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5TH
EDITION

MAKING SENSE OF SPORTS

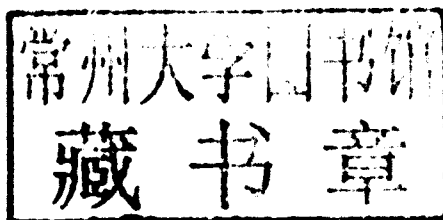
ELLIS CASHMORE



MAKING SENSE OF SPORTS

Fifth edition

Ellis Cashmore



First published 2010

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada

by Routledge

270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an Informa business

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Typeset in Adobe Garamond and Frutiger

by Keystroke, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton

Printed and bound in Great Britain

by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Cashmore, Ernest.

Making sense of sports / by Ellis Cashmore. — 5th ed.

p. cm.

1. Sports—Social aspects. I. Title.

GV706.5.C38 2010

306.4'83—dc22

2010001995

ISBN: 978-0-415-55220-2 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-415-55221-9 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-0-203-87269-7 (ebk)

MAKING SENSE OF SPORTS

Updated, revised, and enhanced with new features, the fifth edition of *Making Sense of Sports* is the strongest yet.

Ellis Cashmore's unique multidisciplinary approach to the study of sports remains the only introduction to combine anthropology, biology, economics, history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology with cultural and media studies to produce a distinct unbroken vision of the origins, development, and current state of sports. New chapters on exercise culture and the moral climate of sports, supplement a thoroughly overhauled text that includes fresh material on Islam, depression, crime and deviance, and the interdependence of sport, culture, and consumerism.

Now packed with teaching supplements, including access to a dedicated online resource headquarters with podcasts of interviews with self-assessment quizzes, the new edition contains a glossary of sports terms as well as guides to further reading, capsule explanations, and model essays. In short, *Making Sense of Sports* is an all-purpose introduction to the study of sports.

Ellis Cashmore is Professor of Culture, Media, and Sport at Staffordshire University's Faculty of Health. Prior to this he was Professor of Sociology at the University of Tampa, Florida, and Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Hong Kong. Previous publications include, *Martin Scorsese's America* (Polity Press, 2009), *Sport and Exercise Psychology: The Key Concepts* (Routledge, 2008) and *Celebrity/Culture* (Routledge, 2006).

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	American Association (baseball)
AAA	Amateur Athletic Association
ABA	American Basketball Association
ABC	American Broadcasting Company
ABL	American Basketball League
ACB	Australian Cricket Board
ADHD	attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
ADP	adenosine diphosphate
AFC	American Football Conference
AFL	American Football League
AIBA	International Boxing Association (Amateur)
AL	American League (baseball)
ANC	African National Congress
ANS	autonomic nervous system
ASA	Amateur Swimming Association
ATP	adenosine triphosphate
ATP	Association of Tennis Professionals
BAF	British Athletics Federation
Balco	Bay Area Laboratory Co-operative
BBBC	British Boxing Board of Control
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCE	Before the Common Era (before the Christian Era)
BDO	British Darts Organization
BRS	Blue Ribbon Sports
BSkyB	British Sky Broadcasting
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System
CE	Common Era
CERA	continuous erythropoiesis receptor activator
CNS	central nervous system
CPUs	central processing units
EA	electronic arts
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EPO	erythropoietin
ESPN	Entertainment and Sports Network

F1	Formula One (motor racing)
FA	Football Association
FAME	Falk Associates Management Enterprises
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FDA	Food and Drugs Administration
FIBA	Fédération Internationale de Boxe Amateur
Fifa	Fédération Internationale de Football Associations
Fina	Fédération Internationale de Natation (swimming)
HBO	Home Box Office
hGH	human growth hormone
HRM	heart rate monitor
IAA	Intercollegiate Athletic Association
IAAF	International Amateur Athletics Federation
IBF	International Boxing Federation
ICC	International Cricket Conference
IGH	insulin growth hormone
ILTF	International Lawn Tennis Federation
IPL	Indian Premier League
ITF	International Tennis Federation
ITV	Independent Television
LAN	local area network
LH	luteinizing hormone
MCC	The Marylebone Cricket Club
MHR	maximum heart rate
MLB	Major League Baseball
MLS	Major League Soccer
MMA	Mixed Martial Arts
NABP	National Association of Base Ball Players
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NASL	North American Soccer League
NBA	National Basketball Association
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NFC	National Football Conference
NFL	National Football League
NHL	National Hockey League
NL	National League (baseball)
NYSAC	New York State Athletic Commission
OHL	Ontario Hockey League
PEG	percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy
PES	Pro Evolution Soccer
PFC	perfluorocarbon
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNS	peripheral nervous system
ppv	pay per view
Push	People United to Save Humanity

