ABSTRACT


by Margi Sammons

This thesis is a critical analysis of newspaper coverage of the 2004 Olympic men’s gymnastics “controversy.” In this coverage an Olympic media complex is present, in which the press must recognize the Olympic myth and simultaneously deal with its inherent hegemonic and capitalistic ideologies when reporting on Olympic “scandals.” This paper will present a case study of USA Today and The New York Times articles to illustrate the language, topics, and style these newspapers use to cover the “controversy.”
Writing the Olympic Dream: A Critical Analysis of the Media Coverage of the 2004 Olympic Paul Hamm Media Controversy

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CHAPTER 1

In what journalists hailed as “inspirational,” “astounding,” and “the greatest comeback in gymnastics history,” United States male gymnast Paul Hamm won the 2004 Athens Olympic Games all-around competition with the closest margin of victory in Olympic history (by .012 points) over South Koreans Kim Dae Eun (who won the silver medal) and Yang Tae Young (who won the bronze medal). Hamm became the first United States male gymnast in Olympic history to win the all-around competition and did so in a dramatic fashion. Leading the competition going into his fourth event\(^1\), Hamm fell on his vault landing, scoring a low 9.137, and dropping him to twelfth place. Despite this fall Hamm did not give up, and ended up performing near-flawless routines on his remaining events. On his final event, the horizontal bar, Hamm “stuck” his landing\(^2\) and won the competition. In doing so, he joined the long list of past Olympic champions, among Olympic glory and…controversy.

Although often thought of mythically and idealistically, the Olympic Games, despite their regular displays of fantastic victories and inspirational athletes, have a past tarnished with events that contradict the very ideals for which the Games stand. While an Olympic ideal of internationalism, fairplay, and sportsmanship has been engrained in athletes, the media, and spectators, nations tend not to abandon their ideologies while competing against one another for one of the most prestigious sporting achievements—Olympic gold medals. Thus, in each Olympics, whether through political decisions, in actual sporting events, or in the media, nationalism and capitalism begin to surface, contradicting the Olympic myth.

HISTORY

The first real modern controversy and examples of ideology clashing with sportsmanship occurred in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, also known as the “Nazi Games,” where anti-Semitism and nationalism was demonstrated by the IOC’s decision to host the Games in Nazi Germany (Real). In doing so the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was accused of racism, and many nations threatened to boycott the Games after initial threats from Germany to ban Jews

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\(^1\) In men’s gymnastics, athletes compete in six events: floor exercise, pommel horse, still rings, vault, parallel bars, and horizontal bar.

\(^2\) To “stick” a landing means that the gymnast did not step or make any movement on the dismount. A stuck landing is important because it means the judges most likely cannot take any score deductions off the landing.
from participating ("Olympics Controversy"). Following these Games, the 1940 and 1944 Olympics were curtailed by World War II, contradicting the notion that countries should assemble in peaceful competition despite nationalistic conflicts (Real 229). Numerous nations did not participate in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, including Spain and Switzerland, who withdrew in protest of the Soviet invasion of Hungary. Then, during the 1972 Munich Olympics a terrorist attack on the Israeli team left 11 Israelis, five terrorists, and a German policeman dead ("Olympics Controversy"). In more recent politization of the Games, the United States led a nearly 60-team boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics (Walton). Following the Soviet Union’s lead, 14 countries boycotted the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. The 1992 Barcelona Olympics marked the end of a 28-year ban against allowing South Africa and its apartheid regime to compete in the Olympics (Walton). Thus, despite Olympic notions of equality and peace, political decisions have been influential in numerous Olympiads, showing that despite these ideals countries cannot easily abandon their nationalistic ideologies.

In the same way, it is difficult for the Olympics to escape commercialism and unsportsmanlike behavior. For example, the 1984 Olympics marked the start of the Olympics’ emphasis on commercialism; for the first time ever, there were corporate sponsors for the Games, with 43 companies licensed to sell official Olympic merchandise (Manning). Unsportsmanlike behavior, while also evident in most of the past Games, became apparent in the 1994 Lillehammer Olympics and in the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. First, the 1994 Olympic women’s figure skating competition was overshadowed by the Tonya Harding-Nancy Kerrigan scandal, in which Harding’s ex-husband hired a man to club Kerrigan in the knee at 1994 U.S. National Championships in order to secure Harding’s spot on the Olympic team. Then, in the 2002 Olympics, a French figure skating judge was pressured to give the gold medal to the Russian figure skating pair over the Canadian pair. In the same Olympics, controversy also developed in the speed skating competition when an Australian official disqualified the winning South Korean skater, Kim Dong-Sung, for blocking American Apolo Anton Ohno's path, allowing the American skater to win the gold medal.

Despite these past contradictions to the Olympic myth, the Olympics are still considered to be the world’s biggest peace-time event, bringing nations together to engage in peaceful, equal competition, through which heroes and memories are made. Therefore, the United States media called Hamm’s victory one of the best moments of the Games until a day after the competition
when they reported that bronze medalist Yang Tae Young and his coaches protested the competition results. The Koreans argued that Yang’s parallel bar score should have been 0.10 of a point higher due to a judging error3, which would have made Yang the Olympic champion. Even in the case of judging errors, International Gymnastics Federation (FIG), IOC, and United States Olympic Committee (USOC) rules prohibit changing the standings or awarding a second gold medal. As a result, while some newspapers encouraged Hamm to keep the gold medal, many others called for him to hand over his medal to Yang in the spirit of the Olympics. For example, USA Today’s Christine Brennan wrote:

It’s not Hamm’s fault but it is his opportunity. Hamm should give his gold medal to Yang. I know how abrupt this sounds. All Hamm’s hard work, all those hopes and dreams of winning an Olympic gold medal, and now he’s supposed to just hand it over to an opponent he thought he defeated the other night? Well, yes. [. . .] Hamm would no longer be a gymnast who won the gold, a fine achievement, but hardly a singular one. He would become a metaphor for everything that is good about sports and the Olympic Games (“Just One”).

As Brennan notes, Hamm’s situation embodied many of the issues surrounding the Games; on one hand, he had the opportunity to represent the ideals of sportsmanship and fairplay, while on the other hand he could stand for all the qualities the Games reject, such as individualism and nationalism. However, this metaphor does not stop with Hamm himself—the media’s role in covering the scandal also represents how these Olympic ideals play out in society. The controversy did not exist just in the Olympics themselves, but was also played out in the media, when many journalists and audience members, like Brennan, began to take sides on whether or not Hamm should keep his gold medal.

Media coverage of the Hamm controversy is unique and significant because men’s gymnastics is not a sport often covered by the United States media, rather making its appearance in mainstream coverage during the “Olympic cycle.” However, the media, particularly print media, gave much attention to this “controversy,” making the coverage ideal to study for representations of Olympic ideals and national ideologies. For example, like Brennan’s article, numerous editorials and commentaries were written on the topic and coverage of developments made its way into front page sports headlines during the course of the Games. The coverage of

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3It was determined after the competition that in the fifth rotation the three judges admittedly mistook a tucked Belle, which is rated as an E skill, for a Morisue, a D skill. A gymnast who performs an E skill is awarded .20 of bonus
the Hamm controversy, along with coverage of other Olympic controversies\(^4\), conflicted with news coverage that exposed the virtue and values of sportsmanship and the Games. Because of this conflicting coverage of the Games and contradictory opinions and reports on the Hamm controversy, it is interesting to investigate the motivations of newspapers that choose to cover stories that reinforce the glorification and myth of the Olympics, while also focusing on and creating scandals that devalue the event.

**MEDIA AND OLYMPICS**

Since its rebirth in 1896, the media have helped the Olympic movement grow stronger by promoting the event, exposing large audiences to the Games, and perpetuating the Olympic ideals, thereby allowing the Olympics to become the world’s “number one mediated event” (Real 222). The 1912 Stockholm Games had approximately 500 accredited journalists in attendance; this number increased in the 1936 Berlin Olympics as radio and film joined newspaper outlets (Real 224). Finally, by the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics there were 8,250 media representatives, outnumbering the 7,800 athletes in attendance (Real 224). That year, the United States newspapers devoted approximately 6.5 percent of their space to the Olympics (Real 237). During the 2004 Athens Olympics, NBC aired over 1,200 hours of coverage (“Olympics 3,000”). This section will look at the media’s role in creating a hyperreality for their audiences, portraying events as spectacles, and forming rituals. It will also discuss television’s influence on print news coverage.

**HYPERREALITY**

With such heavy worldwide coverage of the Olympics, the media have the power to influence readers’ perceptions of the Games. In general, media are increasingly penetrating themselves into people’s lives, and people are growing increasingly dependent on the media. Michael R. Real refers to them as the “super media” because of their ability to shape us, give us identity, and act as “the central nervous system to modern society” (12-13). As the media

\(^4\) As one journalist noted, the IOC president should have started the games with “Let the Shame begin” because of the numerous controversies that took place just within the first week of the Olympics (Boswell). Amongst other controversies there were eight “doped-up” wrestlers, an Iranian judoka who intentionally disqualified himself to

and only .10 of bonus for a D skill. The Korean’s argued that without the judging error, Yang’s score would have been a 9.812—high enough to win the all-around competition.
maintain their influence over what information people hear, they also maintain their power to influence public opinion, activity, knowledge, and values. Thus, the “super media” can create a “hyperreal” world that “becomes the measure and validation of politicians, presidents, athletes, news events, disasters, learning, success, love, and all that is or could be” (Real 19). This world presents a reality in “which science fiction […] our final mythologies and fantasies, or fondest hopes and our highest dreams” all come true (Real 19-20).

In order to understand what is meant by “hyperreal” it is important to understand what is meant by “reality.” In its most basic definition, reality can be defined as “the quality or state of being actual or true” or “that which exists objectively and in fact” (“Reality”). However, the term reality becomes complex as words and signs get their meaning by referencing back “towards the internal exchange of other signs,” thus creating a circularity to the definition of reality (Oberly “Reality”). In his research, Jean Baudrillard studied the media’s role in the creation of reality, in which they do not just communicate but offer a “means of representation” (Oberly “Simulation”). As a result, Baudrillard explained, once the media reach a certain advanced state, “they integrate themselves into daily ‘real’ experience to such an extent that the unmediated sensation is indistinguishable from the mediated, and the simulation becomes confused with its source” (Oberly “Simulation”). Hyperreality, then, can be when the “distinction between the ‘real’ and the imaginary implodes” and reality is “blended” with representation (Oberly “Reality”). As Baudrillard notes, simulacra and hyperreality are increasing proliferated in the world that is “either partially, or entirely simulated” (Oberly “Reality”). Because the media take these simulacra and hyperreality and distribute it to a large-scale audience, they play a great role in forming and normalizing the audience’s expectations of real. For example, this normalization can be seen in the media’s depiction of race and gender, which is portrayed commonly in a specific way, thereby “train[ing]” audiences to “take on, improve, and master those performative identities thus replicating the simulacra” (Oberly “Reality”). This portrayal, in turn, can not only normalize illusions, but can also create a demand for them (Umberto Eco qtd. in Oberly “Reality”).

avoid fighting an Israeli opponent, a cyclist who crossed the finish line while giving her own country officials an inappropriate hand gesture, and a Japanese swimmer who “cheated” by performing an illegal dolphin kick.

