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'History in the Making': Sports and the Serialized Production of Collective Memory

Abstract
Sport is a rich source for memory culture. Conspicuously, sport regularly declares an event to be historical while it is still ongoing. This includes transforming the sport event into one of broader cultural, especially national significance. Using a number of examples from different sports, this article discusses how and why sport, for already more than a hundred years, continuously contributes to national memories. It will argue, that it is first of all the serial organization of standardized (and thus comparable) competitive events that enables sport to continuously declare and remember historical moments. Sport produces an endless series of events that can possibly become historic; simultaneously, all sports organize ('their') memory in such a systematic manner that the claim for historicity can be made with good reasons. On the one hand, it is the comparison with hundreds of past events that allows an ongoing or even an upcoming event to be marked as 'historic'. On the other hand, retrospectively, this ongoing comparison guarantees that the historic moments of the past will be referenced repetitively and thus remembered. Analyzing these foundational mechanisms which represent sport to a global audience allows for a better understanding of the otherwise seemingly irrational and excessive role of sports in national memory cultures.
Keywords: Media sport, memory culture, sport history, seriality, competition

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Introduction

Sport, especially its professionally organized and highly mediatized forms, is a rich source for memory culture. Bars displaying black and white photographs of sport heroes from the past seem to exist in every country – if with a focus on different sports. Fictional films or TV documentaries remind us of remarkable (or too easily forgotten) events. Additionally, as one of the

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key contributors to memory studies observes, "[t]rophies, certificates, and medals adorn the cabinets of clubhouses as well as the shelves of individual sportsmen" and thereby entangle individual and collective memory (or 'tradition') (J. Assmann, 2011: 33). Most conspicuously, sport – at least according to its own terms – has the potential of turning an event into a *historical* event on the spot. Often this includes transforming the sport event into one of broader cultural, especially national significance.

Of the countless possible examples, I want to mention only three here: (1) According to sports, history was made on July 7th, 2013. After 77 years of foreigners winning on British soil, it was a British athlete, Andy Murray, who won the men's tennis tournament in Wimbledon. It was a fierce match, but it would have been declared historical independent of the quality of the game. The audience, the media and the player himself had already framed the match in these terms in advance. A woman in the audience was even waving around a handwritten sign 'Lets (sic!) make History'. Of course, the woman was included in the television coverage of the game (at least the one presented by the German public service broadcaster ARD but probably many more), and the slogan was picked up in newspaper headlines. (2) When the national women's football team progressed to the 2019 World Cup final, the Dutch newspaper Het Parool had a headline: "The women of orange write history with their victory"[2] (3) The main sponsor of the European football's Champions League – a credit card company – has a short trailer before each televised game displaying the slogan: "History in the Making".

These are, of course, hyperbolic statements as they are characteristic for a commercialized, attention-seeking media culture. At the same time, though, it might be worth considering how and why sport, for more than a hundred years already, is continuously able to declare historical moments and grant its athletes "on-the-spot immortality" (Rader, 1984: 20). How is it possible that in many countries sport became one of the pillars of national memory culture?

To a certain extent, the historical significance of an event (and the immortality of an athlete) may result from the heightened visibility of outstanding performances, which characterizes sports. A last minute twist of fate, incredible stamina or technical skill, an underdog victory – there are many aspects that make a performance remarkable and memorable and even more so since everybody watching knows that thousands of others (ideally the 'whole world' or at least the 'entire nation') are watching.

I want to argue that it is first of all the serial organization of standardized (and thus comparable) competitive events that enables sport to continuously declare *and* remember historical moments. Sport produces an endless series of events that can possibly become historic; simultaneously, all sports organize ('their') memory in such a systematic manner that the claim for historicity can be made with good reasons. On the one hand, it is the comparison with hundreds of past events that allows an ongoing or even an upcoming event to be marked as 'historical'. On the other hand, retrospectively, this ongoing comparison guarantees that the historic moments of the past will be referenced repetitively and thus remembered. This combi-

2 Original: "Oranjevrouwen schrijven historie met hun overwinning" my translation (Het Parool, 4 July 2019). The national teams often wear orange jerseys (Dutch royalty being called Oranje/Orange) and are regularly nicknamed 'Orange'.

nation makes sport into an especially reliable and attractive element of national history and national memory.[3]

While historiographical debates of the past two decades critically discussed the modes, genres, and stereotypes shaping the writing of sports history (by historians and the popular media) they didn't comment much on the procedures through which sports create and update their own memory and thereby contribute to national histories (e.g.: Phillips, 2006; Booth, 2005).

