

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: TUNING INTO THE GOSPEL: HOW THE GROWTH OF SPORTS TELEVISION POPULARIZED PUBLIC PRAYER AMONG ATHLETES

Alan M. Goldenbach, Master of Arts, 2012

Directed By: Prof. Kevin B. Blackistone, Shirley Povich Chair in Sports Journalism

Whether the game is played among friends in a community park or in front of tens of thousands inside a packed stadium with millions more watching on television worldwide, prayer has become an omnipresent tool for athletes of all ages and skill levels. No longer do players invoke their spirituality in private or among themselves off the field; they do it in front of whoever is watching. While the ties between religion and sports date to ancient times, the public display of their union has become a phenomenon in the current generation. This book proposal will trace how public prayer among athletes has evolved. It will ultimately show that the boon of sports television programming over that span has given athletes a platform to use as a pulpit, while also exposing viewers to content they had not previously received through other mass media.

**TUNING INTO THE GOSPEL:
HOW THE GROWTH OF SPORTS TELEVISION POPULARIZED PUBLIC
PRAYER AMONG ATHLETES**

By Alan M. Goldenbach

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
2012

Advisory Committee:

Prof. Christopher Hanson, Chair
Prof. Kevin B. Blackistone
Prof. Carl Sessions Stepp

© Copyright by
Alan M. Goldenbach
2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary of Proposal	1
About the Author	3
Book Summary	4
<u>Sample Chapter and Chapter Summaries</u>	
1. The Gospel of Herb Lusk (<i>Sample chapter</i>)	7
2. How Prayer Became a Tool for Athletic Achievement	27
3. Sports and Religion in American Identity and Culture, 1900-1950	33
4. The Power of Television as a Cultural Medium	37
5. The Creation of the Celebrity Athlete	42
6. The Growth of Public Prayer in the U.S.	46
7. The Perfect Storm: ESPN debuts	50
Audience	53
Competition	56
References	59

Summary

While this thesis is in the format of a non-fiction book proposal, it still carries a hypothesis that is buffered by substantial preliminary scholarly research, which will be further developed into its intended longer form.

Two of the most revealing mechanisms of modern American culture are sports and religion. They have interacted to various degrees for centuries. No mass medium has revealed this link as effectively as television.

This thesis will lay the framework for how television served as the ideal conduit for athletes using prayer during their performance. There is a sample chapter dissecting a moment in 1977 that served as a flashpoint to accelerate this relationship's prominence. Subsequently, there will be chapter summaries detailing the historical elements that have helped this relationship gather steam, dating from ancient times.

Other facets of this book proposal will show how little attention this subject has been given, aside from its surface appearance (i.e. – an athlete chose to pray or make a spiritual gesture on the field of play), and why this is a topic that will generate plenty of reader interest.

While some books have examined the interaction of sports and religion from a fundamental perspective, none have taken those historical roots and applied them to their respective modern infrastructures. We may be able to point to the ancient Greeks staging

the Olympic Games as a way to pay homage to their deities, but we have yet to identify how that corresponds to today's Olympic Games, which are a multi-billion-dollar worldwide enterprise. At the center of modern sports, in the U.S. in particular, is television. It is as much a part of top-tier competition as are a ball or the field, such that, if nobody is watching, then should we even bother to play?

About the Author

Alan Goldenbach is a former award-winning sports reporter for *The Washington Post* from 1999 to 2011. He now teaches journalism at the University of Maryland and George Mason University.

Goldenbach was born and raised in the Bronx, N.Y., and is a product of New York City's public schools. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1998, and immediately began his professional journalism career. After a summer internship at *The Star-Ledger* (Newark, NJ), he joined *The Press-Enterprise* (Riverside, CA) as a sports reporter. Thirteen months later, Goldenbach was hired by *The Washington Post* as a reporter.

While with *The Post*, Goldenbach covered a variety of topics, including the University of Maryland men's basketball team the season it won its first national championship. He regularly produced feature and enterprise stories examining broader sociological, health, financial and administrative issues affecting scholastic and collegiate sports. His work was twice honored by the Associated Press Sports Editors in its annual writing contest: in 2005, for feature writing, and the following year for investigative reporting.

In addition to appearing on local programs produced by Comcast SportsNet and *The Post*, Goldenbach has been invited to speak to audiences both large and small on topics, ranging from the changing dynamics of daily journalism the ethical challenges facing journalists that social media presents, and reform of urban scholastic athletic administration.

Book Summary

On October 9, 1977, in the middle of his second NFL season, Philadelphia Eagles backup running back Herb Lusk scored his first professional touchdown. He then made a gesture no NFL player had ever previously done, but has since become ubiquitous within all levels of American sports: without any pretension, Lusk dropped to his left knee in the end zone and bowed his head in prayer.

He scored another touchdown later in the game and repeated the ritual. Following the Eagles' 28-10 victory over the New York Giants, no reporter asked Lusk about his unique touchdown celebration. In the following day's print-media accounts of the game, none mentioned Lusk's gesture. Meantime, on television, sports news still only had a small window at the end of each local news broadcast. Lusk's prayer did not warrant any of that precious air time. There were no national sports broadcast outlets that have since become ubiquitous across cable carries.

Lusk scored another touchdown – and prayed again - the following week, but that would be the last of his career. He retired before the 1979 season and became a pastor. His legacy, however, was becoming clear; other NFL players were copying his end-zone ritual. Soon, basketball players began crossing themselves before taking free throws, baseball players pointed skyward after securing the final out of a victory, and players from opposing teams would not leave the field after a game until they joined together in prayer.

Lusk's timing was perfect. Over the previous decade, American sporting culture had begun to discover its potential to be agent of social change. Television was beginning to exert an overwhelming influence upon American sports – both as a means of information consumption and distribution. It drew in millions more at home, and exposed them to an abundance of new information. From the other side of the camera, athletes saw this change, too, and realized the power they had to deliver a message from the field. Less than two years after Lusk revealed his piety at Giants Stadium, ESPN debuted, opening a window twenty-four hours a day for athletes to profess their faith to a national broadcast audience.

Tuning Into the Gospel examines individually all the components – including the post-World War II rise of spectator sports in the U.S., the emergence of the nation's evangelical community; the communicative potential of television - that, collectively, made on-field spirituality part of the repertoire for any athlete, whether he is a Super Bowl-winning quarterbacks or a preteen playing schoolyard basketball.

Religion's presence in American culture has enjoyed a renaissance in past few decades, yet it now has a different identity than its homogenous version during the nation's founding. Evangelical Christians have been unabashed in touting their faith publicly as they have become the most visible subset of the nation's most prominent religion. Meantime, Islam has grown faster than any other faith, with Muslims struggling to showcase their spirituality without wariness from those

With sports playing an ever-increasing role in defining so many elements of American culture, from education to entertainment, from to social development and interaction to helping to maintain long-held stereotypes and misnomers, it is appropriate – if not altogether important – to examine how this unlikely relationship blossomed and where it may head.

This thesis – and book – will examine that television was – and still is – the conduit that helped the sport-religion relationship prosper. As television became such an influential medium during the latter part of the 20th century, sports found it to be a most effective means of attracting audiences. As broadcast outlets began to expand their coverage of sporting events and sports culture, athletes began to see the medium as a way to share their spirituality, an element long considered private.

Because such disparate opinion exists on the appropriateness and relevance of the sports-religion synthesis, *Tuning Into the Gospel* aims to document the relationship as each element has evolved. The roles of sport and religion in society, independent of one another, have dramatically changed. Television has played a major role in that transformation. In the end, *Tuning Into the Gospel* does not ask whether on-field spirituality is right or wrong, but, instead, shows how and why it became so prevalent, and lets the audience judge the relationship.

Chapter 1 – The Gospel of Herb Lusk (Sample chapter)

Herb Lusk can recall scant details of the day on which he sealed his place in the history of American sporting culture. Even the five seconds in which he transcended all sports and all levels of competition, that brief moment on October 9, 1977, is just a blur to him, save for a few words. As for the other details surrounding his momentous gesture? Lusk's anticipation of the moment overwhelms much of his memory.

Most of the country was unprepared for what Lusk did at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, that fall afternoon. Lusk was in his second season playing professional football for the Philadelphia Eagles. A reserve running back, Lusk's career was threatened just three years earlier by knee injury during his junior season at California State University-Long Beach. His 1976 rookie season with the Eagles was interrupted when a shoulder injury forced him to miss three games and only let him play sparingly once he returned for Philadelphia's final five contests.

The following season, Lusk appeared in just one of the Eagles' first three games. An injury, however, to the team's starting running back, Tom Sullivan, put Lusk in the starting lineup for the first time in Philadelphia's fourth game, October 9, against the New York Giants.

Midway through the third quarter of the game, the Giants, having scored 10 straight points, missed a 47-yard field goal that would have cut Philadelphia's lead to eight. As the Eagles regained possession, Lusk and the Eagles' offense went back out on to the

field, looking to stem the Giants' rally. Philadelphia Coach Dick Vermeil sent in his first-down play-call to quarterback Ron Jaworski: 48 Toss.¹

Jaworski took the snap, dropped back toward his left and pitched the ball to Lusk who swept around the left end. With three blockers flanking him along the way, the six-foot, two-hundred-pound Lusk burst past the Giants' defenders into the open field. As he sprinted downfield, Lusk's strides kicked up water that had pooled on the turf from the previous night's rain. He easily outran the one remaining defender who was the Giants' last chance to tackle him. The seventy-yard touchdown was the Eagles' longest scoring run in nearly twenty years, and clinched what would become a 28-10 Philadelphia victory. Lusk's biggest highlight, however, was yet to come.

Lusk slowed once he crossed the goal line, and relaxed his broad shoulders. Four steps later, he dropped to his left knee, kept the football tucked under his right arm (unlike many of his peers who preferred to spike the ball emphatically following each score, especially their first as a professional), bowed his head and administered the first silent end-zone prayer in the history of the National Football League. The rest of his teammates were still running down field toward him while Lusk had his moment of solitude in plain view of the 48,824 in the stands at Giants Stadium. They arrived just as Lusk rose from the soggy field to congratulate him.

¹ Goldenbach, "After NFL's First Prayer, Religion Touched Down," The Washington Post, September 28, 2007.