5 According to Michael Camille in his article “Simulacrum,” the simulacrum bears a resemblance to the thing it imitates only at its surface level; it is a “mere image,” “a deviation and perversion of imitation,” or “a false likeness"
In their coverage of sports, the media have created such a hyperreality, or a “pseudo-reality” that emphasizes ideals and values and creates heroes. This shared sports culture is constructed in the media because people form a common involvement by seeing events on television, hearing them on the radio, and reading about them in newspapers, magazines, or on the Internet; this communication shared by a large group of people forms the basis of a “shared sports culture” in America (Wenner 16). In a culture that consciously and subconsciously bases itself around a mediated reality, those who control the messages are given extreme power over what their audiences hear and see. As a result, personal experience combines with this mediated sports pseudo-reality, causing people to “construct [their] individual lives under the direct influence of powerful institutions” (Real 15).

SPECTACLES AND MEDIA EVENTS

One way the media can create this pseudo-reality is by forming media events and spectacles. According to Guy Debord, the spectacle is the “present model of socially dominant life,” and its “form and content are identically the total justification of the existing system’s conditions and goals” (140). Because the Olympics support dominant class ideals, the spectacle the media present can act as an “instrument of unification” and can demand a “passive acceptance” from its audience because of its “monopoly of appearance” (Debord 139, 141). By accepting a “pseudo-world” in which nations are at peace and athletes exhibit fairplay, viewers can detach themselves from reality and replace it with an image that can become the ideal, conceivable reality. It is in this way that the spectacle of the Olympics can be used by the dominant class as an “instrument of unification” (Durham and Kellner 139).

Furthermore, the media use and cover such spectacles as a means of “promotions, reproduction, and the circulation and selling of commodities” in an attempt to seize audiences’ attention and increase their own power and profit (Kellner “Media”). The increase of spectacles in American culture affects how the news covers specific spectacles or events in general. The entertainment and commercialistic focus has permeated the news and has created a “tabloidized infotainment culture” (Kellner “Media”). Consequently, the media spectacle has shaped both political and social life, as political and social conflicts are increasingly portrayed in movies, on

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to something”; as a result, the focus of many media theorists is not on media’s identity as a means of communication, but on their forms of representation (Camille qtd. in Oberly “Simulated”).

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television, and in newspapers; such displays of spectacles such as sensationalized trials, celebrity scandals, and violence, can occupy daily consumer audience members’ time and give “more material for fantasy, dreaming, modeling thought and behavior, and identities” (Kellner “Media”).

Media events are similar to spectacles because they are constructed to draw large audiences and gain profit. According to Elihu Katz, a media event includes live transmission of preplanned events that feature a “heroic personality or group” and has “high dramatic or ritual significance,” which makes viewing it seem “mandatory to members of that public” (qtd. in Real 38-39). Such mediated events would include the Olympics, along with the Super Bowl or royal weddings, such as the 1981 Prince Charles and Princess Diana wedding. Creating such mediated events can influence audiences on a large scale by emphasizing different values, creating heroes, and promoting competition. The Olympics, for example, are pervasive and difficult to avoid.

RITUAL

Consequently, viewing the Olympics has become a sports ritual that “seemingly everyone in the world can share”—it has become an “international tribal fire around which we gather to celebrate shared events and values” (Real 240). The Olympics are a highly ritualized event, seemingly bringing cultures together globally and simultaneously through the mass media. Thus, while thousands of athletes, press, and spectators are able to physically gather in the Olympic host city, billions of spectators around the globe, through the mass media, can participate in the Games as well. As a result, because the media control how those not physically present view the event and what they see, the media can construct the reality these viewers experience, highlight their own values, and thereby create a globalized, uni-culture.

Furthermore, by allowing the audiences to participate in the Games through rituals, sports can fill a void that capitalistic societies have left because of their ability to “cater to the ‘new cultural-emotional needs of the masses’” (John Alt qtd. in Jhally 72). In other words, while one part of the social world “robs people of meaning and emotional gratification,” another part offers it to them in the form of “commodified spectacles” (Jhally 72). Sports offer audiences emotional gratification and excitement and allow them to seemingly escape from the reality of society.

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6 In *The Commodity as Spectacle* Guy Debord defines spectacles as the “social relation among people, mediated by images” and explains that “life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles” (DeBord 139).
The ritual people place on sports viewing and the emphasis and importance they put on such spectacles and pseudo-events has, consequently, positioned sports as a religion to some. According to Sut Jhally, sports have taken the place that Marx believed religion held in advanced capitalistic societies, becoming “an ‘opiate of the masses’” where sports events become spectacles and “narcotize” large segments of the population (Jhally 70). As a result, an “unimportant area of life obscures a more fundamental and important one” (Jhally 70). They provide for people community ritual and religion that appears to abandon real-life issues because they are based in a pseudo-reality. In reality, though, they are based on and support society’s ideologies. Sporting events, for example, might not appear at the surface to be spreading nationalistic or capitalistic ideologies. However, in closely examining news articles, it is obvious that newspapers promote America as superior to other nations by focusing on medal counts and by positioning stories about American athletes proximately on the page. Therefore, despite its appearance as a place to escape real world issues, the pseudo-sports reality does not abandon these issues.

**Television’s Influence on Newspaper Coverage**

For the most part this sports ritual is based on viewing sports on television because groups can gather and watch events together. However, the print media are important to the formation of this pseudo-sports reality and the sports ritual, serving different roles to audiences than television does. Therefore, while this thesis does not focus on television coverage, it is necessary to include some aspects of it in this study. In order to understand the influence of newspaper sports coverage on how audience perceives reality, it is important to look at how television has changed newspaper coverage. Primarily, television has changed the role of newspaper sports coverage from recounting events to interpretation; television’s commercialization of sports has changed the content of newspaper sports coverage by introducing real-world issues such as capitalism to the idealistic pseudo-reality; finally, television’s technology has changed how viewers perceive reality by creating unrealistic expectations, such as immediate hero creation, in audience members on one hand, and creating expectations that are carried over into newspaper coverage.
Initial Television Influence on Newspapers

First, the advent of television has influenced newspapers’ role in sports coverage in general. Before the invention of television, the print media’s recounts of events were the only exposure for readers who could not personally attend games. During this period newspaper journalist’s written words were only held accountable by the few who were actually in attendance; as sporting events began to be broadcast, the print media had to produce at high speeds stories that “reconcile[d] with the perceptions of a potentially huge audience” who witnessed the same sporting event on television (Rowe “Sport” 107).

Thus, the print media’s role has significantly changed from primarily recounting sporting events to readers, to providing additional information to the “prejudgments of events already seen and heard on television,” serving as an interpreter for the events, and providing “daily coverage of all events and sustaining public interest in the intervals between competitions” (Krebs 55; Sporidis 62). Newspapers’ changing role into an interpreter of sporting events is important because it positions them in a more subjective than objective role, allowing them to emphasize their own opinions, or events and actions they feel are significant. Newspapers compliment television by focusing on statistical data, background information, and more analysis than actual description of events (McChesney 66). These interpretations are seen in newspapers’ sports news coverage and in their sports editorials. They provide a written emphasis to events, which unlike the visual nature of television that allows viewers to quickly witness events, the print media’s stories and messages can be thought about and re-read in a manner that takes greater effort (Krebs 5). The print media, therefore, give the audience a different form of involvement. Television allows viewers to feel that they are partaking in the events and that they are actually there. Newspapers give their readers less of a feeling of presence; however, because reading a newspaper is more active than passively watching television, readers can feel involved in another way, become informed about events, and get more in-depth information about them.

Commercialization Influences on Newspaper Content

In addition, television’s commercialization of sports has affected newspaper sports coverage. Since the advent of television, newspaper sports writing has changed as the “real world” values have invaded the sports pages’ pseudo-reality due to the increasing commercialization of sports (McChesney 67). Television gave sporting events tremendous audience exposure, which, in turn, popularized certain sports and increased actual sporting event
attendance. Thus, a symbiotic relationship has formed around the capitalistic benefits of the sporting organizations and the media, which present significant compromises to the idealistic sports pseudo-reality that people use to escape the capitalistic pressures of the real world. For example, according to Robert W. McChesney, because television brought so much more attention and money to sports, people might view the relationship between sportswriters, athletes, and sports promoters as adversarial, while others view them as maintaining a more “fundamental symbiotic nature” (67). Whether or not these groups of people are working for or against each other, it is obvious that as more focus is placed on sports, and as more interests are becoming invested into sports and sports media coverage, even more factors can influence and distort how sports are presented to readers.

Technological Influences on Reality and Expectations

Next, television’s use of technology has influenced how audiences view sporting events, creating in them unrealistic expectations about athletes and sports. The technology used in producing televised sporting events has changed the face of sporting events, creating a pseudo-reality on television that many people would rather watch than experience the event in person. Technology such as slow-motion replays can form ideal athletes, unrealistic expectations of perfection, and dramatization of competition. Consequently, because of the viewer’s expectations that are conditioned by television, this pseudo-reality is carried over to the print media. While newspapers’ sports reports are not influenced by decisions of producers, directors, commentators, and camera shots, they are based upon writers’ own editorials and interpretations. Newspapers participate in forming the pseudo-sports reality through their “‘insider gossip about players, coaches, strategies, and historical context for the sporting event,’” and through their “recap[s] of [key game moments], placing the game and its heroes into a ‘fantasy world’” (Wenner 15). Thus, the topics and content of newspaper articles are important to audience’s perceptions of reality.

Television’s influence on audience expectations has influenced how newspapers generally cover sporting events. According to David Rowe, stories that make into the sports pages share one of these many characteristics:

“Personification” (the reduction of large-scale, perhaps abstract events to the actions and motives of recognizable people); “elite status” (the use of celebrity and, when it is not present, connections made to it); “consonance” (the events and their treatment are easily fitted into readers’ everyday frameworks and
expectations when confronting a sports news story); and “negativity” (the established media wisdom that, on balance, bad news is more newsworthy than good) (“Sport” 111).

Emphasizing stories based on such characteristics can create an expectation in readers for stories exhibiting these qualities. In covering the Olympics, “personification” is often a focus, allowing athletes to exemplify the Olympic ideals of peace, sportsmanship, and fairplay. It is evident Brennan hopes that Hamm can become a metaphor for what the Olympics stand for; in the same way, sportsmanlike acts or great athletic feats allow Olympic athletes to personify Olympic ideals. Newspapers oftentimes also focus on celebrity Olympic athletes such as Michael Jordan, Michael Johnson, or Gail Devers. This focus elevates their importance in society, while at the same time allowing them to personify dominant values.

The value the media place on consonance also becomes a factor in sports coverage. Because of how the media routinely cover the sports world, the audience forms an expectation of what sports stories should contain. This expectation influences newspaper content, since editors and writers must give the readers what they want and expect. Similarly, the media use negativity as a newsworthy characteristic. Even idealized events such as the Olympics cannot escape the media’s negativity; with the idealism surrounding the Olympics, negativity is not a newsworthy quality that complements the Olympic myth. However, oftentimes there are controversies surrounding the Games that present newspapers with the opportunity to report negatively on the Games. (How newspapers report this negativity while at the same time reinforcing the Olympic myth will be examined in Chapter 2.) The media’s decision of what to cover leads to the question of how American ideology, values, and myths influence newspaper coverage and content as they report on the Olympics. The media’s focus on these characteristics can significantly distort readers’ perceptions of reality. Newspapers, through the influence of television, are increasingly catering to audience’s needs and expectations rather than portraying factual, objective recounts of sporting events.

