change the argument if he were to downplay his stance?

- What is “athle-tainment,” as Mumford describes it in paragraph 13? What is the value of constructing a new word as part of an argument? Does it make his explanation of the phenomenon of “athle-tainment” more convincing or compelling by naming it in this way? How does it affect the ethos of the author? How does it help or hinder the argument as a whole?

SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

- Write an essay in which you disagree with Mumford’s characterization of how black athletes act on the field, of their ignorance of “the line between exuberance and bad sportsmanship.” Argue that he is drawing too close a connection between these athletes and prevalent stereotypes of black culture. Use specific quotations from his essay or examples from contemporary sports articles or sporting events to support your argument.

- Analyze the language Mumford uses. He employs a good number of colloquial words and phrases. What is the overall effect of this on his argument? How would his argument have changed if he had used more academic discourse?
• Do some research to discover what current athletes are saying on this topic. Write a
dialogue between a current athlete of your choice and Mumford, or interview
athletes or coaches at your school.

• Ask students to compare acts of vaudeville to the National Basketball Association’s
elimination of “do-rags” and other markers of African-American identity from pre-
and post-game interview attire. What would Mumford say about this phenomenon?

• Examine visual images of black vaudeville as well as examples of athletes celebrating
in an end zone. This will give students some frame of reference. See, for example,
famous end zone dances and the Moss Moon at www.kidzworld.com/article/1564-
touchdown-dances-and-celebrations. Then, compare these images to the image of
someone like Barry Sanders, cited in the essay as the sole paragon of humility, a real
model. Write a comparative rhetorical analysis, following the guidelines in Chapter
2, (p. 44) for a cultural analysis assignment.

Todd Boyd, “Doin’ Me”: from Young, Black, Rich, and Famous

Todd Boyd’s selection is an excerpt from his book, Young, Black, Rich, and Famous, and as a
result, that work’s larger argument haunts this piece. Take a look at the subtitle of his book:
“The Rise of the NBA, the Hip Hop Invasion, and the Transformation of American
Culture,” and you’ll see that this excerpt is extremely representative. In fact, this excerpt
represents the last part of his conclusion; for that reason, it provides one of the most
powerful articulations of his argument—a point worth mentioning to students.

Boyd argues several connected points. First, hip hop culture is a lifestyle, not just a music
scene. Second, basketball as played in the NBA is more than a game. Unlike the old days,
when it was a white man’s game, today, it gets its ethos from hip-hop culture. Third, those
holdouts from the old days must cease to despise the new days and realize that these “young,
black, rich, and famous” players are the game. “This reflects a shift in power relations,” write
Boyd. At the very end of his selection, Boyd makes a turn toward the grand: “You can . . .
turn the game of basketball into a global entertainment commodity, with Black players at the
center of a new definition of what now constitutes America.”

Boyd’s provocative words evoke a time when rock and roll changed American culture. The
difference, students might note, is that Boyd speaks of this lifestyle as a commodity. Much of
what underlies this selection is the idea of money as power. This could be the center of a
conversation about hip hop and basketball, and being a young black celebrity.

TEACHING THE TEXT AS WRITING

You might also enrich your discussion of this article by assigning other excerpts from the
longer book and pairing the readings with footage from recent NBA games. Have students
compare the writing strategies, content, and persuasiveness of this excerpt against other
pieces. Why is this selection the most powerful?
ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

- Do you agree with Boyd that hip hop is not just a kind of music, but also a lifestyle? What does that lifestyle entail? How does he define that lifestyle in this selection? Does he mention physical markers (of the type talked about in “Marked Bodies,” Chapter 12)? Does he mention other types of cultural markers of hip hop culture? Do you find his definition of hip-hop culture, and its influence and pervasiveness persuasive? Why or why not?