In what follows, I will focus less on what types of (national) histories and memories sport produces and rather detail the procedures and techniques that allow sport to declare and remember so many events as historical. Analyzing these foundational mechanisms allows for a better understanding of the otherwise seemingly irrational and excessive role of sports in (national) memory culture. After a short discussion of the emergence of sport's memory culture and its basic techniques (like rankings, tables or records), I will compare the memory culture of cycling and baseball to discuss similarities and differences across different sports. Then, I will discuss seriality (or rather two overlapping forms of seriality) as, probably, the most important characteristic of all sports considering their potential to produce historical, memorable events. Eventually, I will conclude with remarks on the complementarity between universally organized sport competitions and national memory.

Before competitive spectator sports: representing history

To indicate sports' specific contributions to (national) memory culture, it is helpful to compare its organization of temporality to German gymnastics, which, similar to the competitive ('English') sports, became established in the 19th century and were thought to be beneficial to strengthen the nations' youths. When Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, the so-called 'Turnvater' (father of gymnastics), founded an open-air gymnasium close to Berlin in 1811, the place itself as well as the activities he organized there were supposed to contribute to German identity. The physical training was intended to create male bodies free from aristocratic drilling and yet fit enough to liberate from Napoleon what was considered German territory. Additionally, the activities were organized as display and re-enactment of German identity: the training ground was surrounded by oaks and also included traditional Germanic meeting places; exercising included the singing of traditional songs, and hiking to places of historical relevance (Alkemeyer, 2003: 38). So far, there are many similarities to physical practices in other countries at the time: Invoking national identity added legitimacy and motivation to the different sports and, at the same time, ensured the recurring representation and embodiment of a "foundational memory" (J. Assmann, 2011: 37). The physical activities of gymnastics themselves, however, were not considered memorable. Jahn was critical of competition and of records. Gymnastics, therefore, did not develop a proper historiography – it was supposed to memorize and revive the national past but not to produce its own cultural memory.

3 As will become clearer below, the long lasting seriality of sport and its institutional manners of accounting partly undermine the established distinction between history and memory.

In contrast to that, as my introductory examples already showed, the organized competitive sports that developed in the second half of the 19th century (first in England but quickly spreading around the world) are only possible because they memorize their own past and thereby develop a drive to produce historic events. Sports only became successful and such an attractive content for the media because they established particular procedures to guarantee both, a regular stream of events and a competitive continuity between them. Through constant references to their own pasts, sports frame each present competition as one element in a long series – compared to which it can be declared a *historical* event.

Competitive sports: accountability and memory

The contribution of competitive sports to history and memory already becomes obvious in the case of the ancient Olympics, which were the most important and longest lasting of hundreds of similar contests across the Mediterranean. Most of these events were organized to give a city (or a sanctuary) public visibility and they followed a regular and harmonized schedule. The winners' performances were memorized in statues and poems. Even more, the Olympics, which for more than a thousand years were taking place every four years, were used as shared reference points for Hellenistic and Byzantine historians long after the games finally had come to an end around 400 CE (Fisher, 2009: 527; Remijsen, 2015: 68).

Such a combination of regularly organized events with similar and thus comparable (and possibly remarkable) performances becomes highly intensified with the emergence and global spread of competitive sports in the 19th century. As Tobias Werron has convincingly shown, one of its decisive features is that it embeds each individual contest in a series of similar, interrelated and comparable ones (Werron, 2010; 2008).

Adding to the ancient Olympics, sport now standardizes the rules and especially the spatial and temporal framework of a growing number of sub-disciplines; it does not only record the winner, but the quantified performance of each participant and therefore allows for the comparability of performances across spatial and temporal distances. For example it has become possible to declare an individual performance a 'world record' – that means a performance that is better than all previous performances anywhere. Multi-tiered competitions were organized in a systematic, continuous and interrelated manner. The league system is the most prominent form but World Cups, Olympic Games and other events which combine multiple contests and take place at regular intervals also contribute to a multiplication of a cyclical seriality of comparable events – so that, next to world records, we have Olympic records as well. Most significantly, the regularly organized and standardized events became object of (and were incited by) an ongoing public observation and discussion. Media forms like league tables, rankings, highlight collections and heroic narratives all contribute to a condensed "public memory" of events which allows for the evaluation and comparison of performances (Werron, 2015).