VALUES, IDEOLOGY, MYTHS

Olympic media coverage is important to study because the media can significantly permeate American culture, shape audiences’ perceptions of reality, and create a pseudo-sports reality and ritualized Olympic event; therefore, it is important to see what messages and values
are being sent and how they are constructed and reinforced in society. This section examines the
notion that ideologies are comprised of myths, values, symbols, and ideas that construct a system
of representation that form peoples’ perceptions of reality. In order to study this reality, this
section will look at the dominant American values. Then it will look at how myths and
ideologies perpetuate these values.

VALUES

First, when trying to analyze the media coverage to see if the coverage reflects and
reinforces these values, it is important to understand a culture’s values. A value can be defined
as a “type of belief, centrally located within one’s total belief system, about how one ought or
ought not to behave or about some end state of existence worth or not worth attaining’”
(Rokeach qtd. in Sillars). Values include beliefs and attitudes, and values comprise a human
value system; in this value system, Milton Rokeach argues, beliefs are arranged in a continuum
in which certain values take on more importance than others (Wilson). Current researchers
consider values to be “guiding principles in life which transcend specific situations, may change
over time, guide selection of behaviour and events and which are part of a dynamic system with
inherent contradictions” (“The Structure”).

In his research on values, Rokeach developed the Rokeach Value System (RVS), which
distinguishes two kinds of values—instrumental and terminal. Terminal values, which refer to
“the end states of existence or ultimate modes of living which have been idealized,” include: a
comfortable life, an exciting life, a sense of accomplishment, a world of peace, a world of
beauty, equality, family security, freedom, happiness, inner harmony, mature love, national
security, pleasure, salvation, self-respect, social recognition, true friendship, and wisdom (“The
Structure”). Instrumental values, which refers to “modes of conduct and reflecting behavioral
characteristics that are seen as socially desirable” include: ambitious, hardworking, capable,
cheerful, clean, courageous, forgiving, helpful, honest, imaginative, independent, intellectual,
logical, loving, obedient, polite, responsible, self-controlled (“The Structure”). In addition,
Steele and Redding (1962) note numerous American values, including:

Puritan and Pioneer morality (Americans like to see the world in moral terms);
achievement and success (the ideal American is the competitive individual and
achievement without regards to means); the value of the individual; change and
progress; ethical equality (all are equal); equality of opportunity, effort and
optimism; efficiency, practicality, and pragmatism; rejection of authority
(emphasize the freedom of choice and to make own decisions); science and secular rationality; sociality; material comfort; quantification; external conformity; humor, generosity and “considerateness”; patriotism.

Each of these values listed by Rokeach, Steele, and Redding has an opposing value. For example, Hofstede (1980) suggested that the value of equality can conflict with the value of hierarchy, achievement and success (Wilson). Such conflicting values come into play when the media must choose which values to emphasize in their Olympic coverage—whether or not to treat all countries equally or promote their own country as superior.

As Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey (1951) argue, values have more concrete, terrestrial meanings, as seen in everyday activities such as reading the newspaper and watching movies (“The Structure”). Furthermore, Steele and Redding (1962) argue that persuasive speakers’ arguments are derived from cultural values in order for them to gain the audience’s acceptance. In the same way, the media can structure their articles to appeal to these values and gain their readers’ acceptance.

**Myths**

Next, myths, derived from the Greek word *mythos*, which means “story” or “word,” use their stories and words to give values to people; they “serve to direct social action and values” by connecting “symbolic tales of the distant past” with belief system and rituals (Magoulick). These belief systems are addressed through myth’s use of narrative that appeals to our fears and wishes (Dick 182). Myth, like ideology, works at an unconscious, invisible structuring level of messages, through which it present[s] us with characters, themes, and settings that we recognize without having experienced them because they tap into our racial memory and recall early stages in development of humankind, as well as events that occurred during those stages and are now regarded as stories (Dick 182).

Although values can readily change over time, the themes of myths endure over time, becoming universal and transcending time and place (Dick 182). While popularly myths are considered to be false, they deal with ultimate truths and themes such as life, death, heroism, and sacrifice. Thus, while myths often deal with mystical, unrealistic characters, they cannot be false; rather, they “endure long after the civilizations that produced them have vanished because they crystallize, in narrative form, unchanging patterns of human behavior” (Dick 182). For example, the mythic story of King Midas teaches a lesson about greed when King Midas asks Dionysus,
the Greek god of wine, to make everything that he touches turn to gold. Although the characters
and story are unrealistic, both are accepted and references are used in modern society, such as
referring to someone having the “Midas touch.” Because they are mystic, myths are often
“instinctively” believed and accepted by audiences, who never question their origins or existence
(Dick 183).

With this willingness to accept myths, myth-makers are able to promote their dominant
values on society. In a functionalist approach to understanding the purpose of myth, Branislaw
Malinowski notes that “myths serve as charters for social action” because myth-makers can
symbolically tell people how to live and explain and encourage a particular world view
(Magoulick). Similarly, a structuralist approach credits myth with helping society mediate
between its dualistic elements; structuralist Claude Levi-Strauss explains that because myths deal
with contradicting principles evident in society, such as good and bad, myths are able to offer a
“symbolic mediation” and become an “inspiration for culture and culture members to heal,
flourish, or accept their reality” (qtd. in Magoulick). Because of myths’ symbolic nature, they
“offer rich resources for making sense of the world, affirming worldview, and confirming human
nature” and can, therefore, give meaning and purpose to “even the most disparate and
fragmented elements of culture” (Magoulick).

Myths, thus, emphasize many of the values discussed above that are also reinforced in the
media through their stories and words that embody values, rituals, and tales of the past. Their
influence is great because, as with ideologies, their messages of domination are not forceful or
direct, but are often masked within the stories’ themes. People’s understanding of what the
Olympic history and Olympic myth is influences how they perceive the Games should be.
Analyzing myths in the Olympic media can show the underlying attitudes of widely accepted
images of what the Olympic Games should represent. These myths surrounding the Olympics,
media, and sports heroes become natural, expected, and common sense and it becomes easy for
those in control of the messages and the ideology engrained in the media to manipulate myths.
The media’s perpetuation of these myths that highlight idealized societal values, allow people to
form mythic visions of what the ideal Olympics, sports hero, and newspaper should be. These
mythic ideals, which are perpetuated in society by stories of an idealized past of what things

7 Someone who has the “Midas touch” has the ability to make and manage large amounts of money.
once were and can be, are often strived for and displayed even, despite their often conflicting exploitations and controversies to what the myths represent. Over time, society has developed myths of the Olympics, sports heroes, and the media.

**Olympic Myth**

The Olympic myth, which will be discussed extensively in Chapter 2, has achieved “an almost mystic global oneness” with audiences based on the “special precious moments of Olympic media magic” presented to them (Real 240). This Olympic myth places values on peace, sportsmanship, and fairplay. It rejects commercialism and nationalism. Based on the need to support this Olympic myth, audiences and the media oftentimes ignore the “commercial exploitation of victory” or the scandals surrounding poor sportsmanship and drug use, preferring instead “to stress the idealistic words of [Pierre] de Coubertin”8 (Real 228). Because the media often choose to support this myth, thus reinforcing dominant values and ideology, they can ignore such issues, choosing, for example, not to challenge the “corrupt Olympic bid process, flagrant violations of lofty Olympic rhetoric, and dishonest business practices” (Burstyn x). However, based on the ideologies and values emphasized in media coverage of the Olympics, it is not surprising that these ideals are reinforced in a way that makes these values seem natural and expected. The Olympics take on these holistic values based on the pseudo-sports reality the media have created in which people take the ideologies and values reinforced in the media and apply them to these Games. Thus, the Olympics become a materialization and concrete example of the dominant ideologies and values. The Olympics, while taking on a mythic, idealistic quality of their own, are based on the highly romanticized sports myth.

**Sports Hero Myths**

From these Olympic and sports myths comes the mythic expectations of sports heroes perpetuated by the media. The American sports hero, as defined by Oriard (1993) “embodies the ‘land of opportunity,’” making him/her “the most widely popular and most attractive self-made” person (qtd. in Archetti 5). In this way, the sports hero is able to “sustain the American Dream, personify the democratic ideal of open accessibility to prestige and allows all citizens to share his glory” (Archetti 5). Sports heroes can also be characterized as having “honesty, commitment,

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8As the founding father of the Olympic Movement in 1894, de Coubertin pushed for the Olympics to serve as a forum for international peace, friendship, fairplay, and sportsmanship.
good sportsmanship, sense of humor, fairness, determination, good self-image, and high moral values” (Marilyn Donahue qtd. in Russell).

Russell notes two primary reasons why professional athletes are given hero status in American society. First, she found that “there is the common assumption that ‘star athletes and their fans share a uniform group of values’” (Russell); fans and viewers believe that athletes are ordinary people and, therefore, share their same values, allowing them to identify with the athletes. Second, Russell found fans also form an admiration for these sports heroes because they embody valued characteristics. For example, these athletes, who were once regular people, have become “successful, usually rich, and usually embody a state of extreme or heightened physical fitness”—traits that fans have “always wanted to” have (Russell).

The media highlight these characteristics in certain athletes and their actions, providing the audiences with role models. Because the media create heroic expectations of athletes, the audience has begun to demand to see heroic athletes, and the media provide it with stories of athletes’ determination and overcoming adversity. The media glorify and give attention to their athletes’ successes by reiterating statistics and accomplishments emphasize these values.

However, the athletes’ status as heroes is not only perpetuated in the media, but it is also reinforced in a capitalistic society that provides monetary rewards for athletes’ achievements. Paying athletes for winning shows “society’s idolization of champions” (“Olympics 3,000”). The media’s perpetuation of this sports hero myth not only affects audiences’ expectations, but also the athletes themselves. As Real notes:

Current Olympic athletes often have been motivated to direct virtually every detail of their life around a specific goal, largely because of their previous media exposure to role models [. . .] Without the media exposure to such role models and heroes, there would be virtually no next generation of stars (226).

Thus, athletes strive to embody the ideals surrounding past sports heroes and hope to become heroes themselves someday. In this respect, athletes realize the importance of media coverage in perpetuating their status as heroes. The attention the media give to the Olympic Games and its athletes accounts for one reason why the Olympics are often valued by athletes more than World Championship competitions. Sports heroes are created and perpetuated in the media. Without the media the values and importance of athletes winning medals becomes less important.
Media Myth

While the Olympic and sports hero myths complement each other, the media myth can conflict with these myths. Thus, the media are expected to fulfill conflicting expectations. On one hand they are expected to reinforce the ideals of sportsmanship, heroism, and idealism, while on the other hand, they are expected to act as the nation’s “fearless watchdog[s],” exposing scandals and “resisting the pressures of the state, capital, and other powerful entities by exposing all and telling the truth” (Rowe “Sport” 85). Rowe explains how the Olympic and hero myths clash with newspaper ideologies and myths, creating a “media sports cultural complex”:

The media, in various ways, are called upon to provide good, wholesome ‘family’ entertainment through sport; to offer sensationally dramatic coverage that will attract healthy audiences (but perhaps for ‘unhealthy’ reasons); to describe and show what happened to those who were not present or who want to see it again and differently’ to subject sport to intense scrutiny as part of the media’s Fourth Estate function; to support local, regional and national sporting efforts; and to further the Olympian ideals of sport by transcending petty, partisan politics in the name of international peace and good will. No single organ of the media can fulfill all of these expectations (some of which are seen as unfortunate obligations), just as different types of media sports text are better suited to the performance of some tasks than others (“Sport” 84).