This was actually Lusk's second end-zone prayer that day. His first professional touchdown came on a one-yard run midway through the second quarter, as he dove over both teams' linemen and put the Eagles ahead 21-0. His first prayer, however, was obscured from television cameras and, for that matter, most of the spectators because Lusk was surrounded by other players during his brief ritual. It was not until his second score that he was able to stand out and let everyone observe his meditation. "I couldn't wait to get on my knees when I got in there and thank God for it," Lusk said years later, as he recalled his second touchdown run. "It's about time."² American sports would never be the same.

The roots of the union of sports and spirituality can be traced back to antiquity. Ancient Greeks completed feats of strength and endurance to curry favor with their deities; English Puritans in the seventeenth century, meantime, sought to prevent any such relationship as they took umbrage with staging Sunday competitions in lieu of extensive worship; the creation and expansion of the Young Men's Christian Association in the late nineteenth century institutionalized sports and religion under the same umbrella; modern invocations now appear, both in preparation for and reaction to, athletic performance. Even as American sporting culture became more prominent, organized, and ultimately, professionalized, during the twentieth century, though, religion's role in conjunction with it was often demonstrated privately. Individual athletes would have a moment of introspection before, during or after a game away from public view, or teams would gather in their locker rooms before or after games to engage in prayers seeking protection or guidance, or expressing gratitude.

² "NFL Films Presents: Religion," DVD, NFL Films, 2004

Herb Lusk stripped prayer of its privacy, brought it on to the field and into homes nationwide, and into the public's consciousness through the medium of television. Players who make the sign of cross before stepping toward the batter's box or free-throw line, point skyward in celebration of victory or accomplishment, or don tattoos or equipment garnished with sacred images or words, can point to Lusk's performance on October 9, 1977, as the moment that made spiritual gestures as much a part of the game as the high-five.³ The reason this is such a defining moment is because of television's role in popularizing sports in the U.S. Would the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team's victory over the Soviet Union have had the same impact were cameras not there to show such a stunning result some felt they needed to see to believe? How well would Americans appreciate Muhammad Ali's command and bravado had they not been able to see and hear him articulate both with such an overwhelming camera presence?

Actually, Lusk began praying on the field two years earlier, but the media environment on that October afternoon spoke to the impact of his gesture on this particular day.

The son of a northern California Baptist minister, Lusk began his college career in 1972 at Monterey Peninsula Junior College, before transferring in 1974 to Long Beach State, a small college whose football team carried a low national profile. While he finished that season as Long Beach's second-leading rusher, Lusk sustained a knee injury that required surgery and left him with what he said was a fifty-fifty chance of ever playing again.⁴ "I

³ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 240.

⁴ H. Vincent Price. "Herb Lusk Plays for God." *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 1, 1976.

prayed and asked God to come back and play football," Lusk said in 2007. "He not only answered my prayer, but did it over and above. I decided I would thank and praise God after each touchdown I scored."⁵

Lusk returned healthy for his senior season at Long Beach State in 1975, and rushed for 1,596 yards - the nation's second-highest total that season – and also scored sixteen touchdowns – each capped by a prayer in the end zone. It earned him the nickname, "The Praying Tailback," but it was a moniker that did not get much notice outside of the Long Beach community. His team's games were seldom covered by local print media, and never by broadcast outlets. It was not until after his college career ended when he was preparing for his professional career that some in the Los Angeles print media reflected on Lusk's on-field displays of spirituality.

Lusk was named an honorable mention all-American by the Associated Press and selected to play January 3, 1976, in the East-West Shrine Game, an annual all-star game of players who had just completed their collegiate careers. In that game, Lusk ran for two short touchdowns in the third quarter to propel the West team to a 21-14 victory. As Lusk knelt in prayer following the first of his scores, one of his West teammates, Chuck Muncie, ran toward him with an arm extended looking for a high-five. Muncie stood over a kneeling Lusk waiting for an embrace that never arrived. Lusk said that that moment encapsulated people's initial reactions to the prayer: they were unprepared for it.⁶ There

⁵ Goldenbach, The Washington Post, September 28, 2007.

⁶ Goldenbach, The Washington Post, September 28, 2007.

were two celebrations occurring simultaneously, Lusk explained, but they could not reconcile one another.⁷

This confusion can also explain why the print media ignored mentioning Lusk's very public displays. What would reporters say about it? How would they describe it? Religion was always a private matter, and treated similar to how reporters would turn a blind eye to athletes' off-the-field carousing or immaturity in previous generations. Moreover, print reporters had a choice of what information to include in their stories. Before they filed their accounts, reporters had time for retrospection, to analyze the value of certain information to the wholeness of a story; there was no immediate relaying of information to the audience. Whether they were confused by the prayer or felt it was excessive or tangential to the story of a game or athlete, reporters could easily omit the detail and write around it.

The Los Angeles Times in 1991 received sharp criticism from readers for choosing to focus a profile of Orel Hershiser, a star pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers, around his Christianity. The story was about Hershiser's recovery from shoulder surgery and as the story was reported, Hershiser repeatedly attributed his recovery to his Christianity. John Cherwa, then the Times associate sports editor, said he was often uncomfortable using religion in stories because readers likened it to proselytizing. Additionally, he said he tried to omit religious comments from a story because they often came across as clichéd. "Basically, our goal is to give a factual, readable story," he said. "It's like words that are

⁷ Hiskey, "Q&A/Herb Lusk II," Atlanta Journal-Constitution, February 4, 2006.

there but don't have a meaning.”⁸ Journalists are taught to report facts, information they can observe with their senses. Spirituality, especially someone else’s, cannot be articulated as such. Objectivity is difficult with respect to religion; accuracy is impossible.

None of the sixteen times Lusk prayed after scoring a touchdown his senior year at Long Beach State was included in print media game reports. Neither was his end-zone display at Giants Stadium in the accounts following the Eagles victory on October 9, 1977. “I don't remember it as shocking or anything like that,” Jaworski said in 2007. “We just took it as, 'That's Herb.' We knew he was a religious man, and this is who he was. Very few people paid much attention to it.”⁹

Inspiration needs a messenger. While Herb Lusk delivered his message at the perfect time, he did not seem like the ideal figure to introduce such a radical and potentially explosive element to an environment that was still learning about its significance.

Considering the metamorphosis that American sports were undergoing in the mid-1970s, such a message seemed to warrant coming from a more established voice, one with whom an audience could identify immediately.

The culture of American sports at the time reflected the broad social changes across the nation over the past decade: the Civil Rights and movement had begun to alter the literal

⁸ Scarton, “Casting God in Sporting Role,” Scripps Howard News Service, October 5, 1991.

⁹ Goldenbach, The Washington Post, September 28, 2007.

appearance of the athletes on professional and high-profile college teams; women's liberation – including the passage of Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments - opened the doors for both genders to fields and gymnasiums; and the six-year challenge, and ultimate repeal, of Major League Baseball's Reserve Clause in 1975 was the gateway to free agency for all professional athletes, who used that decision to usurp unprecedented power and money, make American professional sports a multibillion dollar-a-year industry and create a global reach and appeal for the leagues.

Look at Muhammad Ali's confidence and ease with which he delivered his outlandishly captivating banter. It is easy to see, then, why that personality afforded Ali opportunities to discuss race and a controversial war, when, previously, athletes' opinions on matters off-the-field mattered little. Similarly, Billie Jean King had already become the dominant player in women's tennis, as well as a staunch advocate for prize-money equity between genders before she overwhelmed Bobby Riggs in the Battle of the Sexes on worldwide television in 1973. Her athletic talent, at the very least, had earned her public awareness. Regardless of their opinions on either, Americans had a familiarity with both Ali and King.

Lusk, meantime, hardly carried the cache of an Ali or King. He fit better as a member of a traveling entourage than its focal point. It did not matter that Lusk's status as a professional athlete – no matter how obscure he might have been – made him a public figure, albeit with a low profile. Professional athletes were not all afforded the same

platforms of media exposure. The media sought out its subjects, not vice versa. A high profile made a subject inherently more visible. Lusk lacked that established appeal.

Television – live television, more precisely - flipped that script. Live television became the messenger Lusk and, subsequently, other athletes needed to introduce audiences to on-field prayer, as they ultimately popularized it. Recorded television programs are much like stories in the print media: carefully choreographed, deliberately edited and presented as a complete package. There is a predetermined order of who will speak, what will be said, and how it needs to appear.

Live television, on the other hand, does not allow such complete control of information. In fact, it allows people chances to jump in with unplanned dialogue, opinions or displays that producers would not allow had they had the opportunity to orchestrate and plan each detail of the event's story arc. The idea of an end-zone ritual was not Lusk's; just four years earlier, on November 18, 1973, Elmo Wright, caught a touchdown pass for the Kansas City Chiefs, and celebrated it with what is believed to be the NFL's first touchdown dance: he ran in place for a few seconds, and then bolted to the sideline.¹⁰

On-field prayer needed television to popularize it, and the medium did just that. The very nature of public prayer is evangelism – to reach as many people as possible. Lusk was an evangelical Christian. No medium provided evangelicals a broader reach than television. Its visual and aural impacts dwarfed the power of the printed word's message. While producers could easily avoid any mention of spirituality on their programs, they had no

¹⁰ Goldenbach, The Washington Post, September 28, 2007.

control over what occurred on live broadcasts – especially when certain people knew they would have (or the opportunity to have) the camera affixed to them. Live television gave spontaneity nearly unfettered power. What other daily events are broadcasted live with such a wide cast of characters – or potential characters – beside sporting events?

Kurt Warner had a domestic audience exceeding eighty-eight million, and several million more abroad ready to listen to him talk on January 30, 2000. After leading the St. Louis Rams to victory in Super Bowl XXXIV, the organization's first NFL championship, Warner had the chance to articulate his amazing story into a television microphone. Cultures both near and far - literally and metaphorically – could hear a first-hand account of Warner describing his middle-America upbringing to being named the league's most valuable player and playing the most recognizable position in American sports: Super Bowl-winning quarterback. Warner had the chance to reflect upon playing for an undistinguished college team in a remote community, struggling to gain recognition in one of the sport's minor leagues, and contemplating giving up the sports altogether, while he bagged groceries just five years earlier. As Warner improbably stood atop his profession, cradling the championship trophy and awaiting questions from a television reporter, the audience wondered: What would he say?