Specific media/specific sports

The introductory examples have shown how the commercialization of sports in relation to their immense coverage in the mass media creates a somewhat hyperbolic declaration of historical significance for nearly any event. While this is certainly the case, the previous section aimed to show, that there is a more systematic reason for sport's 'making of history', too: The mediated observation of sports triggers the standardization and serial organization of events; simultaneously, sport activates a number of media forms to record, compare, and evaluate individual contests in relation to all the others. Social history – especially after its 'material turn' (e.g.: Osmond, 2008; 2012) – is interested in statues, medals, trophies, and more banal paraphernalia as contributions to sports' memory culture. In comparison, the media of sports day-by-day memory production, the rankings, tables and narrative summaries got much less attention.

The numeric result of each competition condenses an entire event into a numerical value: the time it took to run a certain distance or the number of goals each of the competing teams scored. These quantified results can easily be used in rankings, tables, and statistical calculations, thus becoming the most basic building blocks for sports' particular memory. In some cases, the numerical result achieves a broader symbolic meaning that articulates and memorizes the emotional experience and broader cultural impact. This was the case with the Brazilian 1:7 defeat in the Men's World Cup 2014 half final against Germany. In Brazil the 'sete a um' (seven to one) "has become a metaphor for a devastating and crushing defeat in Brazilian use of language" far beyond sport.[4]

While all sports use images and narratives next to numbers to record and evaluate performances, it is interesting to see that different sports, due to their temporal and spatial features, trigger a specific use of media for articulating their memory. I will focus on baseball and road cycling as two examples.

Already in the 1860s, baseball was defined as *the* national game of the United States, and it is still considered to be the most traditional of American sports. Re-staging a "pastoral spatiality and temporality" (Bill Brown quoted in Sobchack, 1993: 6), its rules and traditions are supposed to be handed over from father to son. In a slight contrast to that pastorality, baseball is the "most statistically analyzed American sport" (Cassuto & Grant, 2011: 34) and its memory culture, accordingly, is very much shaped by numbers. Since a baseball game consists of a series of distinct actions which are constantly repeated (pitches, hits, runs etc.), it lends itself well to numerical notation. Already in the 1860s, the journalist Henry Chadwick introduced the so-called box score, a standardized manner to record the decisive moves of a baseball game. Even if this box score was modified and complemented with more detailed data throughout the decades, this allows for an easy and 'objective' comparison of performances from the entire history of baseball. The conspicuous nostalgia that permeates baseball is fostered by the seamless continuity of quantified data and the resulting memory of past baseball heroes.

4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazil_v_Germany_(2014_FIFA_World_Cup)#Aftermath. Accessed 31st August, 2019.

In many respects cycling presents a contrasting example: When it took off, at the end of the 19th century, it was considered to be a quintessentially modern sport. The bicycle was an advanced technology and the man-machine assemblage made it into an apt metaphor for contemporary developments (Vigarello, 1996). Additionally, cycling was the sport of the working class in many countries and was professionalized quite early on (in contrast to the more bourgeois tradition of European football).

In terms of its media constellation, however, cycling was – and partly still remains today – a much more old-fashioned sport than baseball. To focus on the most famous example: the Tour de France, an annual race of three weeks (by now: around 20 stages and two rest days), follows a somewhat different route each year. Additionally, the stages often consist of about five hours of continuous racing and thus offer few distinct, pre-defined actions. Therefore, statistics only play a minor role and the annual installments are rather connected with each other through storytelling. Roland Barthes famously described the Tour de France as an "Epic" consisting of a sequence of ordeals in which men(!) battle against the mountains, the weather and their own weaknesses (Barthes, 2012). For many years, there was no chance that any audience could oversee the evolution of a race in its entirety. The final description of the race ending up in newspapers – as well as the accountability of the race – remained dependent on the accounts of the competitors themselves. Even when journalists started to accompany the race on motorbikes, they still weren't able to observe the front group of a race and the riders left behind. Television only slowly changed that. Not until the introduction of mobile and wireless television cameras in the 1970s – first on motorbikes and later also on helicopters – did a more or less seamless coverage become possible. But even today, narrative accounts dominate the evaluation and comparison of past and present performances in cycling. In contrast to the numerically guaranteed historical continuity of baseball, cycling creates historical continuity and marks memorable events mainly through the repetitive use of analogies, metaphors, and narrative tropes: the toughness of a climb, for example, is underlined and evaluated through stories of past editions with even worse weather conditions or even more dramatic setbacks for one of the leading riders. Often these stories (somewhat similar to early German gymnastics) combine the physical activity with the history of the national geography that it traverses and maps (Vigarello, 1996). While historical achievements in baseball are very often represented by numbers (i.e.: records), in cycling the remarkability of a competition is made plausible through narrative tension and context.