- In the course of this selection, Boyd makes a couple of controversial statements. For example, in speaking of John Stockton, the “older White superstar of the Utah Jazz,” Boyd comments that Stockton’s shorts are much shorter than current styles dictate, and that thus his shorts “are like basketball’s version of the Confederate flag; an attempt to hold on to an antiquated and outdated sense of the NBA.” Later, in paragraph 9, Boyd likens the foul called against Rasheed Wallace to a Jim Crow law. How do they function rhetorically? How do such incendiary statements influence the tone of the piece and the persuasiveness of the argument?

- Some might claim that Boyd is really just celebrating a rise in power in a certain segment of black America. Do you think that is what he is doing? Is it possible to argue that power is fine, but that very few black Americans get to play for the NBA, and so this new power is limited? Is there a counterargument Boyd could make? If you were Boyd, and interested in representing the counterargument in your piece, where would you insert into this section? In the opening paragraphs? In the closing paragraphs? In a section of its own? Explain the rationale behind your decision.

SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

- Create an outline of Boyd’s essay. Write an analysis of his structure, focusing in particular on how Boyd uses transitions to connect his ideas. Then, compose subheads for his article based on the points in your outline.

- In paragraph 11, Boyd writes, “Contemporary Black basketball players have a great deal of money at their disposal along with a great deal of visibility and power. Yet the people who tend to control the aspects of the game off the court—the media, the league—reflect these old ideas and expectations.” Explain Boyd’s point and its implications in your own words. Then, compose a rebuttal to this claim, following the guidelines in Chapter 3.

- Research a prominent African-American basketball player—including lifestyle, clothing, attitude on the court, and participation in what Boyd calls hip hop culture. Using your research as evidence, write a paper in which you use this athlete as an
example to either support or counter Boyd’s argument, referring to specific quotations from his text as you do so.

**Dave Zirin, “Say It Ain’t So, Big Leagues”**

Zirin offers an examination of the often-overlooked costs of Major League Baseball’s recruitment of foreign-born talent. He opens and closes with the illustrative example of Mario Encarnación, in a way that honors his “lonely death” by reprinting the words of his friend Marcos Breton. The problem, Zirin argues, is that Major League Baseball promises a way out of poverty, but the promise never becomes a reality for 99.9 of children from the Dominican Republic who join the “baseball camps” with giant hopes. He closes with an appeal of moral responsibility both to baseball fans and MLB.

**TEACHING THE TEXT AS WRITING**

Zirin opens with an emotional hook that successfully introduces his criticism of the United States media and the League, asserting that “Major League Baseball seems unconcerned and uninterested in the situation it has a central role in shaping.” Notice the parallelism in this sentence; ask students to examine the article on a sentence-by-sentence basis, looking for effective rhetorical strategies and stylistic moves. How does narration and citation of research make the piece convincing and memorable?

Zirin’s use of statistics and his appeals to numbers are worthy of attention. Have students explore how he effectively mobilizes these *logos* appeals to alert the reader to the importance of the exploitation of Latin American players. What does his reliance upon this type of evidence suggest about his intended audience?

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:**

- What is the effect of citing the documentary, *Stealing Home*? How does the turn to alternative media as evidence build the *ethos* of the author? Notice additional appeals to authority, including citing Roberto González Echevarría, a Cuban baseball historian.

- Discuss other instances of international recruiting that students may have come across. How many of their families came over as immigrants? What other industries are promising “big league” dreams to impoverished parts of the world today? How do students feel about the stereotypes and challenges inherent in these situations?

**SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

- Zirin’s points are based largely in statistics, narrative, research, and appeals to authority. What would be the effect of writing the piece using just one rhetorical strategy? Have students complete a multiple sides project, in which one side writes an analogous argument *without* the use of statistics or numbers and attempt to argue
this problem on moral or logical grounds alone, and the other just reports on the
statistics without the narration, and so forth. What do students learn about using
multiple strategies in the same piece of writing?

• Zirin makes a strong appeal to moral responsibility. What pragmatic m easures could
be taken to prevent these dire situations while preserving the right of Latino players
to participate in Major League Baseball? Brainstorm solutions and draft a proposal,
following the guidelines in Chapter 4.