Warner could not have been set up better. He was asked to assess his team's 23-17 victory, which was sealed on the game's final play, and also take stock of his own unbelievable reversal of fortune. Instead, he ignored the television reporter's question. Beaming from ear to ear, Warner screamed into the microphone, "First things first. I have

to give praise and glory to my Lord and Savior up above. Thank you, Jesus!”¹¹ Warner considered the most critical attribute of his success was his spirituality, and he made clear everyone knew.

The December 3, 1990, game between the New York Giants and San Francisco 49’ers was highly-anticipated for matching up the defending Super Bowl champion (San Francisco) with that season’s eventual-champion Giants. It also, however, became a test specimen for another striking spiritual display. The game was featured on ABC’s Monday Night Football telecast which attracted larger national audiences than the Sunday games, which were sent to the respective markets of the teams. After San Francisco’s 7-3 victory, seven players – five from San Francisco and two from New York – followed the encouragement of San Francisco team chaplain Pat Richie and joined together at midfield for prayer. Some critics were offended by the display, which was aired briefly before the ABC broadcast signed off, while it gave others an idea.¹²

Reggie White, one of the NFL’s most accomplished players (coincidentally, for the Philadelphia Eagles) and an ordained Evangelical minister, made routine the gathering of players from both teams in prayer following the final whistle. He gathered several players from both teams at midfield for a prayer, and similar congregations have become routine at NFL games, even popping up in other sports, such as the NBA.

¹¹ Broadcast of *Super Bowl XXXIV*, ABC, January 30, 2000.

¹² Don Lattin, “Having a Prayer: Christians are making a statement in the NFL,” San Francisco Chronicle, January 22, 1997,

On a Monday evening in 1980, Lusk glanced at highlights of a game from the previous day, and saw Los Angeles Rams running back Wendell Tyler score a touchdown and promptly kneel in the end zone. If any doubts lingered with Lusk about whether his gesture would ostracize him or confuse others, then Tyler provided all the affirmation Lusk needed.

“I saw that and said, “That's why I played,”” Lusk said. “I felt accomplishment. I felt vindication. People always asked me [after retiring] why did I even bother to play, and then I pointed to that.”¹³

Wendell Tyler's prayer appealed to Lusk for its simplicity and apparent humility. The previous summer, Tyler was traveling in West Virginia with his brother-in-law and a friend, when the brother-in-law fell asleep at the wheel and crashed their car into a ditch, just a few feet from a mountain cliff. Tyler was hospitalized for two weeks with a dislocated hip. After being the Rams' leading rusher the previous season, helping them reach their first Super Bowl, Tyler faced a grim prognosis; doctors told the 25-year-old he had a ten percent chance of being able to resume his career.¹⁴

After missing the first seven weeks of the 1980 season, Tyler was able to return to the lineup. He felt a deep spiritual connection for both allowing him to survive the accident and return to football. But while his motivation was similar to Lusk's, his gumption

¹³ Goldenbach, The Washington Post, September 28, 2007.

¹⁴ Michael Janofsky, “Disaster Changes Course for Tyler,” New York Times, December 26, 1984

wasn't. Tyler said he was hesitant about discussing his faith with reporters, much less expressing it on the field, because he saw how such attitudes or priorities were regarded. Even amongst teammates, there was a sharp divide between those for whom spirituality was focal point, and those who were more secular or spiritually private. The latter derisively labeled the former as "God-squaders," a knock not only on religion, but also, a subtle jab at a player's loyalty; would a player put his faith ahead of his teammates' quest for victory on the field? The ironically named Deacon Jones, a Hall of Fame defensive lineman who played fifteen seasons, and retired in 1974, two years before Lusk made his NFL debut, acknowledged his Christian faith, but rejected any use – public or private – on the field. "If you're praying," he said, "to me, that's a sign of weakness. You ain't sure about yourself."¹⁵ It became an even more prevalent stigma used among reporters and other media members, who were still reluctant to acknowledge spirituality as a component of an athlete's identity or motivation.¹⁶

The result was a vicious cycle: The pious would reach across the locker room; the recipients felt overwhelmed and invaded, and responded by questioning their commitment to winning; this only encouraged stronger displays of spirituality because you naturally dig in your heels when someone questions the strength of your convictions. Spiritual displays, then, became more defiant and demonstrative, which naturally led to critics questioning whether these proclamations were genuine. Anthony Prior, who played six seasons in the NFL in the mid-1990s, said public displays of spirituality afford players protection because they help perpetuate a desirable image that helps them market

¹⁵ "NFL Films Presents: Religion," NFL Films, 2004

¹⁶ Janokfsy, New York Times, December 26, 1984.

themselves. While it's possible to question someone's religious convictions, it is impossible to prove them inaccurate. "It's safe because you can get away with more as a Christian," Prior said. "You can personify yourself and go into the locker room, 'Hey, this guy is a strong Christian. He's a good guy.' But once you leave the locker room and leave the stadium people don't know what you're doing. To have that title as a Christian athlete, that's a safe thing, so they can sustain themselves and have a long career."¹⁷ Lusk acknowledged the potential for warped perspectives, as players could pray for victory or material success. He disagrees with utilizing prayer for either of those purposes, but understands a younger athlete's misuse of an invocation. "I'm not sure that on God's agenda, winning a football game is going to be at the top," he said. "When I was a young Christian, I prayed to win. 'Lord Jesus, let us win this game. Please.' But the more I matured, the more I understood that God has a plan that's much bigger than my desires and my wants."¹⁸

Naturally, once on-field prayer became so pervasive in professional sports, those emulating and aspiring to reach that level began mimicking those displays. In the mid-1990s, end-zone prayers became so common in college football games that the NCAA sought to expand legislation aimed at improving sportsmanship. The 1992 rule penalized teams if players engaged in what officials felt was "excessive celebration" after scoring a touchdown. Three years later, the NCAA's Football Rules Committee decided it would increase enforcement of the rule, following evidence of an increase in players' effusive celebrations or taunts following touchdowns or big plays, which included them posing for

¹⁷ "Outside the Lines," ESPN, January 12, 2010,

¹⁸ "NFL Films Presents: Religion" NFL Films.

television cameras. To distinguish the orchestrated displays from the impulsive, the NCAA sought to forbid, “any delayed, excessive or prolonged act by which a player attempts to focus attention upon himself.” As it explained the focus of its new enforcement of the rule, the NCAA composed a video collage of 150 examples of the rule’s violations, including end-zone prayer, which its leadership classified as a “delayed action.” The first such offense in a game would earn a player’s team a fifteen-yard penalty; the second would result in the player’s ejection from the game. Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, founded and ran by Rev. Jerry Falwell, filed suit, claiming the rule was discriminatory, and violated the 1964 Civil Rights Act, as well as the establishment clause of the First Amendment. The following day, the NCAA altered its interpretation and permitted end-zone prayers without penalty, provided the act of praying appears spontaneous and not premeditated.¹⁹

A 2009 study by Tim Delaney and Tim Madigan revealed more than ninety percent of college athletes felt comfortable allowing teammates or opponents to pray on the field. The same study showed at least three-quarters felt comfortable engaging in prayer with opposing players on the field. Those figures do not change when the sample set is limited to students at public or private institutions, to those at secular or parochial schools, or, to one gender.²⁰ The results validate Lusk’s stance. “What harm does it do to have a guy pray, or to point, not to himself, but to God?” he asked. “What harm does it do to have a

¹⁹ J.A. Adande, “When Giving Thanks Draws a Penalty,” *The Washington Post*, September 1, 1995

²⁰ Delaney and Madigan, *The Sociology of Sports: an introduction*, 271.

guy spread his faith in a tasteful way? It's only a moment."²¹ Taste, however, is not a unanimous opinion.

Or, the numbers could support Prior's contention that the projection of belief can be distasteful to outsiders, or merely a façade to fellow believers. Perhaps one of the consequences of prayer's omnipresence is not that it has made people more spiritual and attuned to the ritual's message, but, in fact, the opposite; they are numb to its effectiveness because the custom seems burdensome or perfunctory. When asked why his team recites in unison the deeply personal Christian Lord's Prayer before and after every game in the locker room, Gary Shephard, the football coach at Halls High School in Knoxville, Tennessee, said, "I guess I'm just a creature of habit. That's something we've always done in every game I've ever been a part of" for nearly 40 years.²² Instances of this ilk make it easy to label prayer as hollow in meaning. Before a game, an athlete's emotions are reaching their collective crescendo, with their singular focus on the event ahead (or afterward, those sentiments are reeling from prolonged engagement). It is unfair to expect the athlete to have substantial ability to concentrate on the prayer's meaning. Several attest they are merely "going through the motions" with their pre-game prayer.²³

It's difficult to imagine Lusk giving any task a cursory effort. Just as his faith professes, Lusk said he had a purpose with everything. After completing his college career at Long Beach State, Lusk was selected by the Philadelphia Eagles in the tenth round of the 1976

²¹ "Outside the Lines," ESPN, January 12, 2010.

²² Price, "Playing and Praying, Sport and Spirit: The Forms and Functions of Prayer in Sports," 70.

²³ Deford, "Reaching For the Stars," Sports Illustrated, May 3, 1976,

NFL Draft. Two hundred seventy-two players were selected before him, in part, because Long Beach did not play a challenging schedule, so teams questioned Lusk's ability, and also because the knee injury Lusk sustained his junior year gave teams pause about his long-term health. Lusk, though, already had his eyes on his long-term future, and it did not involve football.

Upon meeting the Philadelphia media for the first time, Lusk boasted he would only play three seasons, saying he eventually would pursue a career in the ministry, like his father. Lusk recalled the exchange, and noted the reporters' collective skepticism with respect to his plans. "Nobody believed me," he said years later.²⁴ On one hand, it was easy to forget Lusk's end-zone prayer; the week after its debut, Lusk caught a thirty-six-yard touchdown pass from Jaworski and knelt in prayer again, as the Eagles lost at home to the St. Louis Cardinals, 28-17. It was the only other touchdown of his NFL career.