However, while the differences between baseball and cycling are of interest, and while cycling still shows an old-fashioned connection with the national landscape, memory culture in both cases is mainly shaped by the common cyclical seriality of events, as it is for all sports. This guarantees that each year another event takes place that gives reasons to memorize the past events and simultaneously uses this comparative memory for the identification of new historical moments.

The memory of sports: progressing and repetitive seriality

Baseball and cycling's production of memory evince noticeable similarities in the way they combine each individual contest with the memory of past ones: While the quality of a competition might partly still be determined by the present performance – its force, tenseness, or its "epiphany of form" (Gumbrecht, 1999) – its evaluation arguably depends more on the comparison with other similar performances (Werron, 2015). Each single contest is unpredictable but ends with a clear result, thereby supporting an interest and emotional involvement in each individual event. At the same time, each contest follows the same rules as previous ones. Most sport events even participate in two different forms of seriality which support each other while each contributing with a specific dynamic to sport's memory culture:

On the one hand, most single contests are part of a longer and more comprehensive competition often structured as a 'season', a 'tournament', or qualifying rounds. Such a competition constitutes continuity through a *progressing form of seriality*: the result of one event defines the options of the next event; the entire series is defined by increasing tension, often (but not necessarily) culminating in one final decisive competition - the World Series in baseball, the Super Bowl in American Football, the final of a tennis tournament.[5] Especially in the case of leagues, the contrast between present performance and overall achievement can be significant: a loss can turn out to bring a team to the top of the table if the main competitor for the title suffered a more severe defeat. On the other hand, each single contest (and the entire season) is also part of a *repetitive form of seriality*: not only does each contest repeat the same situation with the same rules; each year the entire competition also gets repeated, and the same or similar kinds of fixtures as in the past year will take place again.

Long before the so-called seasons of radio or television series, sports established a seasonal cycle that more or less annually repeats the same kind of competition, a similar series of fixtures yet with different pre-conditions, different personnel, and different weather conditions.[6] In the 19th century, the serial publication of newspapers supported (and often promoted) sports' seriality while sports also shaped the publication schedule of the daily or weekly press by offering reliable weekly content (Mason, 1986). Despite the fact that, recently, the delivery of television shows, first through DVD and now through on-demand streaming platforms like Netflix, tends to de-couple both the production and reception of drama series from the seasonal structure, sport's cyclical structure will, quite probably, survive this technological and economic re-organization of delivery schedules. Sport thus may be the cultural content that is most intensely interwoven with national and global schedules, signaling winter, summer and special holidays. The seriality of sports such as baseball or cycling extends much further back than the

5 Adding to the productivity, different kinds of sports organize the progressive continuity in different ways. Some sports have even established complementary forms - as European football did with the League and the Cup systems. Basically, these different forms of organization, while of course also resulting from commercial incentives, can be conceived of as alternative balances between individual event and overall competition.

6 On the two different forms of seriality characterising television, see Engell 2019.

longest-running soap operas and guarantees for cultural and historical continuity that in many cases outlasts fundamental political and technological transformations.[7]

Beyond creating a relatively stable and annually repeating temporal pattern that often is entangled with other national or global schedules (holidays, seasons etc.) this combination of two forms of seriality embedding the individual contest is key to sports' memory production. More than any other serial form, sport references its own past consistently in its accounts of the present events and uses this to identify and remember historical moments.

Already before the start of each contest, the prior development of the progressing seriality has to be recalled in a condensed form to know what is at stake and to frame the possible – and most probable – outcomes. Before each baseball game, the rankings of the contenders in the league are displayed to visualize the consequences of all the possible outcomes of the upcoming contest. In the Tour de France, meanwhile, the contenders' standings and the time they lag behind the overall leader gets listed in advance of each stage.

