

Chapter 9

The Social and Technological Revolution in Sports Journalism

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how future cultural and technological dynamics will expand the popularity of physical and electronic sports not only in the U.S.A. but will provide opportunities for international expansion and the rise of global fan communities. While physical auditoriums will be designed to accommodate massive crowds, they will also ensure that they take into account future challenges, such as re-occurring pandemics and volatile weather. New technologies will provide immersive experiences at home as well as spectacular views of field action from any bleacher seat.

IMAGINE . . .

Janis Kellis glanced at her watch and realized she must pick up the pace on this overcast day. The weather had been insanely hot this autumn. What a mess, she thought, as she wiped her brow incessantly. She was underperforming and would need to meet her personal goals this week. The team physician tracked her statistics weekly, as she wanted to make sure that she was performing at her peak for the big game in two weeks. She would be playing in London's new amphitheater. The weather would likely be as hot. All the players were struggling with the recent rise in temperatures and humidity. Of course, she was excited about the opportunity to be among the first to play in the mega stadium, but she was also aware that millions would likely be watching her across the world. All her mistakes would be magnified and replayed for not only her coach and fans to critique, but for her to see repeatedly. It was an exciting time, with all the new technologies available for fans and players, but it was also unnerving at times. Every mistake was recorded, to be analyzed for eternity or so it seemed. Plus, everything she ate was automatically reported to her coach, and bad food choices could easily be leaked to social media in an instance like when she slipped and ate a candy bar. The scrutiny was at times stressful, but similarly when she was in perfect form and doing her best on the field, her fan base would send her accolades. To be idolized by the world had both its positive and negative points. Yet the constant surveillance was maddening sometimes.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3844-9.ch009

When she was in her apartment, she could easily shut down the social media, but still her coach would ultimately know when she ate pizza or a cheeseburger. Yet this was the path that she had selected. That afternoon, she would be meeting directly with her fans after the game. She would connect directly with her fans on her social media channel. She was also meeting with a few companies who were interested in sponsoring her channel. On this day, she was meeting with a sports journalist from London, who was interviewing her for a documentary on the new breed of bionic women in soccer. Only a year ago, after a car accident, she was rushed into emergency surgery, and was offered a bionic limb to replace her damaged leg. That was another reason her practice was extremely important to her; she had to keep her leg well maintained and aligned with her overall athletic performance. Indeed, her leggings were lined with sensors that helped her monitor and compare the performance of her legs. She was one of the first women to receive this operation, which was still experimental at the time. Fortunately, the league made had made accommodations to allow for artificial limbs under special circumstances only a few years prior to her accident. Janis had become an inspiration to those similarly injured, and those born with physical disabilities, who desired to overcome such obstacles in life. She became a symbol for anything is possible in life. She made the cover of every magazine across the web. She was interviewed by nearly every media organization in the world. She was featured in numerous commercials for athletic wear and medical implants. Her best plays were made into holographic replays that were shown in schools as further inspiration for youth. A holographic image of her played in nearly every athletic store. She was aware that she not only competed for herself, but her team, and those who followed her success. The latter became her greatest reason for continuing to work hard. She was given a second chance, and for that she was grateful. Not only was she a multi-racial woman who represented women across three continents, but she was a stunning example of technology at its finest. She was the bionic woman, and it was if she stepped out of a science fiction TV show into the future. The world of sports had certainly changed. Her hair now drenched with sweat; she felt a chill in the air. The temperature suddenly dropped. She mused at how erratic the weather had become over the last few years. She decided to slow down and head home for breakfast and a short power nap before heading to the field to practice with the team.

INTRODUCTION: THE SPORT REVOLUTION IS NEAR

One of the areas of journalism that will experience tremendous change in the near to distant future is sports. It is impossible to predict all the forthcoming changes and challenges to sports journalism in the years ahead, for much of it will depend on how games will be played in the future, as well as what sports will be featured and in what ways. The first decade of the 21st century not only elevated social media channels featuring a wider range of sports celebrities nationally and internationally, but further raised the profile of fantasy leagues and esports with historically high-priced celebrity endorsements (Spiel Times, 2020). There will be increased emphasis on women's sports, and as gender definitions blur, there may be radical shifts in the composition of teams. This chapter will discuss several areas of sports journalism, and speculate on forthcoming social, economic and technological advancements over the next 40 to 50 years and beyond. Some of those areas include the rise of popularity in electronic sports, new social media for fans following players and games, as well as experiencing game play through immersive technologies. Finally, also relevant to the future of sports is progress from the medical field to ensure player safety and faster recovery times than ever before.

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