For Lusk, following his convictions away from football and toward a career in ministry was not a choice; it was an obligation, and one he fulfilled without hesitation. The temptation to play a fourth NFL season, however, nearly lured him back. Lusk reported to the Eagles' preseason training camp in July 1979 at Widener University in Philadelphia. After completing the first day of practice, Lusk awoke in the middle of the night in his dorm room. Saying he heard a voice, Lusk dropped to his knees, "and I knew that was it."²⁵ The following morning, July 12, 1979, Lusk told Vermeil, his coach, that

²⁴ "NFL Films Presents: Religion," NFL Films.

²⁵ Goldenbach, The Washington Post, September 28, 2007.

he was retiring. Lusk told reporters later that day his “enthusiasm just wasn’t there.”²⁶ It was, just not for football.

Lusk enrolled at Philadelphia Theological Seminary and became an ordained minister in April 1980. Two years later, he was named pastor at Greater Exodus Baptist Church, less than a mile down North Broad Street in north Philadelphia. It was hardly what someone accustomed to a high-profile life would consider an ideal opportunity. Membership at Greater Exodus had dwindled to about two dozen. The church was delinquent on its gas bill, racking up a debt of \$32,000. Leaks in the ceiling forced the church maintenance staff to place more than a dozen buckets across the floor of the sanctuary to catch dripping water. Other pockmarks scattered across the dilapidated structure required repairs worth approximately \$400,000.²⁷

Within a decade, Greater Exodus had eliminated its debt, refurbished its crumbling facility, and set up, People for People, a non-profit social-service agency that subsequently became more visible than the church. People for People established a wealth of programs, including job training, child care, tutoring for high school equivalency exams, and mentoring to children of inmates. Under its purview, People for People set up a charter school and credit union. Eventually, Greater Exodus no longer could accommodate all of People for People’s outlets, so in 2002, the agency moved into an eight-story building around the corner from the church that used to house Philadelphia’s traffic court. A banquet hall named The View filled the eighth floor, and

²⁶ “The Newswire,” The Los Angeles Times, July 13, 1979.

²⁷ Ron Avery, “Ex-Bird Soaring For Others,” Philadelphia Daily News, January 11, 1995

touted panoramic views of the city that made the facility an attractive rental option for outside groups' social functions.^{28 29} It all helped Greater Exodus membership surpass 1,000 by 1995, and 1,500 a decade later.³⁰

By 2005, Lusk had helped People for People secure more than one million dollars from the administration of President George W. Bush and the White House's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.^{31 32} Bush had visited Greater Exodus twice during his first term in office, once on Independence Day 2001, and the latter, June 23, 2004, to promote his administration's HIV/AIDS initiatives. "I want to thank my friend, Herb Lusk," Bush told the audience at the beginning of his remarks, "for inviting me back to the Greater Exodus Baptist Church. I've been here before ... and I don't remember this building [housing People for People] being here. At the time I said, Herb is a social entrepreneur who can make things happen. We're in this beautiful building because he made things happen." A hearty round of applause interrupted the President before he could continue his address.³³

Standing at the pulpit inside Great Exodus three decades after revealing his silent statement, Lusk still personifies typical gridiron ruggedness. A raspy voice that seamlessly vacillates from booming ferocity to staccato encouragement exudes from Lusk's burly upper body that looks like it could still square up and level a would-be

²⁸ Michael Sokolove, "The Believer," *New York Times Magazine*, May 22, 2005.

²⁹ Goldenbach, *The Washington Post*, September 28, 2007.

³⁰ Avery, *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 11, 1995.

³¹ *Ibid*

³² Goldenbach, *The Washington Post*, September 28, 2007.

³³ Transcript of President George W. Bush speech in Philadelphia re: funding HIV/AIDS programs. June 23, 2004, Fox, Vanderbilt Television News Archive.

tackler. His gleaming smile which is difficult to conceal when he looks out into his congregation, belies that otherwise-gruff exterior. Adamant about the purpose of every undertaking, Lusk may ultimately realize his most lasting impact lacked any of this precise coordination. "All I wanted to do more than anything else in life was to make a difference and be a changing force," Lusk said,

"At the time, I wasn't thinking about what I started, but now, I look back and say to myself, 'Yes, I've given birth to something.'"³⁴

³⁴ Goldenbach, The Washington Post, September 28, 2007.

Chapter 2 - How prayer became a tool for athletic achievement

Sports and religion each have the potential to be defined in particularly abstract terms because there are such great variances in their respective meanings and purposes. For that reason, before beginning any exploration or discussion of the synthesis of sports and religion, it is necessary to understand the identities of each.

Religion, however, is a very broad term, and difficult to isolate. The most fundamental expression of religion is a prayer, and that is often how spirituality is manifested in the sporting realm. This chapter will explore how prayer became infused with sports and developed into a tool for athletic achievement. In order to trace that path, however, we must begin with an understanding of what prayer is, and then establish its possible purposes, uses, and forms.

While prayer is a communication with a spiritual entity, how, exactly, is it constituted? Prayer can be expressed in a multitude of ways, and carry just as many purposes. While each religion often dictates the protocol for administering prayer, ultimately, each individual determines how each specific prayer is best utilized or expressed. There is no template or standard for praying on a playing field. Is it supposed to be done in plain sight alongside others, or should it involve an element of privacy and solitude?

American psychologist and philosopher William James labeled prayer “the core of religion” because, through its utterance, “spiritual energy flows in and produces effects,

psychological or material, within the phenomenal world.”³⁵ While prayer’s sound or appearance can take different identities, there is a ritual element attached to it that denotes familiarity. This familiarity, according to Emile Durkheim, allows the meaning of prayer to transcend communities and generations, such that its understanding and purpose are shared by people who have never practiced the ritual alongside one another.³⁶

Unlike prayer, sports have tangible and quantifiable characteristics: participants, physical equipment that aid the participants in achieving the object of the endeavor, and a physical plane one which to hold a competition. Dutch historian Johan Huizinga’s seminal 1938 work *Homo Ludens* provides an excellent foundation for understanding sports. Huizinga identifies “play” as a central element of human culture, attributing to it the qualities that it occurs outside ordinary life, is fundamentally “not serious,” establishes its own boundaries of time and space, and helps create social groupings that often stress their differences.³⁷

While there are similarities between the practices of both prayer and sports (the element of perfection sought in each; the authoritative infrastructure governing both entities; each housing a shared set of values; and the fierce emotional attachment they each generate), they are an unlikely pairing. Exploring the evolution of Max Weber’s landmark 1905 work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* - largely through Steven Overman, who applied Weber’s theory to sports - it is evident there are seven “cardinal

³⁵ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 477 and 485.

³⁶ Townsley, Jeramy. “Marx, Weber, and Durkheim on Religion”
<http://www.jeramy.org/papers/sociology-of-religion.html>

³⁷ Huizinga, as cited by, Prebish, 20.

virtues” of Protestantism that Overman finds in sports that are consistent with Weber’s analysis of capitalism.³⁸ This is particularly ironic, given the opposition to sports from Protestants – particularly, its Puritan sect – during the post-Renaissance and Industrialization periods.

Yet those similarities alone are not reason enough to induce an athlete to turn to prayer in the interest of performance. The ritual characteristics of prayer, though, demand focus from the one administering it, and attention from others, who recognize its solemnity. Furthermore, whether prayer is given before, during or after an athletic endeavor, according to anthropologist Mari Womack, it serves as a coping and unifying mechanism during a stressful time. Prayer provides comfort during a period of uncertainty, meaning to the seemingly irrelevant, and focus amid chaos.³⁹

We can take these characteristics and conditions and revisit how prayer and sports have intermingled. Among the earliest such documented instances was Odysseus in Homer’s *Iliad*, one of many in ancient Greek lore. During the games commemorating the death of Patroclus, Odysseus fell behind Ajax in a footrace. As they neared the finish line, Odysseus prayed to Athena, “Hear me, goddess; come bless me with speed!” Not only does Athena provide Odysseus with a late burst, she also causes Ajax to slip and fall, allowing Odysseus to win the race. What made Odysseus’ prayer particularly intriguing

³⁸ Overman, *The Influence of the Protestant Ethic on Sport and Recreation*, 38.

³⁹ Womack, “Why Athletes Need Ritual: A Study of Magic Among Professional Athletes,” 197.

was Ajax, too, acknowledging its power, adding after the race, “Curse it, that goddess tripped me us.”⁴⁰

Among monotheistic religions, Judaism sought to distance itself from ancient Greek and Roman cultures and frowned upon crossing sports with spirituality. Christianity, however, which emerged from Judaism, followed the Greeks’ spiritual emphasis on sports. It was not apparent, though, which was surprising because there are many passages in the New Testament that reference sports and other athletic activities.

As industrialization created more leisure time, organized sports became more prevalent, but it soon became the focus of a conflict among European Christians. The Puritans in England shunned playing games on Sundays, contending idle leisure activities were anathema to serving God, potentially addictive, and, ultimately, a waste of time. King James I, though, saw otherwise. During a visit to Scotland in 1617, he saw sports as a worthy societal complement. James returned to England determined to create a similar environment. He justified sports as a means for preparing man for warfare, but also felt recreation was an entitlement following six days of hard work. James voided the Puritanical ban on Sunday leisure activities and issued the *Book of Sports, or Declaration of Sports*, a legislative order on sport participation, which was ordered to be read in churches across England. Many Puritans churches refused. Following a spirited lobbying effort, the Puritans gained a majority of Parliament and ordered the *Book of Sports* burned in 1643.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Baker, *Playing With God: Religion and Modern Sport*. 8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 15-18.

This conflict stretched from Europe to its western colonies, where Puritanical opposition to sport only intensified, as colonists sought to break free from any remnants of their former rulers. As settlers from Western Europe colonized North America and built communities from the ground up, leisure time was reduced to a premium, leaving sport participation a low priority. When sporting events such as horse races, card games, shuffleboard and bowling, were able to be held, gambling and drinking were often part and parcel, further infuriating the pious and encouraging stronger opposition.