As a result, the media are conflicted with the romanticized Olympics myth that “relies on the studied evasion of politics” and the media myth that “depends on a principled confrontation with it” (Rowe “Sport” 85).

Ideology

Myths and ideologies are similar because both exhibit and reinforce dominant values. However, myths and values are both only elements of ideology, which uses them in order to form “systems of representation—composed of concepts, ideas, myths or images—in which men and women […] live their imaginary relations to the real conditions of existence” (Hall qtd. in Jhally 75). While myths are based on stories and words of the past, ideology is based on the people’s present perception of reality. Contemporary scholars, in order to understand how a culture’s values are formed through the media, have been concerned with ideology and how a dominant group maintains its power over the whole with “minimum conflict” (Lye). Because the dominant class is able to exercise such an invisible control over audience’s perceptions of

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9 Stuart Hall (1985) paraphrasing Althusser’s formulation of ideology in For Marx (Jhally 75).
reality, they can readily influence how readers view events such as the Olympic Games and what they value. As noted before, myths, like ideology, are able to invisibly reinforce dominant values. Therefore, in their efforts to maintain this invisible control, the dominant class can highlight and reinforce values already presented in myths, or they can reject or ignore myths that counter the values they hope to reinforce. The study of Olympic newspaper coverage and sports reporting is consistent with Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, which states that the media “reflect the consensus of corporate elites” (Lenskyj 173).

This domination does not have to deliberately oppress people or alter their consciousness; instead, the dominant institutions in society “work through values, conceptions of the world, and symbol systems, in order to legitimize the current order” (Lye). Consequently, these values and myths embedded into the media’s ideology can “orient people’s thinking in such a way that they accept the current way of doing things, the current sense of what is ‘natural,’ and the current understanding of their roles in society” (Lye). Therefore, media are critical to culture because they give the dominant institutions a means of creating and distributing these naturalized modes of control. As Roland Barthes notes, messages that are on the surface and easily recognizable are not the most powerful, but the “strongly presented but apparently absent” messages can be influential and dangerous and protect the “interests of the privileged few as the natural order for many” (cited in Rowe “Sport” 93). It is through these unconscious messages that the natural order, or ideology, is protected. Because people are unable to obviously distinguish these underlying controlling messages, a seemingly natural “reality” is established in readers and the dominant class’s values are maintained.

Thus, the messages of nationalism and capitalism apparent in daily newspaper coverage are not forced onto people but embedded in the newspaper by what facts they give, what stories they cover, and how they report each story. Those that generate the media messages produce signs that influence, express, and reflect culture, and these signs are distributed to audiences. In modern capitalistic society people “are no longer primarily producing material objects, but signs” that are “loaded with symbolic value” (Lash and Urry qtd. in Rowe “Sports” 65). Therefore, by reading such signs in newspapers, readers’ values and perceptions of reality are

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10 Hegemony allows the dominant class to maintain its interests and power over the subordinate classes; to do this the ruling class does not primarily use “direct ‘domination’ but one of negotiated ‘hegemony’” (Real 126).
11 According to Real culture “refers to those elements that set one human grouping apart from others. Culture is the systematic way of construing reality that a people acquires as a consequence of living in a group” (36).
unconsciously shaped in such a way that Olympic idealism, and the ideologies of nationalism and capitalism feel natural and real to them.

In order to maintain its power, the ruling class\textsuperscript{12} must relate to the subordinate class through values and culture. They do this by “compromise, negotiation, and struggle,” ruling by indirectly enforcing its ideology and by conceding in “one area so that it may receive them in another” (Jhally 74). Scandals and controversies can take these deviations of subordinate classes from dominant ideology and present them to readers negatively and as unconventional in order to unconsciously support their own values while rejecting another set of values, which will be discussed further in Chapter 2. The emphasis and importance of sports allows sports to “function as a socializer of dominant values” as well as provide escape from “its existence as a ‘dramatic life-world’” (Richard Lipsky qtd. in Jhally 71). The media provide this pseudo-reality that sports fans and newspaper readers watch and read, forming and emphasizing expectations and values similar to real-world values. This pseudo-reality can, then, allow dominant values and ideologies to be emphasized and highlighted outside the context of the real world and glorified by creating sports myths.

As noted earlier, sports have become a religion to many, providing them with a means of escape from reality. According to Rowe, the real world has created a “values vacuum” whereby “people feel alienated, no longer believing deeply in anything, identifying with anyone, or feeling committed to any cause outside the immediate interests of themselves and their immediate relatives” (“Sport” 69). Because society creates such a void through its cynicism and “abundant critical self-reflection,” people use outlets such as sports and entertainment to give them meaning. At the same time, those who control the media engage in a “‘consciousness’ trade” in which they supply people with the “meaning and commitment they seek in such an environment” (Rowe “Sport” 69). As Jhally notes, sports function as “a form of celebration of the dominant order” (71). In catering to their own needs by reinforcing their ideologies, as well as the desires of the audience, those who produce the media create a pseudo-reality that can create, reinforce, or change values.

\\textsuperscript{12} The ruling class is considered to be those who exert their influence over the subordinate members of society because they own the means of production.
RATIONALE

It is important examine just how these dominant ideologies, values, and myths are manifested within newspapers and how newspapers deal with the media complex in reporting the Olympic Games. This thesis will focus on the 2004 Olympic newspaper coverage of the Hamm controversy for several reasons.

First, the Olympics is an important event that takes place every two years\(^\text{13}\). The 2004 Athens Olympic Games were significant and unique for a variety of reasons. First, they were held in Athens, Greece, the birthplace of the original Olympic Games and the location of the rebirth of the modern Olympic Games Movement in 1896. Before the Athens Olympics, scholar Phil Cousineau predicted that “considering the fact that the Games return to Athens in 2004, there will be more attention paid to the original purpose of the Games and “people will be more open to the mythic and spiritual perspective of the Games” (Cousineau qtd. “Spirituality”). Second, these Olympics were the first to take place since the United States declared war on Iraq and the first Summer Games to take place since the September 11, 2001 attacks. As one scholar notes, the September 11, 2001 attacks have “fostered a powerful wave of public displays of patriotism” along with “local, national and international television news programs reflect[ing] and amplify[ing] that wave of patriotism” (Lambe and Begleiter 2). Because of these factors, nationalism and the myths and peaceful sentiments attached to the Olympic spirit were likely high during these Games. Therefore, it is interesting to look at what ideologies were presented in the newspaper coverage of these Olympic Games.

Next, it is important to study media coverage of the Olympics because, while people from all over the globe are able to attend the Games in person, those not in attendance must get their information from the media. In fact, there were 21,500 members of the media in Athens to cover the Games—16,000 broadcasters and 5,500 photo/written press members (“Athens”). Viewership data from the 2004 Olympics show that there was great worldwide interest in the Games. According to a Sports Marketing Survey on behalf of the IOC, the 2004 Athens Games had the highest viewership in Olympic history; 3.9 billion people (unduplicated) globally had

\(^{13}\) Historically, since the first Winter Olympic Games in 1924, the Summer and Winter Olympics took place in the same year, every four years. After the 1992 Olympics the Olympic cycles were separated when the Winter Games took place two years later in 1994 and the Summer Games in 1996. Now there is either a Summer or Winter Games every two years.
access to, and 35,000 hours were dedicated to, this Olympic television coverage (“Global”). In North America 203 million viewers watched at least some of the coverage (“Global”).

Finally, the Hamm controversy presented in the 2004 Athens Games can illustrate how the media’s coverage of the events reflects their ideologies of Olympic myth\textsuperscript{14}, nationalism, and capitalism; it specifically illustrates the dynamic tension newspapers’ faced concerning whether to evade or confront negative Olympic news. For example, in covering the Hamm controversy, many newspapers, in order to support the Olympic notions of fairplay and sportsmanship, called for Hamm to hand his gold medal over to Yang. However, other articles, in reporting the story, supported Hamm’s decision to keep the medal. No matter what position the journalists took, the language within many of these articles reaffirmed American ideologies, with many turning the controversy into a scandal. Using a case study to examine these conflicting ideologies and myths will be beneficial in giving the concepts a “living quality” and, ideally, make “complex and subtle concepts relatively accessible to any thoughtful individual” (Real 8).

**CHAPTER OVERVIEWS**

Newspapers’ dominant role and influence in our lives coupled with the significance American culture places on sports and the Olympics, makes newspaper coverage of Olympic controversy significant to study. This thesis will conduct a critical analysis of newspaper coverage in order to uncover the conflicting ideologies, myths, and values. Thus, Chapter 2 will under-take an in-depth analysis of the Olympic myth and contrast it to the American ideologies of nationalism and capitalism.

The Olympic myth is one of idealism, placing athletes and sports on pedestals, expecting them to exhibit sportsmanship, fairplay, and peace. This Olympic myth dates back to the original Greek Olympics and was reborn and perpetuated in the media with the 1894 Olympic Games rebirth. This chapter will explore the myth by looking at the ideologies and values of Olympic coverage and at how these values are materialized in the Olympic myth. This section will then explore this Olympic myth’s validity and the media’s role in perpetuating the myth.

Chapter 2 will also explore the conflicting American ideologies of nationalism and capitalism, which influence what the media cover and how they cover events. Ideally the Olympics are free from nationalism, since countries come together for peaceful, equal
competition. In reality, much Olympic coverage focuses on national victories and abandons this mythic equality in order to promote patriotic pride. Therefore, in covering the Olympics, the media do not necessarily abandon politics; instead politics and nationalism often influence their coverage. The media’s coverage can potentially shape global perceptions and create distorted views of other nations. The capitalistic American ideology also influences media coverage as newspapers seek to attract large audiences. In seeking a profit, it is in newspapers’ best interest to promote the Games mythically in order for the Games to keep their attractive purity. On the other hand, the media also benefit economically by reporting on negativity and by creating fiction-like spectacles and scandals.

Chapter 3 will take the concepts discussed in the first two chapters and apply them to the Hamm controversy. By looking at the Hamm case study in depth, this chapter will illustrate the significance and the reality of these conflicting ideologies and how the media construct people’s reality. This case study will look at the top circulated newspapers in the United States based on statistics from the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), to see what values are exhibited in the reporting of the Hamm controversy. To do this, the thesis will look at numerous elements. First, it will look at journalists’ language to see how they characterize people and events based on their word choice. It will also look at how the Olympic myth/ideals are characterized. Next, it will look at the number of articles and their lengths to see how much attention was devoted to the controversy and the overall position the articles take, such as whether they urge Hamm to keep his medal or return it in the spirit of the Olympic Games. This chapter will also look within these stories at the comparisons and references used to enhance or describe the controversy. For example, some articles compare the controversy to the 2002 Olympic figure skating scandal. By comparing Hamm’s story to a scandal where the judges admittedly altered the competition results, the article associates the same blameworthy behavior with the gymnastics judges. This chapter will also look at the articles’ structure, such as which information is placed in the beginning of the article (implying it is most important) and which information is left out or placed at the end. Finally, it will look at the narratives used to describe the athletes.

Last, Chapter 4 will look towards the future of Olympic coverage, how this coverage could change, and suggestions on how to face these conflicting ideologies.