During an unfolding contest, the development of the contest itself has to be 'memorized' to make clear what the options and probabilities are for the remaining time: Scoreboards fulfill this function, and in tennis the umpire additionally announces the current standing after each rally. It is helpful to compare such references to past events with fictional narratives: The soap opera is considered to be a genre that is watched in a distracted mode while doing other things. Because of that, the narrative information is quite redundant; relevant information about changes in a character's life are often repeated in several conversations (Allen, 1985). The redundancy of sports reporting is much higher, though. With each new event the most relevant prior events in the same competition are summarized, often both in graphic and oral mode.

Additionally, the fact that each individual competition is part of a progressive seriality extends these condensed references to past events far beyond the ongoing competition. Often, specific actions of the ongoing contest trigger spontaneous (but often well prepared) references to prior moments of the progressive seriality: In one stage of the Tour de France, the disappointing performance of an athlete can be framed by saying that he is now 'paying the price' for his enormous efforts on the day before. In a BBC Match of the Day episode, commentators frame an upcoming penalty by informing the audience that the player has already shot seven goals from penalties this season, 'but none as important as this'. The progressive seriality serves to underline significance.

Andrew Tudor (whilst referring to the football World Cup) has shown in detail that reporters actually need frameworks from prior games to organize the events of the ongoing competition in a narrative way; they keep an established framework stable as long as possible (e.g. the alleged characteristics and qualities of a player or a team). Only if the unfolding events drastically contradict the accumulated memory, it gets revised and re-organized. For lesser known athletes and especially athletes from lesser-known countries, for which sport-related memory is not available in the database of the observer, resilient stereotypes fill in (Tudor, 1992).

7 On the German Wikipedia page, the list of German football champions spans the period from 1902 to 2019, thus including at least six politically and geographically different entities https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_deutschen_Fußballmeister

Sport does not limit its memory work to the progressing seriality with its causal connection to the present contest, though. It also compares the present action to causally disconnected events from past seasons. As a result, each competition activates multiple narratives with multiple temporal layers. While there is no causal connection between the games of different seasons (or the 100m sprint of two consecutive Olympic games), references to events across the repetitive seriality of all past seasons allow to frame the meaning and significance of an event – and especially serve to mark it as historical. A typical example would be a comment from BBC's Match of the Day after a goalkeeper deflected a penalty shot in the English Cup final of 1988: "the first penalty safe in a Cup final."

This example also indicates another characteristic dynamic of sport's memory culture: With its contingent actions, sport not only offers an incentive to compare the current match or race with prior events, it also allows for an endless extension of possibly relevant elements that can be compared; it is not the current event alone that is put into a historical continuity, each identifiable element of the contest can be compared with an independent series of comparable events: Shots and missed shots, weather conditions, athletes' ages or nationalities – as we saw in my example above, in which the fact that the winner of the Wimbledon tournament was British made it into a historical event.

Maybe most importantly for sports' contributions to wider memory culture and national history, the cyclical structure of sports itself acts as a reliable trigger to regularly activate and update the memory of *historical* events – even without some special current action that would act as a catalyst. Age old and 'legendary' rivalries between teams are a typical example, as are the TV highlight reels of past triumphs and dramatic losses of a national team framing the coverage of World Cups or the Olympics. This happens in the less result-oriented and more narrative memory culture of cycling, too. In the Tour de France, the route is not the same every year but each time the race crosses the Tourmalet mountain, the story of Eugene Christophe will be repeated – a rider who in 1913 lost the Tour de France because his forks broke descending the Tourmalet and he had to walk to a blacksmith in the next village to fix it; similarly, each time the route includes the ascent to Mont Ventoux, the 1967 death of British rider Tom Simpsons during a time trial stage to the top of the mountain is memorized. There is a monument, too, at the spot where he fell from his bike and amateur riders climbing the mountain have developed a ritual of stopping and leaving behind one of their water bottles there. But this monument is not needed to trigger the mentioning of the event on TV or on social media when in yet another year the professional cyclists ride by the spot without paying attention to the special place.

These are examples in which the repetitive seriality of sports figures less as a flexible resource that is accessed dependent on contingent events, but rather as a nearly mindless ritual, ensuring a shared knowledge that comes close to being cliché. While some of sports' memories are dependent on contingent occasions, others are consistently repeated every competition. This also raises the question whether sports memories that are allegedly shared across a nation, the men's football team's World Cup win of 1954 in Germany for instance, would in fact be part of cultural memory if football and its cyclical structure would stop mentioning that event.