As the United States grew in size and population during the 19th century, industrialization created a paradox for those morally opposed to sports. In most families, men were able to work from home, whether they were farmers, craftsmen or artisans, thus, helping to preserve the family unit for all activities, including church attendance. Industrialization, however, prompted men to seek work outside the home, which kept them away for the majority of each day. Consequently, the maintenance of home life fell almost entirely into the hands of women, who became charged with instilling Protestant virtues into her children.⁴²

The economic and occupational changes resulted in population hubs forming in cities. The population of New York City, for example, swelled tenfold between 1800 and 1860. Leisure time grew similarly, but, so, too, did health problems, for which these urban centers were ill-prepared. Suddenly-congested cities were unable to provide enough food,

⁴² Lippy, *Do Real Men Pray?*, 8-12.

clean water and adequate housing for its residents, and the general public health suffered as a result.

At the same time, with no legal edict ordering a particular sect of Christianity to prevail, religion did not maintain the same priority among the people of the United States.

Churches – Protestant congregations, in particular - struggled to attract men to attend.

Less than one-quarter of all Americans attended church regularly, even as immigration boomed in the latter part of the 19th century, and the U.S. population more than doubled in the three decades following the Civil War. Christianity needed a boost. It needed some muscle.⁴³

⁴³ Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 10-25.

Chapter 3 - Sports and religion in American identity and culture. 1900-1950

Christianity was developing an unflattering reputation in the western world during the mid-19th century: it lacked toughness, or, in layman's terms, it was too feminine, and, critics espoused, was becoming too common a trait within Anglican seminaries.

In England, fiction prompted Christianity's about-face perspective with sports. In their prose, British novelists Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes crafted characters possessing an admirable ruggedness, along with brilliant physical fitness and a firm base in Christian morality. The identity was loosely based upon the writings of Paul in the New Testament. For example, Kingsley's 1857 book *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, detailed a boy whose character evolved while playing rugby at school. The character showed – albeit from a fictional perspective – that a morality based upon godliness can co-exist with sports.

The books became popular, and forced clergymen to re-consider their characterization of Christ; strength and virility were desirable traits, so, therefore, they must have been imbued in Jesus. This connection turned the quest for physical fitness into a spiritual endeavor, and created a term for the athletic-sacred synthesis: Muscular Christianity. Athletic success equated to moral superiority. According to historian Laurence Moore, it was “less about turning the other cheek and more about physical strength.”

Muscular Christianity reached the United States shortly after the Civil War, when industrialization had radically altered traditional family life. With men eschewing work at

home for jobs in factories in cities, women took control of family life, which included creating and instilling a religious, often Protestant, identity (though other denominations, including Methodists and Baptists, grew noticeably at this time). Femininity came to personify that identity, if for no other reason than the source of leadership in the household.⁴⁴

When Muscular Christianity began to permeate the United States, it was accompanied by a critical infrastructure needed to implement its values: the Young Men's Christian Association. The first YMCA opened in England in 1844, seeking to instill these traits in children. When the institution premiered in the United States seven years later, though, its leaders placed a greater emphasis upon sports. Each city housed a YMCA facility, with a large gymnasium as its centerpiece. While prayer and spiritual development were the highlighted goals, Moore said young men were similarly praised if they came to participate in sports. In July 1869, the *New York Times* praised the new facility in New York:

“If the association succeeds in drawing to its gymnasium a large number of young men of the City, and in giving them sound bodies and muscles of iron, as well as healthy religious principles and moral characters more enduring than steel, it will deserve and receive a double commendation. We may then hope for a next generation of New Yorkers fully equal to the occasions of an advancing civilization.”⁴⁵

Even though there was an unmistakable Christian identity in each YMCA facility, each lacked the aura of a house of worship. Sports, though, made a conspicuous appearance in the 1920s, when New York's Cathedral of St. John's the Divine installed a sports bay

⁴⁴ Lippy, 8-12.

⁴⁵ Moore, *Touchdown Jesus: The Mixing of Sacred and Secular in American History*, 60.

window, which depicted outlines of some of the New Testament's athletic references.

The window incited debate about the merger of the two entities in an unquestionably holy structure. New York Bishop William T. Manning, in response to criticism of the window, justified the sports-and-prayer combination by equating the two.

“Clean, wholesome, well-regulated sport is a most powerful agency for true and utmost living ... [T]rue sport, and true religion should be in the closest touch and sympathy. Few things have done more harm than the idea that religion frowns upon sport or is out of sympathy with it. The notion gives men the wrong idea of religion and it puts religion out of touch with the life of the people. A well-played game of polo or of touch football is in its own place and in its way as pleasing to God as a beautiful service of worship in the Cathedral.”⁴⁶

More explicit demonstrations of Christian athletic entities began to emerge over the latter part of the twentieth century, each prominently carrying the torch of Muscular Christianity among the youth, much like the YMCA did.

Don McClanen was the basketball coach at Eastern Oklahoma A&M with a firm desire to give spiritual purpose to his efforts on the court, and saw coaching as a means for evangelism. In 1954, McClanen met prominent Presbyterian minister Louis Evans and shared his idea of creating a ministry of athletes and coaches. Evans put McClanen in contact with baseball executive Branch Rickey and celebrated college football coach Amos Alonzo Stagg, who gave McClanen financial support for building a framework organization. By November 1954, McClanen, Rickey and Evans were ready to announce the name of their group: the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

⁴⁶ Price, Joseph, 72.

Less than a year into their effort, though, as the group sought greater funding and a wider reach, it arrived at a critical crossroads. As he went about fundraising, McClanen was asked about the group's name. Some wondered if changing the name to the Fellowship of Religious Athletes to avoid being exclusionary, and also to appeal to a broader audience. Unsure, McClanen turned to his chief sponsor and spiritual role model, and Evans was emphatically opposed to it. McClanen had no choice.⁴⁷

FCA stuck, and, in hindsight, would be a significant point in the establishment of a sports-religion partnership in the United States.

⁴⁷ Krattenmaker, *Onward Christian Athletes*, 18-19.

Chapter 4 - The power of television as a cultural medium

Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan revolutionized our understanding of how we consume information by making us question what exactly constitutes information. He published his most influential works in the 1960s and '70s, as television and other forms of electronic communication became increasingly prevalent. Previously, we were accustomed to digesting words, sounds or images transmitted in linear form – one medium in a specific order with controlled variables. This model, McLuhan argued, was obsolete and impractical, given electronic communication. When information is being delivered simultaneously through multiple media, it is incumbent upon us to utilize all of our senses to understand the information. There isn't one specific order to absorb information. Words alone, McLuhan said, don't sufficiently convey the message; we need to utilize all of our senses to consume the words, images, sounds – those both central and ancillary to the point - that affect how we interpret and perceive the information.^{48 49}

Television ideally illustrated the manifestation of many of McLuhan's theories. It not only allowed words to be spoken – and at various intonations - but the accompanying screen provides a vision of the people who are speaking the words. Television also brings other components into play, including the environment – both foreground and background – and color only enhances those components. No area of American life was as affected by television as sports. Television established a closer link to sports than any

⁴⁸ Symes, Benjamin. "McLuhan's Global Village," <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/bas9401.html>..

⁴⁹ Fitzgerald, Judith. "The Gospel According to McLuhan," Toronto Globe and Mail, May 26, 2001,

other mass medium, and, consequently, the two have exerted overpowering influence over one another.⁵⁰

Put aside, for a moment, the discussion in Chapter 1 that showed print reporters' subjectivity when it came to information that allowed them to omit details of athletes praying or displaying their spirituality. Assume for a moment that the print media reported details of Herb Lusk – or any other athlete - emotionally displaying spiritual commitment on the field. Consider the information that would have been used to describe the moment. How comprehensive would it have been? The textual picture, however it is painted, undoubtedly will leave something to the reader's imagination.

Now, consider the televised image. Of course, there are filters: audiences are subject to the vantage point of the cameraman and the whims of the producer who chooses to show a camera's particular perspective at that moment. The amount of information, however, that is filtered out before the remainder is beamed into television sets is much smaller than what is not included in a textual or aural report. Television allows us to see the emotions with which athletes display their spirituality, the means through which they express it, and the context, as well, all in much greater detail and quantity.

This chapter will explore television's sensory elements that are critical to the perception of public prayer, particularly in the context of sports. Prayer's meaning is not limited to its words; rather the tone, context, surrounding environment, and emotions of the person

⁵⁰ Eitzen and Sage, *Sociology of American Sport*, second edition. 245.

speaking affect its message and impact. This is how an audience can learn behavior through television that it cannot grasp through other media.⁵¹

There is another element that live television affords athletes – or anyone in front of the camera or microphone – that needs to be explained: the degree to which the message can be controlled. When interacting with print media, athletes cannot be sure what kind of information of theirs journalists would use in their stories. When it comes to live television, athletes no longer have to fight through the medium’s filter; as long as they are at the focal point of the camera, they can get their message across. As a result, television changed the style of athletes.⁵² They can project how they want to be perceived, and the message can be delivered much faster on television. A ten-second sound-bite or display could generate instant celebrity status for the athlete.

This comes across in the subtle interplay between the athlete (or whomever is in front of the camera) and the viewer. The influence one has on the other can, and often does, dictate behavior. In 1956, Horton and Wohl, were among the first to study the social impact of electronic media, and found one of its distinguishing characteristics to be its ability to provide the audience with the “illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer.” This relationship, which they termed “parasocial interaction,” gave viewers the impression of a friendship (albeit, a one-way relationship) based upon the appearance

⁵¹ Bandura, as cited in Skill and Robinson *The Portrayal of Religion and Spirituality on Fictional Network Television*, 252.

⁵² Altheide and Snow, “The Television Effect,” 69.

and portrayal of people through an electronic medium.⁵³ It was why by 1978, the majority of Americans, according to a poll by TV Guide, said they would rather watch sports (except baseball) on television instead of in the stands. The experience in front of the tube was more appealing because that's where they felt a greater sense of interaction.⁵⁴ If that's how the audience felt, then the stars had to consider this: if performing in front of forty- or fifty-thousand people was thrilling, then imagine having millions tuning in elsewhere to watch. If they hadn't, evangelicals had. They saw the creation of the celebrity athlete and commensurate off-the-field attention. The next steps were recruiting and training these athletes for the purpose of ministry.⁵⁵

In politics, Ronald Reagan perhaps utilized this effect better than anyone. He was able to get the growing Christian conservative movement to rally furiously around him in the 1980 presidential campaign. It was a curious pairing; Reagan's opponent, Jimmy Carter appeared a more logical ally, given his Southern Baptist background and strong marriage. Reagan, on the other hand, seldom went to church and was divorced. Maybe he didn't practice strong conservative values, but in front of the camera, he made them sound awfully good and presented them with a confident smile.⁵⁶

Nobody in television management understood this better than Roone Arledge, who headed ABC Sports in the 1960s and '70s, and lists Monday Night Football and Wide World of Sports as two of his creations. In the late 1960s, Arledge tied elevating ABC's

⁵³ Horton and Wohl, *Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance*, as cited in Presnell, 11.