14 The Olympic spirit, which will be discussed in more detail later, is based on the notion of achieving international peace and friendship through sport. Good sportsmanship, fairplay, and physical achievement are key to Olympism.
CHAPTER 2

The media, in their ability to choose which stories they cover and how they cover them, form their own representations of events, and create a reality for viewers and readers. Most people cannot witness events in person, so what they consider as “real” in regards to the Olympics is largely based on what they have read or seen in the media. Thus, Americans’ reality can become distorted based on how, where, and through what medium they view events. The distorted reality depicted in televised events, as well as newspaper’s supplemental coverage before and after the events, can emphasize values such as the Olympic notion of sportsmanship and fairplay, and the American ideologies and values of nationalism, and capitalism. This distortion can become dangerous to viewers who then make value judgments based on their viewing, which they see as a depiction of reality.

In a case study of the Hamm controversy it is apparent that an Olympic/media complex exists in which the press must recognize the Olympic myth and at the same time deal with their inherent hegemonic nationalistic and capitalistic ideologies when reporting on Olympic “scandals.” Before looking at specific examples in Chapter 3 it is first important to explore these ideologies further. In doing so, this chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section will look at Olympic ideologies and values and how they have been structured into myths apparent in media coverage. The second section will focus on the American ideologies and values of capitalism and nationalism and how these ideologies conflict with the Olympic myth.

OLYMPIC IDEAL

In order to explore the Olympic ideology apparent in the print media’s Olympic coverage, it is first important to understand the myth behind the Olympic Games. This myth links Greek mythology to the modern Olympic Movement and the ethics this Olympic history has embedded into the event.

THE MYTHIC HISTORY

The Olympic Games are mythic and idealistic with a past engrained in Greek mythology and history. The Olympics originated in Olympia, Greece about 3,000 years ago in 776 B.C. Historically, Olympia was considered to be a sacred land belonging to the Greek gods where
people paid tribute to Zeus through prayers, sacrifices, and races. The Greek calendar actually begins with the revival of the Olympic Games in the eight-century B.C.

While there are numerous myths regarding these Olympic Games, one links the Olympics to a peacekeeping endeavor. As the story goes, King Iphitos of Elis, a Greek king who was in the midst of a war, was advised to restore the Olympic Games and call for a truce during their duration. Therefore, the “Olympic Truce” was signed between Iphitos, Cleosthenes of Pisa and Lycurgus of Sparta in the ninth century B.C. During this period of truce people were able to travel safely to participate in or attend the ancient Games (“The Olympic”). According to Cousineau, this treaty helped historically to “forge the national and spiritual unity of the Greek nation” (32). The Olympics ended with the Roman conquest of Greece in 146 B.C. after more than 1,000 years of existence (“The Olympic”). This message of peace and unity in which the Games were based was used decades later in the 1896 revival of the Olympics as it “provide[d] hope for fans of the modern Games” (Cousineau 32).

THE MODERN OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

Based on the Olympics’ rich history, in the revival of the Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin, former founder and president the International Olympic Committee (IOC), pushed for an Olympic Movement in 1894 that “served as a vector of universal peace in the face of international tension” (Parienté 11). Along with promoting physical education, training and culture, the Olympic Movement was founded on the ideologies and values of international peace and friendship through sport (Downing 27). Also in this Olympic Movement, the IOC emphasizes Olympism. Olympism, which was discussed in Chapter One, is the term used to encompass the ultimate meaning of Olympic spirit and its notions of fairplay, sportsmanship, and peace. According to the 1994 Olympic Charter, Olympism

is a philosophy of life, exalting and coming in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will, and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles (“International”).

As Olympic filmmaker Bud Greenspan put it, the Olympics are “devoted to a philosophy that does honour to the highest forms of the human spirit” where “young men and women from almost two hundred countries in the world can compete in friendly competition for the honour of glory of sport” (Greenspan 25). Therefore, the Olympics are based on a peaceful unity of nations.
Along with the value placed on peace comes an emphasis on the Olympic ethic. Athletes and officials are expected to “uphold the equality of opportunity by rejecting abuse or manipulation, which have no place in sporting honor” (Parienté 13). Other key factors in the Olympic Movement are fairplay and sportsmanship, which make the Olympics unique among sporting events. According to David Miller, sportsmanship is “the one, last, inalienable virtue that can distinguish the Olympic Games from all other sporting occasions; that will continue to make an Olympic medal prized above all, that will help retain the original concept of Pierre de Coubertin: the essence of the Game is taking part” (Miller 131). In the spirit of fairplay, the Olympics can put countries on an equal playing field:

The Olympics, unlike all other international sport, is about the involvement, side by side, of great and small, itself a definition of sportsmanship. The Olympic Games aligns the Cook Islands with the United States, Nepal with China, Namibia with Russia. The pervading, yet often indefinable, sense of sportsmanship is something precious within the Olympic Games, individual and collective (Miller 133).

Therefore, any breech in the ideals of sportsmanship and fairplay undermines the Olympic ideal. This ideal is essential to the Olympics, and it is important for the press to keep it in the forefront in its portrayal of the Games.

**The Media’s Role in the Olympic Movement**

These ideologies and values of the Modern Olympic movement have been perpetuated as the media highlights it as prestigious and newsworthy, and reports predominately pro-Olympic news. It is through the media’s support and perpetuation of such ideologies and values that the Olympic myth has taken form and has become idealized in sport competition. According to Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, journalists reaffirm the possibility of returning to “a Golden age of pure Olympic sport” and support athletes and readers who share this “naïve hope” (188). Traditionally, the press have kept this ideal of Olympism in their coverage by highlighting the Games as a prestigious event. Since the first fully live televised Olympic Games in Mexico City in 1968, this Olympic notion has been realized beyond just athletic participation in events, allowing fans worldwide to participate. Television spreads the popularity of the Olympics by increasing its audience size. For example, the 1968 Mexico City Summer Games drew a worldwide audience of at least 400 million viewers (Carlson qtd. in Kachgal 27). Since this broadcast, the IOC has stated in its Olympic Charter that there must be “maximum presentation
of the Olympic Games by broadcasters around the world to everyone who has access to a television” free of charge (“Olympic Broadcasting”).

As Joshua Meyrowitz observes, the homogenization in the electronic media allows people from all classes to have a commonality in what they see on television. This idea of homogenized ideals relates to the whole notion of Olympism. Just as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), through its mission of Olympism, funds “poorer” countries to come to the Games, television allows people from all classes to essentially attend the Games, too. Therefore, the Olympics, like other sporting events, can unify nations and classes.

With the audience’s great interest in televised and written coverage of the Games, how the press cover the Olympics is important to Olympism. According to the IOC, the press is the fourth pillar of the Olympic Movement because journalists can play an important role in maintaining the Olympic spirit. It is the media’s function “to create a certain image of sport” and to “take a critical, but not negative approach” towards the Olympics (Fernández de Córdova qtd. in Marchand 67). It was the press that helped the modern Olympic Movement take off in the late 1800s, and since then there has become an established link between the press and Olympism (Marchand 14).

In acknowledging the importance of the press in the success of the Olympics, the IOC has established the IOC Press Commission, which is made up of experts in the field of sports and Olympic journalism in order to “ensure success is achieved [in the press’s Olympic coverage] by providing conditions which allow journalists to work at their best” (“The Press”). For example, in its Written and Photographic Press Guide (1997), the IOC required Sydney Olympic organizers to provide the five thousand credentialed journalists with

- a fully equipped and staffed main press center and competition venue press centers; a three-to-four-star equivalent media village (although accommodation is not free); free local train travel and shuttle bus service; and in the case of the top media organizations, guaranteed tickets to high-demand events (Lenskyj 175).

As a result of this push for positive Olympic coverage, much of the media focus on primarily positive Olympic coverage as a “de facto mainstream media blackout of organized Olympic struggles” (Lenskyj xii); here, Olympic organizers “pressure editors to publish only positive articles about the Olympics,” and publishers comply in order not to offend the IOC because they want to get enough Olympic credentials for their staff (Lenskyj 174). As one Toronto Star columnist notes: “It’s a lot easier, and lots more fun,
to collect all the trinkets and make all the trips than to offend those who might turn off the access and the perks” (Jim Coyle qtd. in Lenksyj 175). In some cases there have even been some allegations of journalists accepting money and bribes from the IOC to report positively about the Olympics15 (Lenskyj 174).

While Lenksyj and Bustyn note the media’s unwillingness to report on media scandal, increasingly the media seems to report contradictory messages about the Games. For example, during the 2004 Athens Games one journalist wrote: “Athens 2004, billed as a return to the roots of sport, a throwback to the vaunted purity of ancient athletics, is reeling from scandal and unsportsmanlike conduct—and that doesn’t even include the unresolved case of a Danish sailor who could face manslaughter charges” (Boswell). However, in bringing negative Olympic coverage into the public consciousness, many newspapers focused on individuals rather than organizational problems (Lenskyj 190). Thus, the Olympics themselves escaped the negativism, and the problems were attributed to a few deviant individuals. Furthermore, in order to maintain the Olympic myth of the pure, heroic Olympic athlete, oftentimes when the media report negatively about athletes, due to drug use or poor sportsmanship, they often “juxtapose the ‘bad apples’ against the ‘good’ Olympic athletes who would return the Olympics back to their ‘pure’ roots” (Lenskyj 188). In doing so, the media are able to report their negative news by focusing on “individual misconduct” rather than the “system,” and still maintain their notion of the ideal athlete and pure Games (Lenskyj 188). The audience, then, while given conflicting notions of Olympism, is able to maintain its notions of Olympic purity; the media allow it to accept the positive images that reinforce Olympism, while rejecting the negative images and classifying them as abnormal, individual problems not inherent to the Olympics.

INACCURACIES IN THE OLYMPIC MYTH

While Olympic myth and the media often glorify the ancient Greek Olympics as a golden age in sports, history shows that they were “subject to the same influences of money, politics, and nationalism as the Modern Games;” for example in 364 B.C., “armies interrupted the Games to fight a pitched battle across the wrestling ground—in midmatch” (“Olympics 3,000”). Donald G. Kyle, author of Athletics in Ancient Athens, debunks the Olympic myth, noting that athletes

15 In his book Andrew Jennings cites an instance when a senior British reporter “was forced to resign because of undisclosed IOC links” and how North American journalists are given fringe benefits such as invitations to lavish parties held by IOC bid committee members (qtd. in Lenskyj 175).
competed for more than the love of sport or the wreath awarded to them for their victory, showing that even in the original Games not all athletes were amateurs. For example, when athletes returned to their cities they were monetarily rewarded and given special treatment and favors and some athletes were even paid as jockeys in the equestrian contests (Kyle qtd. in Quillen).

Furthermore, while some of today’s athletes are criticized for competing for countries in which they have never lived, supposedly ancient Olympic athletes also competed for city-states to which they did not belong. One documented chariot race shows that cheating in Olympic competition is not just exhibited in the modern Games, when Roman Emperor Nero fell off his chariot in the 10-horse chariot race in 67 A.D. but was still declared the victor because of his status (Kyle qtd. in Quillen). Finally, Kyle notes that even some of the symbols used in the modern Games actually have no ancient roots—the ancient Greeks did not use an Olympic torch and the Olympic rings were designed as part of the modern Olympic movement (Quillen). Both the torch and the rings are widely recognized Olympic symbols that seem to connect the modern Games to the historic Games. The lighting of the Olympic torch seems to audiences to be an Olympic tradition, honoring the past. However, both the Olympism ideals and the sacred Olympic symbols cannot live up to and are not legitimately associated with the Olympic Golden Age.

