2C Jennifer Harker, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
“A Field of Deviance: Pitching the Dark Side of Sport”

Two studies were conducted and results combined to examine the landscape of deviant behavior in sport. The first study was a quantitative content analysis of the last five years of American newspaper reports on sport-related deviant behaviors that necessitated a public apology. The second study quantitatively analyzed sport-related deviance in 25 years of internationally published literature from 25 academic journals spanning five disciplines. The top six most frequently occurring deviant behaviors were found to be the same in both studies. The most often occurring behaviors reported upon or researched (in order of cumulative frequency) were the use of performing enhancing drugs; spoken or Tweeted offensive slurs; aggressive behaviors; rule breaking or cheating; sexual misconduct; and racial or homophobic slurs. These incidents are discussed via detailed case study examples and further broken down by sport, by league and level (professional, collegiate, etc.), and by specific sport-related personnel (male/female, athlete/coach/owner/team, etc.). The mediated discourse and enhanced social need for remediation that followed only some of the deviant behaviors also is discussed.

2C Jane Stangl, Smith College & Anna Baeth, University of Minnesota
“Embodying Neoliberal Ideals: (Cross)Fit-ness as a Production of Healthism, Consumption, and Deviance”

Currently, the United States is simultaneously home to the largest number of obese citizens and the largest number of extreme fitness followers in modern history. We argue that this ‘fit are getting fitter and fat are getting fatter’ culture is a bi-product of a neoliberal govern-mentality in which individual citizens have contradictory impulses toward compulsive consumption and obsessive self-control. These contradictions are literally embodied in extremely deviant (obese) and extremely compliant (militaristically fit or Cross-Fit) citizens. Looking full circle, these contradictions also raise the question of what constitutes deviant or compliant behavior. The intent of this paper is to highlight CrossFit – “the sport of fitness” – as an exemplary manifestation of neoliberalism, as well as a constructed and a practiced form of healthism through social media surveillance. Utilizing four biographical texts, this paper reads neoliberalism both objectively and subjectively upon the physical bodies of CrossFitters. Rather than asking, ‘why is CrossFit as a fitness program becoming so popular?’, it will ask, ‘what about our contemporary period has made extreme fitness (and deviance-prevention) programs, such as CrossFit, so popular?’ The fundamental question then is not simply ‘why CrossFit?’ but the pre-suppositional questions of ‘why here?’ and perhaps most importantly, ‘why now?’.

2C Gretchen Peterson, University of Memphis
“Constructing Deviance in Adult Recreational Softball”

This paper uses qualitative data to examine the reasons that adult recreational softball players give for cheating, which involves the use of an altered bat. Previous research on this topic (Peterson, 2015) found that 27% of respondents (n=1727) to an online survey admitted to intentionally using an altered bat. One of the major factors that predicted such intentional cheating in the quantitative data was the recommendation of a teammate to use an altered bat. This paper builds on that study by examining in more depth the qualitative responses given by study participants to the question of why they had used an altered bat. Initial review of responses finds references to being competitive as one justification as well as ideas about how different ways of altering bats are defined differently (i.e., shaving a bat is cheating, but rolling a bat is not). The results of this project will be a more comprehensive understanding of how
deviance in adult softball is viewed by players and how deviance is socially constructed in recreational sport.

2C Brian Menaker, Texas A & M University – Kingsville & R. Dale Sheptak, Lake Erie College
“Decivilizing Behavior in and Around Sporting Venues: Continuing the Quest for Deviant Excitement”

Sporting events offer a unique venue for people to act outside acceptable social norms. Increased excitement, arousal of aggression, combined with the fans’ tribal mentality often leads to criminal acts on game days. This paper analyzes the relationship between sporting venues in a major U.S. city and reported assault and property crime. Findings suggest that game days indeed influence crime in the vicinity of these stadiums. Elias and Dunning’s 1986 theory, the Quest for Excitement offers a salient explanation for spectator misconduct positing that mimetic behavior is created in an environment of excitable competition. This behavior can lead to unintended actions or intended action that lead to criminal activity. We will explore how the quest serves as strong theoretical underpinning for the problems associated with sports venues and game days.