RAF	Royal Air Force
RAS	reticular activating system
RFU	Rugby Football Union
ROM	read-only memory
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
SANROC	South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
SARU	South African Rugby Union
TBS	Turner Broadcasting System
T-E ratio	testosterone to epitestosterone ratio
TNT	Turner Television Network
TOP	The Olympic Partner program
UCI	Union Cycliste Internationale
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
Uefa	Union des Associations Européennes de Football
UFC	Ultimate Fighting Championship
USATF	USA Track and Field
USOC	United States Olympic Committee
VO^2_{\max}	Maximum oxygen uptake
WADA	World Anti-Doping Agency
WBA	World Boxing Association
WBC	World Boxing Council
WHO	World Health Organization
WNBA	Women's National Basketball Association
WPBSA	World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association
WWE	World Wrestling Entertainment (formerly WWF)
WWF	World Wrestling Federation
Zanu PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZCU	Zimbabwe Cricket Union

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Introduction

KEY ISSUES

- How do we express our identities through sport?
- What would a world without sport be like?
- When life becomes too organized, what do we do?
- Where is spitting melon seeds considered a sport?
- Why do so many of us spend money, time and energy on something that makes no material impact on our lives?
- . . . and is being a sports fan a form of madness?

A WORLD WITHOUT SPORT

Just think of a world without sport. Almost unimaginable, isn't it? No sports to provide us with those ritualistic actions that bring us together, or the traditions that transfer customs and beliefs from one generation to the next. Where would we look for the dramatic spectacles that set the adrenaline pulsing through our system, the savage, gladiatorial conflicts that have no counterpart in any other area of entertainment? Our pantheon of heroes would be seriously diminished without figures like Muhammad Ali, Babe Ruth, or Stanley Matthews. How we'd miss savoring the delicate skill, the unconquerable combativeness, and the occasional moment when art intrudes into the realm of competition and elevates a contest into an expression of sublime creativity. Sport can be overrated. But not by enthusiasts.

If we had to reconstruct history without sport, it would leave unbridgeable gaps. Jesse Owens' four gold medals at the Berlin Olympics of 1936 would be missing. The "Rumble in the Jungle" of 1974, when Muhammad Ali reclaimed the world heavyweight title wouldn't have happened. Tiger Woods' historic Masters win in 1997 just wouldn't exist. Numberless people would have been destined to live in poverty if denied their only opportunity for advancement. There would be no camaraderie, or the filial relationships, the ritual bonding, the common causes that unite people. The peaks of triumph, the troughs of failure, the ecstasy and despair: we would never have experienced how sport can elicit all these. The color would be erased from otherwise monochrome lives. The commerce, industries, media of communications, and employment sectors that have organized around sport just wouldn't have materialized.

Surely, we would be worse off without sport. Wouldn't we? Not according to some: they insist the world would be a better place. They'd argue that the clasp that sports have had on our hearts and minds has been unhealthy and led to all manner of despicable incidents. Sport may not have been the cause of the Munich atrocity of 1972, when eleven Israeli athletes were taken hostage and killed, but it provided a global forum. The 95 football fans who were crushed to death at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels, in 1985, were gathered for one purpose – to watch a sporting competition: they surrendered their lives for a pointless game. Countless young people illicitly procure dubious substances and ingest them, often in dangerously high doses, for one simple reason: to win sports contests.

These are the kinds of reminders that should make us scratch our heads and wonder: is this madness? Should lives be lost or ruined because of something that's meant to bring joy? The answer is, of course, no. So have we lost the ability to make rational choices? Let's consider one sports event that seems to offer an answer. Since its inaugural race in 1903, the Tour de France has been responsible for at least 30 deaths, of cyclists as well as spectators. And riding a cycle over 2,130 miles along a track that takes in Champagne country, the Alps, the Pyrenees and the Atlantic coast has no obvious utility. Yet, every year, 15 million spectators crowd along the cyclists' path. All they see is a brief blur of 198 cyclists hurtling past en route for Paris.