Despite the inaccuracies between the Olympic myth and true Olympic history, the Olympic myth’s emphasis on the ideology and values of peace, sportsmanship, and fairplay survives due to the mass media’s ability to manufacture consent and influence people’s opinions. However, the mythic Olympics are contradicted by every modern iteration of the Olympic Games. As Rhona Bennett notes, the Olympics’ past glory survives only in people’s “fond imagination,” for today the Games “clearly stand for greed, destructive nationalism, political posturing, and corruption,” and no longer “strength, determination, achievement, health, fitness, co-operation, and international understanding.” Therefore, it is important to look at why the press choose to perpetuate the idealized notion of the Olympic Games when history sheds doubt on the feasibility of Olympism; since most Olympic Games are boycotted by at least one country or another, and as drug use and terrorism continue to be a forefront Olympic issues, it seems unlikely that countries can put aside politics, nationalism, or capitalism despite these mythic ideals.
AMERICAN NEWSPAPER IDEOLOGIES

Despite the Olympic Movement’s myths and ideals, according to filmmaker Bud Greenspan, “it is caught in the same media negativeness that has become part of all society. Good news doesn’t sell” (25). To study at how the media’s ideologies conflict with the Olympic myth, this section will examine at how television has influenced newspaper Olympic coverage, how newspapers cover scandals, and then look in-depth at the newspaper ideologies of nationalism and capitalism.

TELEVISION’S INFLUENCE

The coverage of the Olympic Games has changed over the course of time, primarily with the invention of television. According to Greenspan, during his pre-television era days as a reporter, sports journalism was 100 percent positive in print and radio coverage. While the athletes of today have not significantly changed, their coverage has changed due to television:

Many believe that television has changed the ground rules of written journalism. When viewers get the “inside story” daily on TV, they expect to also read about it in the newspapers. To compete, newspaper accounts must have a greater, in-depth “inside story” (Greenspan 24).

Headlines during the Olympics often focus on scandals and the “anti-hero,” rather than on the “hero” (Greenspan 24). While the Olympic Movement uses the media to carry forward the “spiritual ideals for which it has always stood,” television and press—“the very sources of wealth that permit the extension of its ideals to the world”—also “threaten to undermine the purity and nobility of its crusade” (Barney qtd. in Cousineau 11).

For example, television has increasingly brought the “backstage” into the “frontstage” by becoming more and more voyeuristic (Meyrowitz, Brummett). As a result, viewers are shown dialogue and images that they know they would not normally be invited to see, such as shots of athlete-coach conversations and the footage of gymnasts before and after their routines. This voyeurism allows the media to personalize athletes by showing them off the playing field and providing inside information about them. Also, this voyeuristic approach has lowered Americans’ standards of privacy; this change comes with the print media and electronic media’s voyeuristic nature that exposes viewers and readers to “inside” information about scandals and invades the privacy of those involved (Brummett). Such a voyeuristic focus that exposes athletes’ private lives can function to separate individual athletes from other Olympic athletes.
So, when these athletes misbehave, the negativity can be attributed to these individuals and not the Games themselves.

As John B. Thompson notes, the media’s growing emphasis on scandal is “symptomatic of the changing nature of communication media, which have transformed the nature of visibility and altered the relations between public and private life” (36). These athletes are projected into people’s households on television sets; athletes witness events from their living rooms. Thus, while athletics used to be very public because they were witnessed in person or only read about in newspapers, newspapers are increasingly focusing on more private information because audience members are essentially inviting the sports into their homes and expecting such in-depth information.

**Scandal**

Many news stories show that society’s interest in scandal and drama is increasingly challenging this Olympic ideal. Therefore, when people look to the Olympics idealistically by glorifying athletes that embody these ideals, they are holding on to and embracing the historical notion of the Olympics—a glorified image created in the sports pseudo-reality. Recent scandals and controversies related to the Olympics that are increasingly being covered and elaborated on by the media could potentially change how people perceive the Games. For example, in the 1999 hearings on the Salt Lake City bribery scandal, Senator John McCain questioned what the Olympics were coming to—“A culture of corruption, with lavish travel and gift-giving, bribe-taking and exploitation?” (qtd. in Jennings and Sambrook 5). In this investigation, Senator George Mitchell worried that without reform of the Olympic bidding process “the Olympic movement runs the risk of becoming a testimonial to excess, to elitism, to money” instead of “an ideal to competition, to excellence, to integrity” (qtd. in Jennings and Sambrook 6).

According to author David Rowe, the conflicting ideals between Olympism and chauvinism have allowed scandals to form in even “the most significant of all contemporary

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16 An investigation the Special Olympic Bid Oversight Commission, chaired by Senator George Mitchell, found that members of the IOC had taken between four million and seven million dollars in gifts and services in order to have Salt Lake City be named the host city for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games. Jennings and Sambrook 6. The Senate Commerce Committee, chaired by Senator John McCain, held hearings in April 1999 to look into “scandals plaguing the Olympics” (“U.S. Olympians”).

17 Senator Mitchell headed the U.S. investigation into the IOC Olympic-bidding practices in Salt Lake City after the IOC’s investigation reported that IOC members were victims of “predator cities” and believed that the overly-friendly hosts were giving them gifts out of friendship, not business (Jennings and Sambrook 2).
sports phenomena—the Olympic Games” (208). Hans-Dieter Krebs, from German Deutsche Welle Radio, notes three stages in the media response to sporting events. First, the media treat sports positively, portraying them as “fascinating” and as “happening[s] with a mostly open outcome and frequently unpredictable action” by focusing on records and scores. By focusing on scores and statistics, the coverage is free of interpretation or negativity and is very factual. Such reporting was seen in the early newspaper days before television.

In conflict with this first stage, the media must also respond to sporting events by acting as interpreters and thus evaluating and classifying athletic performances (Krebs 55). Interpreting events conflicts with the first stage in which reporters were neutral and factual, thereby illustrating the multiple roles journalists must play to satisfy audiences. According to Krebs, the media’s interpretation can lead to a “‘new second- or third-hand reality’” in which the dramatization and depiction of events can be substantially deviated from reality, forming a pseudo-reality for readers (Krebs 55).

As a result of these two conflicting stages, a third stage, a “brave new world,” emerges where objective information and propaganda “come into confrontation” (Krebs 55). The media, then, must balance their roles as objective, factual reporter with their inherent need to promote their own propaganda and ideologies. This third stage is especially apparent in Olympics newspaper coverage where stories contain elements of Olympism, with its myth, sportsmanship, and peace, as well as their own cultures’ ideologies that conflict with this Olympic spirit; newspapers are based in hegemonic notions of nationalism and commercialism. As television has changed the face of newspaper reporting into serving these conflicting roles, it is important to contrast the newspapers’ support of Olympism with their focus on American ideologies that are in direct conflict with these notions. The next section will look at how these conflicting ideologies are apparent in news coverage of the Olympics.

**NATIONALISM**

Nationalistic images are apparent within the mass media’s depiction of the Olympics, despite the Olympic ideal of equality. Although the Olympics is a ritual that brings nations together, the media allow politics to enter their sports coverage, create a dualism as they separate nations, and as they focus on competition, and give the audience a distorted view of other nations.
There are two primary Olympic ideals, as discussed previously, that relate to nationalism: the Olympics should promote international peace and friendship and all countries should have equal opportunities in competition.

First, sports are seen as “having a *universal* appeal” and are considered “apolitical and safe as in that they do not raise controversial issues of social power and inequality” (Jacobson and Mazur qtd. in McAllister 41). Going along with this notion, the Olympics are founded on the ideology and values of international peace, in which the people and press are expected to erase any “real differences among the heterogeneous ‘we’ to construct and celebrate a ‘false unity’ of ‘nation’” and show an “‘honourable’ form of nationalism which goes no further than a feeling of pride at the sight of a flag and the sound of a hymn” (Riggs, et. al. 256; Ormezzano 74). While the Olympics do not exclude patriotism, they “oppose any extreme patriotic fervor, which slips into chauvinism and ethnocentrism” (Real 245).

Second, in covering the Olympics the U.S. media have the potential to introduce Americans to sports and people from other parts of the world. In erasing these differences, the IOC tries to put athletes on a level playing field, so, despite their countries’ politics and economics, all athletes have equal opportunities.

Despite this ideal, the press gives much focus to patriotism and nationalism, which reveals the reporting nation’s hegemony and ideology. Such a focus shows that the media cannot easily promote the notion of equality amongst nations because they see America as superior. Thus, oftentimes politics tend to become the focus on Games as the media promote nationalistic superiority, especially over countries that have political conflicts with the United States. In this sense, Olympic competition can symbolize for the media, a political “win” over rival nations.

Olympic nationalism is considered to have started with the 1936 Berlin Olympics due to the nationalistic emphasis during wartime (Riggs, et. al. 254). During war it is especially important for nations to feel superior over their political enemies. This nationalism continued supposedly until the 1992 Olympics, after the Soviet Union breakup because the United States no longer had a huge political rival:

American media billed the 1992 Olympic Games as a “nonpolitical” event. Morley Safer of CBS’s *60 Minutes* concluded that, in light of the breakup of the
Despite this analysis, one study (Riggs et al.) shows that nationalism was still present in the 1992 Winter Olympics television coverage. For example, in their study they found that the United States received the largest number of nationalistic references by commentators with 494, followed by the Unified Team/Soviet Union with 186 references. Based on such findings, the authors concluded the nationalistic comments expressed in the American press showed that even during an event that puts athletes on an equal field and supposedly forgets politics, these sentiments were not easily forgotten.

By emphasizing country and using the “us versus them” mentality, the media allow politics to enter the sporting area by creating national enemies and friends. In addition to emphasizing their own nationalistic superiority in sporting competition, in many instances this superiority is extended to the political arena. According to Bennett, Olympic coverage has historically focused on the “superiority of one team over another” to demonstrate “superiority of one county or one political system over another.” For example, newspaper editorialists or television announcers often complain about judging and scoring, which “can feed into a feeling of nationalistic grudges that can carry over into persecution-aggression complexes in other international affairs” (Real 245). This focus on nationalism can be commercially driven. The media can increase profits by exploiting politics and nationalism and “enhancing public interest in the Olympic spectacle by focusing on divisive international concerns” (Riggs, et. al. 255).

**FOCUS ON COMPETITION**

In addition to using politics in their coverage, the American press, based on the notion of hegemony\(^\text{18}\), sees the United States as superior to other nations and often focus on nationalism and patriotism. Through their nationalistic media gatekeeping the media uses “selective national coverage and nationalistic commentaries” that contrast the Olympics’ internationalism (Real 244). In doing so, the media illustrate the Olympics’ dualism functioning as both ritual and game; the media also show their superiority by focusing on winners and losers and by covering primarily their own nation’s athletes.

\(^{18}\) Hegemony is the “moral and political claims to leadership” where there is a constant ideological struggle with one social group having dominance over another (Cormack 15). In this case, the American press would consider their values and morals to be superior to other nations competing in the Olympics.
Dualism

First, the Olympics are based on the notion of equality, but a dualism is formed between their identity as rituals and games. According to Claude Levi-Strauss (1966), rituals have the “‘conjunctive’ effect of taking subjects previously separated and unifying them” (qtd. in Real 246). On the other hand, games have the “‘disjunctive’ effect of taking initially equal individuals or groups and separating them into winners and losers” (qtd. in Real 246). In other words, competition in one sense can put politically unequal countries on an equal playing field through ritual, but at the same time can fuel nationalism and a sense of superiority because of the nature of games.