⁵⁴ Rader, *In Its Own Image*, 196.

⁵⁵ Blakeney-Glazer, "Faith on the Field: A Cultural Analysis of Sports Ministry in America," 42-43.

⁵⁶ Moore, 186.

college football programming to audience involvement. Everyone in front of the camera – players, spectators, referees – contributed to the broadcast. Once the fans saw they were involved, they began to bring flamboyant signs and banners to games or engaged in attention-grabbing moves to get on camera.⁵⁷ With players having easier access to the focus of a cameraman, it was only a matter of time before they realized they had similar opportunities.

⁵⁷ Rader, 107.

Chapter 5 – The creation of the celebrity athlete

In 1964, Americans spent 10 times as much on participant sports than they did on spectators sports, prompting Sports Illustrated to note “the hunger for spectator sports has reached the saturation point.”⁵⁸ Fifteen years later, Bill Rasmussen, a former public-relations official for a minor-league hockey team, launched ESPN, the nation’s first all-sports television network, about which a fellow executive at the fledgling network said, “We believe the appetite for sports in this country is insatiable.”⁵⁹

Suburbanization of the country’s middle class and the resulting leisure time, along with the advent of television prompted incredible growth of spectator sports after World War II that Sports Illustrated in 1964 expected to plateau. It didn’t. According to the number of hours coverage annually, networks increased theirs devoted to sports by 72 percent during the 1970s; from 1974 to 1984, that figure doubled. A 1981 study of men 18 to 49 revealed they were six times as likely to watch pro football as the top-rated primetime drama, Dallas.⁶⁰

Such abundant and repeated exposure to the people playing these games naturally created a greater interest in the athletes. So, too, did a new way of presenting them. Roone Arledge, the pioneering chief of ABC Sports, sought to expand audiences by targeting what he called the “casual viewer,” in addition to the passionate fan. He did this by implementing tools that compensated – or accelerated – a viewer’s short attention span –

⁵⁸ Boyle, Robert H. “The New Wave in Sports.” Sports Illustrated,, December 21, 1964.

⁵⁹ McChesney, as cited in Wenner, “Media, Sports and Society,” 65

⁶⁰ Ibid, 65.

multiple camera angles, instant replay, on-field microphones and irreverent commentators.

As a result, viewers became interested in more than the nuts and bolts of a game; they wanted to know more about the people making those plays happen. Sports journalism in the 1960s was characterized by reporters rushing to chat up the athletes in the locker room immediately after the game for the great quotes to liven their stories. The more perceptive athletes knew how to create a personality they would essentially market to the reporters.⁶¹

Whether he devised a character for reporters, or just cultivated his natural persona, Joe Namath exemplified this new breed of athlete. The New York Jets' cocksure quarterback with long hair, quick – and potentially overzealous – wit, and a woman on each arm whenever he stepped out in public, was a torchbearer for counterculture youth, the antithesis of the previous decade's all-American archetype, Johnny Unitas. Yet, Namath was also well aware of celebrity's other benefits; he shaved his Fu Manchu for the sake of a television commercial, a model for the mercenary that would come to dominate American sports in subsequent decades.⁶²

The ability to measure success through individual accomplishments was unique to athletes as opposed to other celebrities, who lacked specific, tangible achievements. An actor can claim movie credits, or a musician can tout popular albums, but an athlete

⁶¹ Overman, "Living Out of Bounds: The Male Athlete's Everyday Life," 51.

⁶² Rader, 185.

didn't just play for the New York Yankees; he hit 40 home runs for them, as they won the pennant. What is it, the audience wonders that gives the athlete the ability to hit those home runs? Not just home runs, but *that many*.⁶³ Ultimately, the man becomes more interesting than his accomplishments, a fact that suddenly makes the best athletes indistinguishable from their mediocre peers. Personality becomes the great equalizer.

It also brought the celebrity culture to American sports. Athletes assumed mythic identities as audiences engaged in parasocial interaction with them through their television sets. What red-blooded man didn't have a little envy for Namath? It didn't matter if he was a football fan or not; maybe he shared Namath's love of beautiful blonde women, or Johnnie Walker Red, and that was good enough. That tiny connection took the everyman from his living room, and put him under center on Super Bowl Sunday.

There is a power unique to celebrity of offering a sense of confidence and belonging to the audience. They are capable of harnessing desires of others and linking them to objects or feelings unrelated to those desires.⁶⁴ Take Nike sneakers, for example. Are buyers seeking a link to Michael Jordan's physical or competitive strengths through shared footwear? Perhaps it's his riches they want. Or maybe it's that Jordan makes a living playing a game, something the audience has to wait to do until after it finishing working. It could be that Jordan's cool, relaxed appearance in those commercials is enticing enough.⁶⁵

⁶³ Overman, "Living Out of Bounds," 182.

⁶⁴ Rojek, *Celebrity*, 189.

⁶⁵ Rojek, 92.

They are all plausible reasons, which are why an official from the Fellowship of Christian Athletes once asked, ““If athletes can endorse products, why can’t they endorse a way of life?””⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Deford, Frank, “The World According to Tom,” *Sports Illustrated*, April 26, 1976.

Chapter 6 - The growth of public prayer in the U.S.

Spectator sport with its ostensible human drama is an ideal setting for an evangelist. The environment is designed to compel the audience's collective attention at a specific point, and hold its focus based upon the uncertainty of what will next occur. What more does an evangelist – someone fervently seeking to spread a particular message – need beside a large, captive audience? Seventy thousand people are crammed shoulder-to-shoulder seated in a cylindrical edifice all looking at you. So, too, are a bevy of cameras following you when you have the ball, come to bat or are about to run that race, which will go to countless others watching on television. What are you going to do next?

One of the fundamental tenets of evangelism, perhaps its most distinguishing quality, is its requirement of spreading its beliefs to as many people possible. Large segments of American culture representing several different religions have an obvious conflict here: their respective faiths consider religious beliefs and personal spirituality a private matter. Former bodybuilder-turned-minister Alex Aronis held up the front page of a newspaper's Sports section that featured a photo of several professional athletes knelt in prayer. He asked rhetorically, "What's wrong with this?" He condemned what he considered the clear culprit: "It's the cameras." Aronis meant the camera represented how prayer had transitioned from a private to a public matter, and, thus, turned pride – long considered a sin – into a virtue aligned with victory.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Richard C. Crepeau, "Higgs on Prayer" online conversation with Jack Higgs on topic of prayer and sport; posted on the listserv h-arete@h-net.msu.edu, September 19, 2000: <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Arete&month=0009&week=c&msg=l%2BhU1MeDtG4pFaooQX1oaA&user=&pw=>

So how did evangelism overcome such opposition?

Evangelical preachers are deft communicators; it's an inherent task of the job. They seek to expose an audience to something new or different. This was their strategy in the late-nineteenth century, but it has become amplified through improved communications infrastructure.⁶⁸ Through careful planning and coordination of each effort, evangelists are, in a sense, following the gospel of journalism: they are packing the most information into the shortest message that can reach the widest audience. Evangelicals have connected with sports in the same manner they have with other elements of American culture over the past three decades. They have fearlessly and confidently entered public domains and used electronic media to stake their beliefs in the nation's broader discourse.⁶⁹ Yet, this particular domain affords evangelicals both a connection to their audience, as well as a buffer. It is similar to a pen-pal relationship with the medium serving as the postman. There is nobody capable of standing up in the middle of the prayer, sermon or display and challenge its veracity.⁷⁰

It probably looked a little strange to the 48,824 inside Giants Stadium on October 9, 1977, when Herb Lusk became the first professional football player to kneel in prayer after scoring a touchdown. Evangelicals, though, by their very nature, were willing to take that risk. It was a little less jarring for any of those spectators the next time they saw an athlete do that, and even less the third time, and so on. Arlis Priest, who co-founded

⁶⁸ Mazer, "The Power Team: Muscular Christianity and the Spectacle of Conversion." 163.

⁶⁹ Krattenmaker, 16.

⁷⁰ Morris, *God-in-a-box: Christian strategy in the television age*, 229.

the Pro Athletes Outreach ministry in the 1974, said the Gospel compels people to affect change, “and it is the athletes in our society who can best carry that message.”⁷¹

Consider an athlete’s emotional state surrounding competition, and it makes sense why one would be likely to invoke spirituality. Prayer is supposed to emanate from the depths of one’s emotional core, and it is delivered at a time when someone is engaged in an activity that taps those depths or extremes. The uncertainty that an ensuing event can impact one’s health or livelihood, or the acknowledgment of the resulting unmitigated joy or devastating sorrow, are reasons to seek comfort.^{72 73}

The mainstream media, which has long struggled reconciling its coverage of religion, seemed to relish documenting the meteoric rise and subsequent self-destruction of many televangelists in the 1980s.⁷⁴ Lost in newsrooms, though, is that televised message. Those viewers were hooked on the message, regardless of who delivered it, and they wanted more. It didn’t matter to them that it may have been coming from an athlete – an unconventional source at the time.

Besides, there was already a rallying cry from evangelicals petitioning athletes for help. As the Rev. Billy Zeoli addressed the Cincinnati Reds in their pregame chapel service prior to a game in the 1975 World Series, he told them, “I hope you have a concept of

⁷¹ Deford, Frank. “Religion In Sport.” Sports Illustrated, April 16, 1976

⁷² Pittenger, “Christian Affirmations.” Online: <http://www.religion-online.org/showbook.asp?title=2663>

⁷³ “NFL Films Presents: Religion,” NFL Films

⁷⁴ Mattingly, Terry. “Pop Goes Religion: Faith in Popular Culture” p. xx.

how much you affect people, how they look up to you. Let me remind you that your national influence on youth is greater than that of any single pastor, priest or rabbi.”⁷⁵

Echoing vibes from the Muscular Christianity movement of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, evangelist Oral Roberts, upon founding his eponymous university in 1965, immediately created an athletic department. Why? He wanted to attract students and knew “nearly every man in America reads the sports pages ... Sports are becoming the number one interest of people in America. For us to be relevant, we had to gain the attention of millions of people in a way that they could understand.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Deford, *Sports Illustrated*, April 16, 1976.