WORKING WITH THE VISUAL READINGS ON PAGE 467, FIGURES 13.12–13.13: SPORTS
ILLUSTRATED COVERS

The covers portrayed in Figures 13.12 and 13.13 represent two common stereotypes of
women athletes. What common stereotypes are reproduced in these images? Could the
images of Serena Williams and Anna Kournikova be seen as visual rhetoric of female
empowerment? Have students debate these questions, then, in small groups, develop draft
cover images for the athletes they admire most. Students might find it helpful to refer to
Chapter 5 for more detailed explanation of the rhetorical analysis of magazine covers; the
pre-writing questions on page 112 might be particularly helpful.

The Media Education Foundation, “Playing Unfair”

This selection is the transcript of a short film that examines gender issues in sports on the
occasion of the 30th anniversary of Title IX, the legislation that aimed to ensure equal
funding for women’s college sports. The Media Education Foundation is a nonprofit that
creates and distributes documentaries. The board of advisors of the foundation includes
Noam Chomsky, bell hooks, Naomi Klein, Cornel West, and Susan Faludi. It might be
interesting to look at the list of board members and have students become familiar with
several of these public intellectuals. Some of the foundation’s dozens of videos are
Dreamworlds, which shows the “impact of sexual imagery in music videos”; Game Over, about
video games; I Am a Man, about black masculine identity; and Off the Straight and Narrow,
about images of gays in the media.

The transcript of Playing Unfair begins with a celebration of the significant increase in
women’s sports over the past few decades; however, the next section “Out of Uniform,”
focuses on the fact that there is little media coverage of these sports and that, when
reporters do cover women’s sports, the athletes tend to be sexualized, discussed more in
terms of their sexual images off the field than for their prowess on the field. The next
section, “Playing Along” offers an interesting counterpoint, suggesting ways in which some
female athletes may be complicit in this process, promoting a sexualized image as a way of
“expressing themselves.” The following section, “The Glass Closet,” moves to the issue of
homophobia in women’s athletics, focusing on well-known examples such as tennis player
Billie Jean King. The concluding section, “Fair Play,” offers a final, renewed call for equity in
sports broadcasting, regardless of the gender of the players.
TEACHING THE TEXT AS WRITING

Discuss with your students how *Playing Unfair* is structured much like a traditional college essay: thesis, several points, and conclusion. The fact that it is broken into several sections could provide the basis for a useful discussion about structure, outline, and organization of argument. One option for teaching this selection is to get a copy of *Playing Unfair* itself. If that is not possible, consider having students read the selection out loud, with each student taking another character in the transcript. You might also supplement your discussion of the transcript from other materials from the Media Education Website for *Playing Unfair*, which contains a video preview and a study guide; you can also view a trailer. Access this material as a class at wwwmediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=208.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

- Read through the transcript and storyboard a series of visuals for the film. Use YouTube or other online media if you want to select clips or simply speculate on the types of footage or photo montages you would use. Having done so, compare your storyboard with a partner. Watch the film together and discuss the ways in which your montages differ from those used in the film and how those differences influenced the persuasiveness of the argument.

- Having read or listened to the transcript, watch the full film. What is the particular power of film and video in communicating messages such as you find in *Playing Unfair*? How do the images either enhance or detract from the argument?

- Write in one or two sentences the thesis or argument for this piece. Now, look back at the transcript. Which sections seem the most relevant to the argument—and what seems missing from the argument? If you could introduce a different topic or example related to gender and sports coverage for these scholars to discuss, what would it be? How does this new point a support or contradict the argument?

SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

- *Playing Unfair* contains several different sections; however, there is little verbal transition between the sections. Write prose transitions, designed either to be read by a reader of the transcript or, if you choose, to be spoken by a voice-over narrator or moderator. Pay close attention to ways to connect the ideas in the different parts to reinforce the argument.

- In the section entitled “Playing Along—Empowerment or Exploitation?” the three media critics discuss whether women gain power or are exploited by portraying themselves (or allowing themselves to be portrayed) as sexual objects. Write an essay arguing for one side the other.
• All three media critics in this transcript complain that women are over-sexualized. Only Michael Messner acknowledges that men are increasingly sexualized in the media. Write a response to Playing Unfair that takes a stand on the sexualization of men by the sports media to either support, enrich, or contest the documentary’s argument.

