As a mega-sporting event, the FIFA World Cup can lead fans to engage in self-categorization in terms of in-groups and out-groups based on nationality by supporting participating squads of the same national affiliation. During such events, fans engage on social media as an expression of the group with which they identify, often espousing an “us vs. them” mentality in which “them” constitutes an amalgamation of all other non-home nations. This study examined Twitter conversation surrounding the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup, centering on how supporters of the United States’ respective national teams described the tournaments. Analysis consisted of classification of 33,529 tweets and comparison between the U.S. teams and their opponents as well as comparisons between descriptions of the U.S. Men’s and Women’s National Teams. Results revealed U.S. teams were more likely to be described in regard to attributions of success or failure, while opponents were more likely to receive personal or physical attributions. Conversely, no differences were found between the U.S. men and women in regard to attributions of success or failure, but revealed the women’s team was more likely to receive personal and physical attributions. Interpretations and implications of these findings are further explored.

In the wake of the United States Supreme Court ruling legalizing gay marriage nationwide, social media reflected a range of support and dissent. U.S. Soccer posted a photo featuring an eagle and the phrase “One Nation, One Team” in rainbow font on their official social media accounts. This paper explores the reaction to those posts by social media users. We examined comments made about the post and, using elements of grounded theory, found five themes emerge: 1) resistance to the intertwinement of politics and sport, and pushback to that resistance; 2) patriotism/nationalism; 3) the symbolic importance of out gay players, coaches, and fans; 4) general negative comments; and 5) general positive comments. We contextualize these themes in light of 1) the tension around the role of politics in sports, 2) US Soccer’s historical heterosexism and its manifestations, and 3) the changing landscape of women’s sports in regards to homosexuality.

Power soccer is a sport in which teams of four compete against each other in an effort to drive a 13-inch soccer ball through goals using motorized wheelchairs. The athletes typically have upper and lower extremity impairment and the sport is played co-ed. Because chairs are motorized, traditional physiological gender differences in sport have been removed. Still, the sport is over 80% male. This study explored the experiences of female power soccer players in light of three distinct positions they hold: as athletes with disabilities in a predominantly non-disabled world; as athletes with more impactful physiological impairments within the disability sport community; and as women in a co-ed male-dominated sport. Results indicate experiences of ableism and minimally impactful but present sexism. Finally, participants note how they engage with social dynamics related to their disabilities and gender.
Girls’ youth soccer is increasingly taking the form of a pay to play “youth sports to college pipeline” that systematically excludes low-income, “minority,” and non-suburban families. The often overlooked driving force behind this commercialized and commodified pipeline is an increasingly corporatized system of higher education that, with Title IX as a catalyst, is redirecting significant resources toward women’s intercollegiate athletics which is contributing to the skyrocketing cost of college. Commercial interests within the pipeline attract young girls and their overeager parents by greatly exaggerating the likelihood of securing athletics-based college scholarships or admissions advantages at the pipeline’s exit. This article, part of a larger project examining pipelines in five different female sports, uses quantitative and qualitative data to highlight how the girls’ youth soccer to college pipeline has become little more than an affirmative action program for some relatively wealthy families to subsidize their daughters’ college education.

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“Abby Wambach: G.O.A.T. or Just a Goat?”

In the ten years of its existence, the social media site Twitter has become a “disruptive force in sport communication today” (Pegoraro, 2014, p. 133) by enabling consumers to also become producers. Twitter is an important virtual space for collective, fan-driven cultural constructions of athletes. However, one question that remains somewhat open is whether Twitter’s “disruptive” character extends to dominant ideologies of gender whereby women in sport become visible only to the extent that they signal heterosexuality, femininity, and/or nation. This analysis is located at the intersections of studies of social media, fandom, and cultural constructions of women in sport. It asks how a prominent, elite woman athlete, U.S. women’s soccer player Abby Wambach, is constructed “from below” via Twitter. It compares the meanings attached to Wambach by Twitter users upon two distinctly different events: Wambach’s retirement from professional soccer in 2016 and her arrest for a DUI several weeks later.