⁷⁶ Eitzen and Sage, 153.

Chapter 7 - The perfect storm: ESPN debuts

The athlete in American culture began to assume both a new identity and approach to his job in the 1970s. The money, attention and expectations all increased exponentially.

Thanks to Roone Arledge and his fresh approach to covering a sporting event on television, ABC had risen from a distant third in ratings to the unquestioned leader in network sports programming by the mid-1970s. As a result, CBS and NBC revised their approaches to sports coverage and, lo and behold, competition among the networks benefitted sports: in the 1970s, the number of hours per year a network devoted to sports coverage increased seventy-two percent over the decade.⁷⁷ Not only was there no sign of it slowing, but it showed the demand far outweighed the supply.

The athlete needed an outlet for his expression. Print media was not sufficient because there was too much out of his control. Even though broadcast outlets couldn't stop adding sports to its schedule, they were committed to too many other programs. There needed to be a new infrastructure to showcase it all.

When ESPN launched in 1979, sports, the people involved with them, and those wanting to be involved had a hub for the new sports-centered lifestyle, a 24-hour revolving door of sports news in all its forms – previews, reviews, scores and updates.⁷⁸

At the center of it all was the defining element of the new athlete (and ESPN): the highlight. Why watch a two- or three-hour game when all of its key moments could be

⁷⁷ McChesney, 65

⁷⁸ Gamache, *A History of Sports Highlights*, 7.

compressed into a sixty-second compilation? ESPN's original highlight show – SportsNight – ran just fifteen minutes when the network launched. The following year, the show stretched into an hour and was renamed SportsCenter. It became the network's most identifying element because it changed the focus and delivery of sports news. Popular culture and personality resonated as much as the score.⁷⁹

More time and more resources allowed ESPN to delve into the elements beyond the score and the stats that told us about the games and players. Some could speculate it's a chicken-or-the-egg argument: does the network come first and eventually learn to fill the time, or does the need exist, but not until a 24-hour time slot makes us aware that we wanted the information? The answer probably lies in between. We were intrigued by athletes' personalities, but were accustomed only to reading about them, not seeing them detailed in moving images with sound.

Imagine the media environment surrounding an NFL game today between the Philadelphia Eagles and New York Giants. Consider what would happen if Herb Lusk were to drop to his left knee and utter a sacred wish of gratitude. Cameras would isolate him, starting when his knee touched the turf, following him subsequently jog over to the sideline, and zero in on him as he takes a seat and a sip of Gatorade. As the broadcast fades to commercial, countless reporters Tweet the bizarre episode, and a few spectators do the same with images they took of Lusk with their camera phones. By the time the game has ended, the nation has seen replays and read instant analysis and background biographical information about Lusk. When Lusk greets reporters, they leave no stone

⁷⁹ Gamache, 156.

unturned as they inquire about his motivation, memories of the moment, and what it means to him. Before he goes to sleep, the nation will have a complete biography of Lusk and a thorough scrutiny of both the meaning and implication of this act told across a multitude of platforms and outlets within each medium. No act goes unnoticed and without remark in the electronic media environment.

So, was Lusk just the benefit of good timing – doing something unique at time when a competitive media market was evolving – or did he start a fundamental change in American sports culture?

Fortunately, we don't need to imagine such a scenario; we just experienced it last year.

More than three decades after Lusk brought prayer onto professional sports fields and before television cameras, the movement may have its second coming. Tim Tebow, however, has many advantages Lusk lacked in 1977. Aside from his good looks, and that he plays quarterback (the most identified position in American sports), Tebow, more importantly, also has a radically different media environment to project his beliefs.

It might be Tebow's turn, now, to make another fundamental change. With an unlimited slate of outlets across multiple media and a nation's voracious appetite for anything football-related, Tebow has the platforms and audience in place to absorb his message.

What will he say?

Audience

There is not a person who has seen an athlete pause and pray or cite spiritual inspiration for a winning performance and not had a visceral reaction: either you relate to it and admire the person's humility, or you recoil and wonder how anyone could think a deity could impact a game. Regardless of your interest in sports, everyone has an opinion on these kinds of displays, and often, they are strong feelings.

According to a 2008 survey of the U.S. religious landscape, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that 26.3 Americans – the largest single group - identified as Evangelical Christians – the sect most associated with popularizing on-field displays of spirituality.⁸⁰ The number of evangelicals in the U.S. has risen dramatically over the past three decades; the U.S. Census found those who identify as Evangelical Christians have increased nearly four-fold from 1990 to 2008.⁸¹ This is a book that speaks directly to more than one-quarter of the nation, a demographic that only appears to be growing.

Another faith that engages in public prayer – Muslim – also shows rapid growth worldwide. A 2011 Pew study projected a 35 percent growth of the world's Muslim population from 2010 to 2030, with the number of Muslims in the U.S. more than doubling over that span.⁸²

⁸⁰ The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "U.S. Religious Landscape Study," February, 2008, 12 <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report2religious-landscape-study-key-findings.pdf>

⁸¹ U.S. Census, "Self-Described Religious Identification of Adult Population, 1991, 2000, and 2008." Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2012, 61. <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0075.pdf>

⁸² The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "The Future of the Global Muslim Population," January, 27, 2011, <http://www.pewforum.org/The-Future-of-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx>

Regardless of the faith, the 2008 Pew study revealed 58 percent of Americans pray daily, with 75 percent doing so at least once a week.⁸³

The undeniable fact to be drawn from this data is that public displays of spirituality have and will continue to become more prevalent in the U.S. Given that those making these displays represent different faiths, the potential for conflict is glaring.

Similarly, U.S. spectator sports have never been more popular, either viewed in person or through a broadcast medium. Aware of the platform the playing field affords them, athletes who tout strong spiritual identities are more prone to show them, both to the audience before them, as well as to the cameras beaming their exploits to households across the nation. In what other endeavor, can a professional with a skill set ranging from mediocre to above-average (depending upon the observer's opinion), be the industry's most popular and acclaimed performer? Yet, in America's most popular athletic enterprise – the National Football League – Tim Tebow, a staunch Evangelical Christian with limited overwhelming physical skills, became such a sensation, despite playing just three-quarters of his team's games, that Time magazine named him one of the world's 100 most influential people in April 2012.⁸⁴ The way he bows his head while kneeling in prayer has turned his name into a verb: Tebowing. On the black stickers Tebow attaches to his cheek below each eye (intended to help deflect the glare of the sun) are references

⁸³ The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "U.S. Religious Landscape Study," February, 2008, 12-13 <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report2religious-landscape-study-key-findings.pdf>

⁸⁴ Lin, Jeremy. "Tim Tebow." *Time*, April 18, 2012. http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2111975_2111976_2112139,00.html

to verses from the New Testament, meant to be inspirational. Tebow does not grant an interview without displaying spiritual gratitude for being in the position he is.

Much like other prominent athletes who engage in public prayer, Tebow is a polarizing force, which speaks clearly to the collective perception of religion in U.S.

Tuning Into the Gospel will examine how American culture arrived at this point. While it is easy – and even fun - to speculate what might be the next step in this religion’s place on the playing field, we need to take a step back first.

This is not a book about sports, religion or media: it’s a fusion of all three. Each of those elements, though, is represented by arguably its most popular incarnation: professional football, Evangelical Christianity and television. Therefore, it is a book for those with a casual interest in all three, as well as a passion for any one of them: the football fan who spends Sundays parked in front of a television set; the one who keenly feels that a complete spiritual identity extends to all facets of one’s life; and finally, the one who digests countless hours of television information, unaware, perhaps of how much he is still missing.

Competition

Several books have tried to lasso the sports-religion relationship, but none can accurately portray its current form because of its increasingly public nature.

Several scholars, particularly Robert J. Higgs (“God In the Stadium,” and “An Unholy Alliance) and Shirl J. Hoffman (“Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports” and “Sport and Religion”), have examined this relationship from philosophical and theological perspectives. While these and other similar texts proved invaluable to my research, they are too dense for the casual reader who approaches the subject with only a surface interest, if any at all.

Joseph Price, meantime, has written extensively – both in books (“Rounding the Bases” and “From Season to Season”) and articles (he wrote the most comprehensive piece included in the first issue of the International Journal of Religion and Sport in 2009) – about sports taking on the role of religion. Those works, too, while incredibly thoughtful and provocative, prove far too abstract for the recreational reader, even one who opens a book eager to cast a critical eye.

Other scholars, including Charles Prebish (“Religion and Sport: The Meeting of the Sacred and Profane”) and R. Laurence Moore (“Touchdown Jesus: The Mixing of Sacred and Secular in American History”), have put forth titles that take a strong stance against infusing popular culture (not just sports) with spirituality. While the reading is

entertaining, it does not allow the reader much opportunity to consider an opposing viewpoint.

Steve Hubbard took the opposite approach in 1998 with “Faith in Sports,” in which he essentially pulled together vignettes from several dozen professional athletes and coaches as they explain the role faith plays in their participation in sports. This title left me unfulfilled because it did not attempt to rationalize the use of faith in athletics, nor did it challenge the athletes’ contentions. Finally, it only examined players who were deeply spiritual. What about those who feel faith has no place on the field?

Tom Krattenmaker’s 2010 title, “Onward Christian Athletes,” was a strong analysis of the two cultures interwoven, as it examines individual athletes or teams that showcase a unique way bringing their faith into their sport (e.g. – the role of baseball chapel, the attempts by teams to market to fans’ spiritualities, and the assembling of a professional team that is predominantly spiritual). Where this book comes up short is its analysis is limited to Christianity.

Tuning Into the Gospel, meantime, is approaching this subject cognizant that analyzing the co-existence between sports and religion is too unwieldy a proposition, even for a project as lengthy as this. There are too many ways to interpret either term. Instead, it will examine this relationship as it has prospered in the most powerful mass medium: television.