This sense of equality is embodied in the spectacle of the Olympic opening ceremonies. Here, nations gather together in the same stadium, marching in as equals, exposing each other and the world to different countries and cultures. While these opening ceremonies “celebrate international peace, understanding, cooperation, and friendship,” they serve as a great contrast to the rest of the Games, which tend to focus on nationalism rather than “international character” through their “medal ceremonies, flags, uniforms, and anthems” (Real 247).

Winners and Losers

Such nationalism is highlighted in the emphasis the media place on the Olympic medal count, which can symbolize “national success” by using a “crude ranking order” (Espy qtd. in Riggs, et. al. 254). Some say that the emphasis on the nations’ medal counts has turned the Olympics from “a celebration of individual competition in sporting prowess” into “a festival of nationalism,” while others see such competition through the medal table as a “great aspect of the games” in which “great struggles between empires and nations are peacefully enacted on the stage they provide” (Bowring, “The Olympic Ideal”).

In separating winners and losers by focusing on medal count, the media divide the competition between “us versus them.” The ritualistic sense of the Olympics should take place in competition by unifying nations, and also in the audience as viewers who watch the events in groups. However, competition often separates people; instead of unifying nations, the Olympics divide participants into winners and losers, leaving the ritual to remain in the importance audience members place on the events, not in the competition itself.
**Self Interest**

Next, the United States media also predominately focus on their own athletes, reinforcing nationalism and superiority. This nationalism was highly evident in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics where one *The Washington Post* reporter commented: “amid all our power, there’s an explosion of superiority after Americans win” and “headlines trumpet America’s victories, but nobody else’s” (Kornheiser).

For example, a study of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic coverage showed that United States newspaper coverage of the Olympics was the most nationalistic, with 79 percent of its Olympic coverage being devoted to covering its own country’s athletes. Korea was the second most nationalistic with 76 percent. Korea also devoted the most newspaper space to the Olympics, with 34.3 percent on the Games, while the United States devoted only 6.5 percent in 1984 (Real 238). In addition, Real notes that newspapers in three East Asian countries (China, Korea, Japan) in their 1984 Olympic coverage, wrote of “world peace and international friendship” in their editorials, but in their actual sports news they focused instead on the “triumphs of the nation’s own athletes” (Real 236).

**Distorted View**

As a result of this nationalistic coverage of events that are presumed by audience members to be equal and idealistic, the media’s coverage has the potential to shape global perceptions and give the audience a distorted view of nations through stereotyping. For many international audience members, the Olympics are their only exposure to many countries around the world, especially those that are not superpowers and do not typically make daily headlines. As Real notes, the Olympics are “the leading expression of an emerging form of ‘global culture’ that crosses traditional cultural boundaries,” whose media coverage “exposes audience members to other peoples and countries, providing direct access to information and personal representatives of usually remote human grouping from other countries and continents” (Real 236, 241). Even though this media coverage can give audience members knowledge of other countries, this media coverage is often limited and biased, with much of the focus being on the nation’s own athletes and limited attention given to the opposition.

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19 In a sample taken of five random days during the 1984 Summer Olympic Games of newspapers including *The New York Times, Chicago Tribune, San Francisco Examiner*. 

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Furthermore, the Olympics cannot be experienced by the entire world, further destroying its ideal as a global event. Olympic coverage does not reach many areas of the world. While an abundance of media coverage reaches “technologically rich and literate countries,” poor countries receive little (Real 243). Because poor countries are excluded from participating, the notion of the Games as being equal and global is questioned; the assumption that the Games are global is ethnocentric because they ignore those who are unable to afford the technology to view them. The Games are also not always experienced globally by countries that do not have many athletes participating. For example, one study (UNESCO, 1986) showed that six Latin American countries gave less space to the Olympics that other countries did, because of a lack of Latin American athletes’ participation in the Games (cited in Real 236). Similarly, African media show little coverage of the Games, with not much more than 10 percent of the Nigerian population watching the 1984 Los Angeles Games due to economics, the scarcity of electrical power, and illiteracy (Real 236).

As a result of this nationalistic coverage, the Olympics are unable to achieve their potential of being internationally equal. Nationalistic images are continually emphasized by the media in order to “construct an ‘imagined community’ and cultivate nationalism” (Kachgal 28). To do this, the media often construct a “universalizing experience, one that superseded geopolitical borders and that appealed to transnational emotions and values” (Kachgal 28). Thus, sports often are portrayed as key parts of national heritage and identity, not just in the United States but worldwide (Kachgal 32).

**CAPITALISM**

Olympic coverage should, ideally, be free from commercial influence and should be reported fairly and accurately. As mentioned previously, the IOC tries to create a competitive environment where money does not matter, and countries from all over the world, despite monetary resources, are able to compete.

Despite this effort, money has profoundly affected the Olympics and their media coverage, and culture as well. While competition should be equal, it is the wealthiest countries that can afford the high-tech training and large monetary rewards through payments and endorsements for their athletes. As a result, oftentimes high-class athletes often come from more
affluent countries, or from countries that offer large sums of money for Olympic victories. Thus, the Olympics are not easily separated from capitalism.

Furthermore, the Olympics and its media coverage “involve vast international resources and money” with an organizational infrastructure and expenses that surpasses those of many national governments” (Real 223). With so much money at stake for Olympic organizers and Olympic media, while money should not be an issue for the Olympics, it has become a primary concern. Therefore, the importance of capitalism in American society is an ideology and value not only engrained in media coverage but also a key factor in shaping Olympic coverage. The capitalistic effects on Olympic media coverage are seen in the media’s commercial dependence that can influence them to report positively, in their profit-driven structure that causes them to report negatively, and in how the media portrays athletes and how the athletes act.

COMMERCIAL DEPENDENT POSITIVE MEDIA COVERAGE

In the United States journalism is commercially driven. Numerous scholars have noted the commercial interdependence on media coverage and sports; one cannot survive without the other (Critcher 140). A similar dependence has formed between the Olympics and advertising since the Olympics have become more and more a commercial/capitalistic event. For example, marketing (through broadcasting, ticketing, and sponsorship) played a significant role in the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics. The Salt Lake Olympic Committee’s (SLOC) approximately $1.4 billion budget was almost entirely supported by marketing and broadcasting (“100”). Such marketing, according to Olympic Market Research, was based on the notion that people have a “passion for the Olympic Games, support for Olympic sponsors, and enjoyment of the Olympic Games experience” (“100”). Sponsorship was also crucial support the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games’ $1.7 billion cost (McAllister 42). In the end, nearly 180 different companies and brands had some promotional ties to the Olympics (McAllister 43). Therefore, it is in the dominant class’s best interest to keep the integrity of the Games in order to maintain sponsorship and advertising.

Because the media and commercial sponsors are attached to the Games economically, it can benefit them to portray the Olympics positively in order to keep Olympic sponsors happy. This commercial dependence was first apparent in the 1984 Los Angeles Games, which brought capitalism into the Games’ forefront. In the 1984 Games corporations directly sponsored teams and events in hopes of “attaching their names to the meaning of the particular activities” (Jhally
Thus, these Olympics symbolized the “auctioning off” of the Olympic idealism in the “most spectacular example to date of this linking of spheres of commerce and sports” (Jhally 79).

Since then, the Olympics have essentially become an international marketing event; for example, according to one Adweek columnist, the biggest story from the Barcelona Games was “how the Olympics have transformed themselves from a nationalist sports festival to an international marketing event in just eight years” (Buchanan qtd. in McAllister 42). Newsweek referred to these Games as “corporate games,” noting how, ever since the 1984 Los Angeles Games started having companies sponsor the Games, those who sign up as Olympic sponsors have seen sales increase significantly20 (Manning). Companies that use the Olympic logo can earn $15 million to $30 million over eight years21 (Bennett). Thus, capitalism plays an important role in Olympic media coverage. As long as people buy into the Olympic myth, and express an excitement and enjoyment for the Games due to their uniqueness and notions of peace and sportsmanship, the Olympic sponsors will continue to profit and people will be interested in reading news stories about the Games.

With such corporate interest and high money at stake, economically, some scholars note, the media have a vested interest in promoting the Games mythically to keep their attractive purity in tact. Once the Games begin to take on the same negative qualities as other sports, then audience members will lose their excitement for them. Loss of viewership could harm sponsorship money and newspaper sales. Newspapers, which are concerned with making a profit, must attract large readership in order to sell advertising space to commercial advertisers. The newspapers’ concern for attracting readers oftentimes affects how they cover events. As cultural critic Varda Burstyn concludes, the “structural integration of the media into the Olympic industry” and the media’s significant economic interests in the Games, “have turned them into promoters—not journalists or critics—of all things Olympic” (xiii). Therefore, in keeping with their own interests, the press has the ability to keep the public in the dark about corruption and scandal when it takes on the role of a promoter of the Olympics. As a result, newspapers often sell their readers heroes, winners, and great tales of the Olympics in order to maintain the audience’s interest in them.

20 According to Newsweek, after Visa signed up as an Olympic sponsor in 1987, its sales volume rose 17 percent, while Fuji, after becoming the “official” film of the 1984 Games, increased its share of the U.S. market from five percent to ten percent (Manning).

21 According to Keith McIntyre of K. Mac & Associates
CAPITALISM AND OLYMPIC ATHLETES

While capitalism can influence whether the Olympics are portrayed positively or negatively, it can also affect how the athletes are portrayed in the media and how the athletes themselves act.

Athletes as Commodities

In addition to the commercialism of the news event, the athletes themselves are treated as commodities. The value placed on capitalism is seen in newspapers’ focus on the athletes’ marketing potential after winning medals and also by the fact that athletes are paid so highly after winning gold medals through privately negotiated endorsements. The commodification of Olympic athletes—when athletes are “transformed from casual ‘players’ into sportworkers selling their athletic labour power as ‘products’ bought and sold on the sport market”—has been a largely debated issue surrounding Olympism (Rowe “Sport” 17). In his modern Olympic movement, de Coubertin stressed the importance of amateur22 athletes. Such amateurism, he believed, would allow athletes to “adhere to higher values of selfless devotion to the sport, fellow team members and competitors” rather than “promote the ‘unworthy’ practice of ‘playing for pay’ or of constructing entire sports (like prize fighting) around gambling or money making” (Rowe “Sport” 17).

Athletes are often commodified in gymnastics, being sold to audience members through how they are portrayed, in order to draw viewers and readers into the sporting event. Presenting a more likeable, ideal athlete can attract a larger audience. In selling the athletes to the audience, the media often portray athletes as having super-human qualities that athletes then must live up to. For example, in gymnastics scoring a perfect ten or winning an Olympic gold medal are the ultimate goals reinforced by the media, and athletes are expected to achieve these goals. Those who earn perfect scores and win gold medals have opportunities that otherwise would not be provided for them—to appear on Wheaties boxes, perform on talk shows, and get endorsements.