• In this documentary, there is much made of homophobia in women’s sports. In men’s sports, however, there is perhaps even greater homophobia. Write a research project on homophobia in men’s sports.

• If you could choose an additional scholar, or sports figure, or news commentator to participate in this conversation, who would it be? Do a little research on this figure to ascertain some sense of their attitude toward gender and sports: are they conservative? liberal? outspokenly feminist? Now, for each section, rewrite the transcript and insert dialogue from that person to address the key issues discussed. What would your chosen person argue about these topics?

• In the transcript, Mary Jo Kane says that “As women move into this once exclusive domain of male power, and privilege, and identity, there’s been a tremendous backlash, and a desire to push back, and either to push women out of sport altogether or certainly to contain their power within it and keep them on the margins.” Write an essay in which you offer your argument about the validity of this statement.

Shannon Ryan, “Banking on Beauty”

Ryan’s report calls students’ attention to an undeniably gendered aspect of athleticism for which male sports have no equivalent; namely, the pressure on female athletes in the WNBA to groom themselves for the camera and the press. Ryan proceeds to list a variety of female athletes who have achieved prominence for beauty but not for performance, such as Anna Kournikova, and she asserts that such prominence comes down to “marketing.” The article then turns to the credible source of Susan Ziegler, Cleveland State Professor of Sports Psychology, a credible source who asserts, “Once you begin to worry about how the person looks as opposed to how she plays, you’ve crossed the line into dangerous play.” The piece explores a counter-argument about the pressures the WNBA itself faces before ending on a contested note so that the reader can respond.

TEACHING THE TEXT AS WRITING

Walk students through the different sections of this article, using the table on Strategies of Arrangement from Chapter 3, page 68. How does each new “section” build on credible evidence, whether in appeals to authority, quotations from players, or statistics? Next, discuss the tone or style of the piece. Ryan seems to situate her argument as a “report” yet
her argument emerges clearly. Discuss how her title and subtitles contribute to the success of her argument.

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:**

- The issue that Ryan raises about the need for female athletes to appear pleasing in order to increase viewers brings up questions of audience. Ask your students to identify what audience this cosmetic training is geared toward and what pressures athletes have felt to “look” a certain way.

- As a class, locate images to place in this article as visual rhetoric. Return to Chapter 8 for guidelines on selecting, placing, and referencing images.

**SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

- Bring in a commercial advertisement by both the NBA and the WNBA and have students write a comparative essay that examines the gender disparities and stereotypes in the types of appearances of the athletes. What do the changes in their annual slogans tell us about what the WNBA and the NBA choose to emphasize?

- The scholarly perspective on gender is represented by Susan Ziegler’s claim that marginalization occurs when “we’re not really focused on marketing them as athletes but as feminine objects” (paragraph 10). Have students read Ziegler’s sentiments in light of the gender stereotypes captured by Gok in Chapter 12 about professional and casual attire for women (p. 410). How are female athletes also “marked bodies”?

**WORKING WITH THE VISUAL READING ON PAGE 479, FIGURE 13.14: SUE BIRD, “EXPECT GREAT” AD CAMPAIGN**

The WNBA’s slogan “Expect Great” emphasizes the organization’s desire to establish itself as a legitimate athletic presence. One of the first things for students to note about this commercial is that it avoids a direct comparison with the NBA and offers a strong portrait of a woman as an athlete. The words of the transcript and still shots emphasize athletic excellence and excitement achieved through a montage of Bird’s moves.
ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

- How does sarcasm work in the commercial? How do questions work?
- What other commercials do students currently enjoy with regard to playing against stereotypes and why?

SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

- Write out the argument of the commercial as an op-ed, or position paper, following the guidelines in Chapter 3.
- Storyboard a commercial for another sport in which women or minorities have been stereotyped or discriminated against. Draw or include photos along with the script. Present your work to the class.