Because of how rapidly this subject has forged its way into popular discourse, most books have explored where the sports-religion relationship is headed. Most of those hypotheses are simply speculation. *Tuning Into the Gospel*, instead, wants to step back and examine how this relationship reached this point, laying out a road map that explores the impacts of both the people and the infrastructure that help sustain it. It is intended to prompt discussion and critical thought, not offer a declaration of its rationale or lack thereof.

The inspiration for the book – and the act of on-field prayer at the outset of the sports-broadcast boom – Herb Lusk, has had no substantial literature written about him, aside from a few newspaper articles. Most of those, however, focus on his life after football as an extraordinarily successful conservative pastor in inner-city Philadelphia. This book will provide the first sketch of Lusk’s parallel lives in sports and spirituality, using him as a springboard into an examination of the display he popularized.

Referenced Cited and Other Sources Used

J.A. Adande, "When Giving Thanks Draws a Penalty," *The Washington Post*, September 1, 1995, 'A' Section, final edition, www.lexisnexis.com

Altheide, David L., and Snow, Robert P. "The Television Effect." *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer 1979.

Avery, Ron. "Ex-Bird Soaring For Others," Philadelphia Daily News, January 11, 1995, Sports Section, Final Edition, www.lexisnexis.com

Baker, William J. *Playing With God: Religion and Modern Sport*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Bandura, Albert. *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*, as cited in Skill, Thomas, and Robinson, James D. "The Portrayal of Religion and Spirituality on Fictional Network Television," *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3, March 1994.

Bible: The New Oxford Annotated

Birrell, Susan. "Sport as Ritual: Interpretations from Durkheim to Goffman." *Social Forces*, 60, no. 2 (1981): 354-376.

Blakeney-Glazer, Anne, "Faith on the Field: A Cultural Analysis of Sports Ministry in America." PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2008.

Boyle, Robert H. "The New Wave in Sports." *Sports Illustrated*, December 21, 1964. <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1076746/index.htm>

Carlstedt, R.A. *Critical moments during competition: A mind-body model of sport performance when it counts the most*. New York: Psychology Press. 2004.

Coakley, Jay. *Sport in Society*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2001.

Richard C. Crepeau, "Higgs on Prayer" online conversation with Jack Higgs on topic of prayer and sport; posted on the listserv h-arete@h-net.msu.edu, September 19, 2000: <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Arete&month=0009&week=c&msg=I%2BhU1MeDtG4pFaooQX1oaA&user=&pw=>

Deford, Frank. "Reaching For the Stars," *Sports Illustrated*, May 3, 1976, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1091040/index.htm>

Deford, Frank. "Religion In Sport." *Sports Illustrated*, April 16, 1976. <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1090994/index.htm>

- Deford, Frank, "The World According to Tom," *Sports Illustrated*, April 26, 1976. <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1091031/index.htm>
- Delaney, Tim, and, Madigan, Tim. *The Sociology of Sports: an introduction*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2009.
- Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free Press, 1915.
- Eitzen, D. Stanley, and Sage, George H. *Sociology of American Sport, second edition*. Dubuque, IA: William C. Brown, 1982.
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes, "Annual Impact Report." Fellowship of Christian Athletes, <http://www.fca.org/AboutFCA/AnnualImpactReport.jsp>, Retrieved December 12, 2011.
- Fitzgerald, Judith. "The Gospel According to McLuhan," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, May 26, 2001, <http://www.judithfitzgerald.ca/thegospelaccordingtomcluhan.html>
- Gamache, Raymond. *A History of Sports Highlights*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2010
- Alan Goldenbach. "After NFL's First Prayer, Religion Touched Down." *The Washington Post*, September 28, 2007, Sports Section, final edition.
- Goodger, John. "Ritual Solidarity and Sport." *Acta Sociologica*, 29, no. 3 (1986): 219-224.
- Guttmann, Allen. *A Whole New Ballgame*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Higgs, Robert J. *God in the Stadium: Sports & Religion in America*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995.
- Michelle Hiskey, "Q&A/Herb Lusk II: First prayer; Displays of faith on football field started three decades ago, when Herb Lusk kneeled," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, February 4, 2006, Sports Section, final edition. <http://lexisnexis.com>
- Hoffman, Shirl J. *Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010.
- Horton, D. and Wohl, R. R., "Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance," 1956, as cited in, Presnell, Kara K. "Media, Celebrities and Identification: An Examination of Fan Relationships with Dale Earnhardt amid the Culture of NASCAR" (PhD diss., Regent University, 2008).

Huizinga, Johan, from "*Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*" as cited on p. 20 in Prebish, Charles. *Religion and Sport: The Meeting of Sacred and Profane*. Westport, CT, Greenwood, 1993.

Michael Janofsky, "Disaster Changes Course for Tyler," *New York Times*, December 26, 1984, Sports Section, final edition. www.lexisnexus.com

Krattenmaker, Tom. *Onward Christian Athletes*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

Don Lattin, "Having a Prayer: Christians are making a statement in the NFL," San Francisco Chronicle, January 22, 1997, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/1997/01/22/SP72983.DTL&ao=all>.

Lippy, Charles. *Do Real Men Pray?* Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2005.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Magic, Science, and Religion, and other essays*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954. Online: <http://www.freewebs.com/atheisthistorian/magicsciencereligion.htm>

Mattingly, Terry. *Pop Goes Religion: Faith in Popular Culture*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005.

Mazer, Sharon. "The Power Team: Muscular Christianity and the Spectacle of Conversion." *The Drama Review*, Vol. 38, No. 4, Winter 1994.

McChesney, Robert. "Media made sport: A history of sports coverage in the United States." In *Media, Sports, and Society*, edited by Lawrence A. Wenner, 49-69, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989.

Melton, Gordon J. 2010. American Religion's Mega-Trends: Gleanings from Forty Years of Research (ARDA Guiding Paper Series). State College, PA: The Association of Religion Data Archives at The Pennsylvania State University, from <http://www.thearda.com/rrh/papers/guidingpapers.asp>.

Moore, R. Laurence. *Touchdown Jesus: The Mixing of Sacred and Secular in American History*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

Morbeto, Jr., Joseph A. *The Incidence of Prayer in Athletics as Indicated by Selected California Collegiate Athletes and Coaches*. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California Santa Barbara, 1967.

Morris, Colin. *God-in-a-box: Christian strategy in the television age*. London: Holder and Stoughton, 1984.

Nack, William. "Does God Care Who Wins the Super Bowl?" *Sports Illustrated*. January 28, 1998,

<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1011819/index.htm>

"*NFL Films Presents: Religion*," DVD, Produced by Steve Sabol, Mount Laurel, NJ: NFL Films, 2004

"Outside the Lines," YouTube video, 9:01, originally aired January 12, 2010, on ESPN. Posted by [GEBCH](#), January 12, 2010,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?gl=BE&feature=related&v=-suhmltgw80>

Overman, Steven J. *The Influence of the Protestant Ethic on Sport and Recreation*. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 1997.

Overman, Steven J. *Living Out of Bounds: The Male Athlete's Everyday Life*. Westport, CT, Praeger, 2009.

Pittenger, Norman. *Christian Affirmations*. New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1954.

Online: <http://www.religion-online.org/showbook.asp?title=2663>

Plimpton, George. "Gods," In *The Gospel According to ESPN: the Saints, Saviors and Sinners of Sports*, edited by Jay Lovinger, 209-231. New York: Hyperion, 2002.

Prebish, Charles. *Religion and Sport: The Meeting of Sacred and Profane*. Westport, CT, Greenwood, 1993.

H. Vincent Price. "Herb Lusk Plays for God." *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 1, 1976, Sports Section, final edition

Price, Joseph, "Playing and Praying, Sport and Spirit: The Forms and Functions of Prayer in Sports," *International Journal of Religion and Sport* 1, no. 1 (2009): 55-81.

Putney, Clifford, *Muscular Christianity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Rader, Benjamin, G. *In Its Own Image: How Television Has Transformed Sports*. New York: The Free Press, 1984.

Rojek, Chris. *Celebrity*. London: Reaktion Books, 2001.

Rossano, Matt J. "Ritual Behaviour and the Origins of Modern Cognition." *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 19, no. 2, (2009): 250-251.

Dana Scarton, "Casting God in Sporting Role," *Scripps Howard News Service*, October 5, 1991. www.lexisnexis.com

Sherice L. Shields, "The sporting life: A praying athlete is not necessarily a soft athlete." *Kansas City Star*, June 2, 2001, final edition, www.lexisnexus.com

Staff, "The Newswire," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1979, Sports Section, final edition.

Don Steinberg, "Program delves into faith and football." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 18, 2004, Sports Section, www.lexisnexus.com

Streng, Frederick J. *Understanding Religious Life*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1985.

"*Super Bowl XXXIV*," VHS, Produced by ABC, Atlanta, GA, Jan. 30, 2000.

Symes, Benjamin. "McLuhan's Global Village," <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/bas9401.html>, 1995.

Townsley, Jeramy. "Marx, Weber and Durkheim on Religion." August 2004: <http://www.jeramyt.org/papers/sociology-of-religion.html> Retrieved December 12, 2011.

Transcript of President George W. Bush speech in Philadelphia re: funding HIV/AIDS programs. June 23, 2004, Fox, Vanderbilt Television News Archive.

Watson, Nick J., and Czech, Daniel R. "The Use of Prayer in Sport: Implications for Sport Psychology Counseling." *Athletic Insight*, 7, no. 4 (Dec. 2005): 26-35.

Watson, Nick, and Weir, Stuart, and Friend, Stephen. "The Development of Muscular Christianity in Victorian Britain and Beyond." *The Journal of Religion and Society*, 7 (2005): Online: <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2005/2005-2.html>

Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009 (originally 1905).

Weir, Tom. "Robinson: 'Sorry for the hurt' Teammates say arrest not a big factor in loss." *USA Today*, February 1, 1999, Sports Section, www.lexisnexus.com

Womack, Mari. "Why Athletes Need Ritual: A Study of Magic Among Professional Athletes." In *Sport and Religion*, edited by Shirl J. Hoffman, 191-202. Champaign, IL.: Human Kinetics Publishing, 1992.

Young Men's Christian Association, "YMCA Board of Directors" Young Men's Christian Association: <http://www.ymca.net/news-releases/20110309-board-of-directors.html> Retrieved December 12 2011.