10I Rebecca Alt, University of Maryland
“A League of their Own and Gendered Sport: The Price of Admission to America’s Game”

This essay performs a rhetorical criticism and articulation of explicit and implicit discursive constructions of gender in sport in a popular film, joining a scholarly conversation at the intersection of physical cultural studies and communication. Most people know that in the World War II era, women played baseball in the All-American Girls’ Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL). However, the extent of cultural knowledge about the league is derived from the Penny Marshall’s 1992 film A League of Their Own. Loosely based on the documentary by the same title, the film was lauded as both a good comedy and a celebration of a positive historical advancement for women in sports and in society. The themes derived from the film’s dialogue and plot development are, however, troubling, as they articulate the broader oppressive ideologies about women athletes that continue to persist in American culture and urge viewers to accept sexism in sport as part of the game. In the analysis, I focus on three major themes that emerge in A League of Their Own’s dialogue and representations: gatekeeping and male control in sport (particularly “America’s game” baseball), women and the “gendered diamond,” and the overt attempt to domesticate the (athletic) woman.

10I Callie Maddox, Miami University
“Silencing Difference: Bollywood, Mary Kom, and Racism in India”

In 2012, Indian boxer Mary Kom won the Olympic bronze medal in the women’s flyweight division, one of only six total medals that India captured during the Games. A few months later, production began on a movie about her life, resulting in the 2014 release of Mary Kom, a commercially successful Bollywood film that recounts Kom’s early struggles and eventual rise to national sporting hero. What is largely ignored in the film, however, is Kom’s identity as a member of the Kom tribe, a Tibeto-Burman minority community from the northeastern state of Manipur. In its effort to portray Kom as an icon of the Indian nation, the film effectively massages her ethnic identity to fit within an “acceptable” definition of who constitutes the nation. When placed within the current context of racism and violence perpetrated against people from the northeast living in cities such as Delhi, the erasure of Kom's ethnicity in the film is striking. If, as Banerjee (2006) has suggested, the history of Manipur is “written on the woman’s body”, then Bollywood’s representation of Mary Kom’s sporting body is silencing part of that history.

10I Mark Falcous, University of Otago & Matthew Masucci, San Jose State University
“Myth and Narrativisation of Cycle Racing in Popular Literature”

In his 1957 collection of essays Mythologies Roland Barthes famously discussed the world’s most prominent cycle race Le Tour De France. He critiqued its explicit narrativisation, which he argued masked the economic motives and human costs of the event. Amongst 53 essays, Barthes notably makes the case that “the Tour is the best example we have ever encountered of a total, hence an ambiguous myth” (p.130). Barthes assertion of a cycling spectacle as the foremost ‘total’ myth among his many sites of analysis is a notable indication of the power of sporting myth within social life. Following Barthes promptings, in this paper we consider the contemporary narrativisation of cycle racing focusing upon popular literature surrounding the sport. We offer critically discursive readings in light of the broader political, economic and cultural contexts of cycling. The dominant framing across the literature constitutes a discourse that valorises an apparently glorious history/heritage, (male) heroic sacrifice, Europhilia and liturgises the aesthetics of professional racing. In doing so, the literature both deproblematises the human experiences of cycle racing, and affirms what Wieting (2000) terms the “the fiction of pure sport” (p.350). We also document complexities and flaws in the mythical edifice surrounding cycling, which offers possibilities for more critical engagement.