The Tour de France is an exceptional event, of course: it remains one of those competitions that excite people from around the world, turning rationality on its head. They forget the purpose of the epic ride – which was actually to promote a magazine – and flock to whatever vantage point they can just to catch sight of the competitors whizzing past. Spectators are familiar with the brutal side of this sport, but there is a momentary frisson at the sight of fit and doughty young men submitting their bodies to what is an almost inhuman ordeal, not for 90 minutes, or 3 hours, or even for the 5 days test cricket sometimes takes, but for 3 weeks, with only a couple of rest days.

Most major competitions are over in a fraction of Tour's duration time, and take place in confined spaces that can accommodate thousands rather than millions. But, thanks to television, anyone who's interested can watch from anywhere in the world. Association football's World Cup is actually longer than the Tour and draws an overall audience of 30 billion over 25 days, the final game alone drawing 1.7 billion people to their tv sets. That's about a quarter of the world's population. A figure like this makes the NFL's Super Bowl seem like a private gathering of 200 million.

Well, all this certainly looks like madness. After all, the sight of grown men cycling at breakneck speeds for 3 weeks, or 11 supremely fit and trained men trying to move a ball in one direction while another 11 supremely fit and trained men try to move it in the opposite direction serves no obvious function. Nor will the fruits of their labors bring any lasting benefit to civilization. It's not as if they'll take us anywhere nearer curing cancer, or bringing peace on earth or saving the planet. And unless we've staked a substantial wager on the outcome, we don't stand to gain anything in material terms. In fact, we will, for the most part, be out of pocket. Enthusiasm for sports is truly universal and seemingly unquenchable: no matter how much we get, we thirst for more. And there's no apparent let-up to our spending.

We pay out inordinate amounts of money either to watch or to bet on events; we travel often great distances; in some cases, we even fight – to the death – over sports.

We should properly feel at least slightly uncomfortable about this. Challenge is important to the human condition: it's one of the oldest preoccupations. Where obstacles – natural or artificial – exist, we always attempt to surmount them. And, where they don't exist, we invent them. Countless episodes of triumph or folly and, sometimes, disaster have followed our attempts to conquer obstacles. Witness the yearly catalog of deaths resulting from mountaineering expeditions.

The human tendency to rise to challenges rather than just accept them is no doubt part of our evolutionary adaptation. If we didn't rise, we wouldn't have survived as a species. Sports kick in when we've taken on all the challenges germane to our survival and then lust for more; when the challenges no longer exist, we invent them. Sporting competition has everything: the challenge, the confrontation and the climactic finality of a result. Someone, or something, always wins, loses or draws. And this goes some way toward understanding our fundamental fascination with sports. But we still need to dig deeper for the sources.

No human institution is immune from critical investigation. Not even ones that provide us with so much pleasure – in fact, you could argue that these are especially worthy of critical investigation. This is why there are theories of and investigations into art, humor and, of course, sex. Ask anybody why he or she likes any of these and odds are you will get a stock response along the lines of “they're good fun” or “because they give us pleasure.” Fair comment. But the analyst of sports uses this only as the starting point of his or her examination.

Often, there's resistance to approaching sports on any other terms other than those of the fan, the reporter or the athlete. Sports practitioners and journalists have warned off those who bring too much intellect to what is, after all, a joyous human activity. Theoretical contemplation is all very well; but sports are for doers, not thinkers. If you intellectualize over an activity too much you lose sight of the basic reason why people like it. That was the jaundiced view once encountered by sports analysts. Now it's changing.

Sport as an institution is just too economically big, too politically important, too influential in shaping people's lives not to be taken seriously as a subject for academic inquiry. I should distinguish between sport and sports: *sport* refers to the entire institution and is preferred in Britain to the plural *sports*, which describes the various activities and organizations and is more popularly used in the United States. In practice, the two are used interchangeably.

Those whose emotions are left undisturbed by sports, are often bewildered and sometimes disgusted by the irrational waste involved in sports. Readers of this book will probably not be among this group. But they'll be looking for explanations: they'll want to make sense of what is, on the surface at least, a senseless activity. This book, as its title suggests, tries to do exactly that. In the chapters that follow, we'll go beyond surface appearances to reveal new perspectives on sports.

None of what follows denies the validity of the views of the fans, the athletes, the sports journalists, nor indeed the cynics: they all provide us with pieces of a jigsaw, a puzzle that can only be assembled by fitting the various different-shaped pieces together. To this end, I'll integrate as many different perspectives as necessary in the attempt to make sport comprehensible as an enduring, universal phenomenon. The reader will find contributions from a range of behavioral and physical sciences, such