The argument would be, that the more subtle, unremarkable but highly flexible and ubiquitous mechanisms that connect past and present events are the unmistakable basis for the

declaration and memorization of historical events. These references take advantage of the interplay between progressing seriality with its causal connections on the one hand and repetitive seriality with it causally disconnected but symbolically rich similarities on the other. This offers two dynamics to the broader cultural memory: It uses a condensed and reductive form of the past to evaluate the quality of the ongoing event and thus to potentially transform it into a 'historical event' – sometimes even before it started. Yet, the repetitive seriality also allows to repeat, recall and praise the event of the past that already has become considered 'historical'. In this context, history is constantly transformed into memory again: In established terminology, history distinguishes (and disconnects) the past from present experience, while memory keeps the past connected to the present (A. Assmann, 2011; Engell, 2019 – both referring to Maurice Halbwachs' work). In sports, a baseball season or a Tour de France event from the early 20th century is both: historically archived and closed but also flexibly accessible to fans and media to find new aspects that can be compared to ongoing developments.

Conclusion: universal competition and national memory

So far I have argued that organized, competitive sport is structurally dependent on creating its own memory. In this context sports developed procedures and media forms (like rankings, tables, and narratives) that organize the memory of their own past in a highly efficient and flexible manner. It is the combination between such media forms and the twofold serial structure of sports' organization of events (repetitive/cyclical and progressive) that creates a dynamic and flexible machinery that keeps the memory of past events alive and uses the past to frame the present – to possibly mark it as a *historical* event. While this machinery is an essential building block for sport as we know it, its solidity for the organization of memory clearly makes it attractive beyond sport. A World Cup Win of a national team is remembered as not only an athletic achievement but a significant moment of a nation. The cyclical repetition of the Tour de France does not only memorize the heroic achievements of riders from the past but also significant places and events of wider French history (its cloisters, its wars etc.).

In principal, sports' efficient and sustainable organization of memory can be (and actually has been) connected to individual biographies and to collectives of different size and different character. The fact that it is most often harnessed by national perspectives and thus contributes to national (and nationalistic) memory is mostly due to the fact that sports – at the end of the 19th and start of the 20th century – developed into a universal competition that is organized according to nation states. Barbara Keys traced this development in detail and argued that it is exactly the decidedly international character of sport competitions that made them an ideal stage for the articulation of national identities and histories. The uniformity and universalism of sport "appear to offer a uniquely objective and quantifiable means to compare national strength" (Keys, 2006: 4).

German gymnastics did not only lack a competitive spirit, but because of that it also missed to develop "an internationalist ideology" and an international institutional framework (Keys, 2006: 23). Thus, it could represent elements of German history but it could not contribute to any updating of German memory in relation to and in competition with other countries.

Sport's memory production became so relevant as a resource for national identity because it embeds each significant event not only in a series of past events but also in a series of comparable international events.

There are remarkable sport events that are clearly entangled with national memory culture. The 'miracle on ice' in the US or the Football World Cup of 1954 in Germany did contribute to national history and identity; and the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games is still the most globally visible moment for displaying one's national histories and traditions. In a way, these examples still continue in the manner in which Friedrich Ludwig Jahn wanted to use gymnastics to display and embody national tradition and essence.

Some people have argued that sport history is so attractive because in contrast to the mishmash of schoolbook history "the history of sports revealed crystal-clear, cyclical patterns" (Rader, 1984: 12). According to sociologist Gregory Stone (1971, 50) "[…] the sports pages in the daily newspaper […] provide some confirmation that there is a continuity in the events and affairs of the larger society."

I don't think that the procedures discussed here do, in fact, present a clear continuity; and sport's history is as controversial a mishmash as any. If we don't focus only on the biggest events – and especially not only on the nationally memorized historical achievements which are only one highly specific aspect of sport's memory culture – but also on the basic procedures of sports' organization of memory, we can understand better how and why sports gets entangled with historical and national significance. Sports offer instruments to always re-order and thus re-stabilize continuity. Their production of memory is characterized by procedures which allow for a highly dynamic play between past and present and for a constant signaling of possibly historical moments – most of which will quickly be forgotten, some of them will be repeated every year. Only by understanding the entire well-oiled machine of sports' production of the past we can understand how special historical events are marked, enabled, and memorized by sport. In the end the mechanisms discussed here may carry more weight in relation with the contemporary sense of the past and the shaping of cultural memories and identities than the big, memorable events.

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