Monetary Influences on Athletes

While media coverage is partly responsible for affecting how audiences view athletes and the Games, monetary rewards can also influence how the athletes themselves act. The money promised to Olympic champions can tempt athletes to cheat, such as by using performance-

22 The word “amateur” is derived directly from the French word “lover” (Rowe “Sport” 17).
enhancing drugs, which was a major focus of 2004 Athens Olympic coverage. As one newspaper article noted, these monetary rewards can be substantial, with an American who wins a marathon receiving roughly $1 million in rewards and incentives, and swimming “offer[ing] bounties of up to $1 million for new world records and gold medals in the men’s 800-meter and the women’s 1,500-meter freestyle meets” (“Olympics 3,000”). Therefore, the capitalistic rewards for athletes can lead to the media scandals that tarnish the Olympic reputation.

So, while it is often the case that the press is merely reporting on scandals and controversies provoked by a capitalistic society, the prominence they give stories such as Hamm’s and how they report it is significant to note. While only a handful of thousands of athletes that attend the Games break the rules, the media put these stories on the headlines to sell papers and, consequently, possibly cultivate a negative sense that Olympic athletes are more corrupt and dishonest than there really are.

**PROFIT-DRIVEN NEGATIVE MEDIA COVERAGE**

While on one hand it seems as though the press have a vested interest in keeping the Olympic myth alive, the press also can benefit economically by reporting negatively on the Games, thereby tarnishing the purity associated with the Games. Reporting negatively on such a pure ideal can be relatively easy for the press to do and such negativity can attract readers and reap economic profit. Such negativity is seen not only in the articles’ topic-matter, but also in the focus on the dramatic and the scandalous.

*Focusing on the Negative*

Because of their “highly romanticized mythology,” the Olympics “provide the greatest opportunity for scandal” (Rowe 212). It is difficult for athletes and society to live up to this idealistically created myth; therefore, any wrong move by athletes, officials, or nations is reported and often embellished by the media. It is easy for the media to contrast images of heroes with those of villains, winners with losers, or good with evil. In addition, in supporting their own interests, the media must try to attract as many readers as possible in order to increase their advertising revenue. In order to attract the most number of readers, their product should appeal to the broad interests of the masses and should offend as few readers as possible. At the same time, they also must please their advertisers, who are their primary financial supporters. With all this in mind, newspapers have become “by and large a conservative defender of the
status quo”’ (Silas Bent qtd. in McChesney 57). Such financial support is vital to newspapers’ survival. In 2004, *USA Today*’s total advertising revenue that amounted to just under $416.5 million, with circulation revenue equaling approximately $367 million, and readers reaching 2,220,86323 (“Gannett,” “Top”). Therefore, when newspapers report on scandals they fulfill two functions. First, they appeal to the voyeuristic nature of audiences that demand and consume such news. Second, scandals serve the purpose of reinforcing mainstream social values by singling out individuals or groups that challenge them; in doing so, newspapers can act as “moral anchor[s] in a sea of conventionality,” reinforcing ideological and cultural hegemony (Lull and Hinerman 2). Therefore, they tend to focus more on such entertaining and negative coverage:

> No one set of ethical rules can be adopted by or imposed upon the world’s sports media at the Olympic Games because not all media personnel covering athletic events act as news journalists. Sport is packaged in a variety of ways to attract different audiences during the Olympics. As competition for audiences intensifies in the North American private sector and public media, boundaries between media that inform or entertain are shifting and in some cases dissolving. (Christie, 1996, Telander, 1984 qtd. in MacNeill 105).

As the media on one hand try to maintain the purity and ideals of the Olympics, at the same time they must satisfy audience and institutional demands.

As a result, sports coverage in general has shifted to focusing on negative aspects such as violence and bad behavior from coaches, athletes, and fans. For example, during the 2004 Athens Olympics, much media focus was given to athletes’ steroid use. This shift was due to the profit-driven media who have become convinced that sports information, drama, and conflict could increase sales. In turn, the media coverage of sports has turned from being educational to detracting from “the essence of sport” and turning it into a “mere superficial spectacle due to its commercialism” (Fernández de Córdova 66). As a result, the media coverage often resembles fictional genres such as adventure, thriller, or romance stories (Whannel and Barthes cited in Critcher 140). For example, stories often focus on athletes’ personal stories of adversity, dramatic moments in competition, and scandals surrounding the event. This drama allows readers to form a personal connection to the athletes, which could increase readership.

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23This statistic is based on the paper’s Monday through Thursday morning circulation.
Highlighting the Dramatic

Today’s audience increasingly demands to be entertained. As a result, news increasingly resembles entertainment. In sports coverage, the media provides such entertainment by giving dramatic, fiction-like events extensive coverage, thus making the sport vulnerable and controversial (Krebs 55). In coverage of Olympic scandals, the “heroic myths” encompassed in Olympic coverage are “undermined by rather more prosaic and partisan forms of identification and competition” (Rowe 204). Thus, a complex is created between the heroic image of Olympic athletes, the idealism of the Olympic Games, and the scandals the press reports. While the press coverage shows some components of the Olympic ideology, at the same time it seeks to exploit the Olympic heroes it helps to create. This dualism is noted by Rowe:

The celebrity sports scandal is a particularly dramatic exposure of the tensions between those impulses which seek to place sports stars on an Olympian pedestal, those which strive to oppose and depose them, and also those which indulge in the ambivalent, if not guilty, pleasures or schadenfreude

Because the Olympics are based in myth and idealism, the media are quick to point out any contradictions to the Olympic ideal or any breech in the Olympic ethic, thereby turning such events into scandals and controversies, such as in Paul Hamm’s case. Furthermore, the media turn such “scandals” into the hyperreal in order to create a spectacle; the hyperreal is more exciting than reality, and the audience is conditioned by the media to expect such content (Sabato, et. al. 303). The press, in order to capture the audience’s attention, go beyond the mere presentation of facts to its audience and frame them in a way to create spectacle and scandal.

The audiences’ schadenfreude from the drama of Olympic competition is noteworthy since they increasingly rely on the media to cover such drama. Because viewers derive pleasure from mediated events they are able to become emotionally involved in the sports and essentially enter into the events; the viewers, therefore, suspend critical evaluation of the media’s coverage and increase newspapers’ influence on readers who form their reality based on the coverage.

This emphasis on the dramatic takes away from the reality of the competition itself and helps to form the Olympic spectacle. For example, television editing can condense time and make competitions seem more fast-paced and dramatic. Similarly, newspapers can highlight the most exciting parts of competitions and leave out the more serious moments, making the

schadenfreude refers to “pleasure derived from the misfortunes of others” (“Schadenfreude”).
competition seems overly interesting. Newspapers and television, as mentioned before, can also personalize athletes and create or emphasize a rivalry amongst athletes and teams. All of these elements can attract viewers to the Olympics, but can also misrepresent sports by making them seem more exciting or controversial than they really are. To the broadcast industry (and to newspapers, too) it is the spectacle that is important, not the sport itself (Brummett). The drama surrounding the gymnasts’ routines is more important than the skill or ability that goes into the routines. Such portrayal of drama can alter the reality for the audience by conditioning them to expect drama, scandal, and conflict and demand it from the media.

*Emphasizing Scandals and Dominant Values*

Covering Olympic scandals is not as far from the Olympic myth as it might seem. While scandals put events into a negative light, they also “provide symbolic terrain on which the terms and boundaries of public morality are negotiated” (Lull and Hinerman 3). By covering an athlete’s actions as deplorable, the media individualize the athlete as a deviant who breeched a moral code and, as a result, the media tell the audience what is valued and accepted in society. Lull and Hinerman compare the media coverage of scandals to a term used in sociological literature—“moral panic;” moral panic is “a reaction to an apparent social movement which generally and permanently threatens the stability of the dominant morality” (4). Unlike “moral panic’s” link to social movements, scandals are traceable to “real persons who are held responsible for their actions” (Lull and Hinerman 4). For example, in Olympic coverage “deviants,” such as athletes who use steroids, can “stimulate moral panic” (Lull and Hinerman 4). Such “chemically enhanced” performances go against the “Games’ intrinsic purpose, to celebrate natural physical ability,” by “tilt[ing] the playing field” and “ensuring that poorer athletes (or those with more integrity) are forever disadvantaged against richer (or more cynical) ones” (“Olympics 3,000”). However, by reporting them as scandals, the media are able to reassert what is considered to be normal and moral by separating them from the praised athletes and reporting on their stories negatively.

Thus, through their coverage of scandals, the media are able reinforce their dominant values:

The media scandal is but the most extreme example of how, in practice, individuals are held to an imagined, idealized standard of social conduct. In this way, mass media become reflexive agents implicitly representing those whose interests are served by the constant reassertion of dominant modes of thought,
driving mainstream values and lifestyles into the assumptive worlds of audience members (Lull and Hinerman 5).

Therefore, stories become scandals if they transgress the Olympic values. Scandals, consequently, allow the media to address social issues and reinforce their own institutional values by “damag[ing]” the “forms of trust” in the sport and Olympic institutions (Rowe “Sport” 92). For example, it could be said that the newspaper coverage of the Hamm controversy went against the “trust” of the Olympic Games by pointing out a deviant from Olympic ideals of sportsmanship and fairplay. Such media reports can have lasting effects that could go beyond just pointing out deviants; they have the capability of leading people to reject subjective sports and judging and question the results, validity, and purity of the Games. On the other hand, it also offers a solution to repair the integrity of the Games, by either correcting scoring issues, getting rid of bad officials, or establishing new rules.

While media sports scandals can attract readers through their spectacle, they are just concrete examples of the media’s production of values and emphasis on right and wrong. In reality, as Rowe notes, such value emphasis and media manipulation is present in all sports coverage and the pseudo-reality the media help to form:

In fact, the media sports scandal is, ultimately, no more than a spectacular instance of the everyday product of the sports media. Every fragment of sports report, snatch of commentary, still shot and flickering image, and all other elements of sports discourse, are couched in visual and verbal languages whose grammar and syntax, vocabulary and framing, carry within them a kind of politics. These need not be overt, clear or consistent, but they represent a politics of the popular that is pumped out unreflectively every day in the name of sport (“Sport” 92).

Therefore, the values reinforced by the media in their rejection of athletes who go against the Olympic myth, are equally supported in everyday, non-scandalous sports reports.

The media’s complex on whether to uphold the Olympic myth or their own nationalistic and capitalistic ideologies is apparent in actual newspaper coverage. Thus, it is important to be aware how such myths and ideologies can influence the information readers often perceive as accurate and unbiased. This complex will be explored extensively in Chapter 3 in a case study of the 2004 Athens Olympic Paul Hamm controversy.
CHAPTER 3

With a general understanding of the media complex newspaper journalists must face when covering the Olympic Games, it is appropriate to examine a case study to see how this complex materializes in news coverage. This chapter will look at the 2004 Athens Olympics Paul Hamm controversy by examining approximately 58 articles printed in the two top circulated American newspapers—USA Today and The New York Times.25 This chapter will not look at The Wall Street Journal, the second most circulated newspaper, because it does not typically cover the Olympics. USA Today and The New York Times are the focus because they have a broader circulation than other top newspapers such as The Los Angeles Times, Daily News, or The Washington Post,26 and these other top newspapers’ articles on the Hamm controversy tended to be similar to this chapter’s samples.

Also, while it would be interesting to compare the American media coverage of the Hamm controversy to the South Korean coverage or another nation’s coverage, such an analysis is beyond the scope of this paper. The purpose of this paper is to look at American news coverage and American ideology. However, some examples from South Korean papers will be used to contrast some of the American newspaper coverage, but an extensive analysis of these papers will not be performed.

The time frame of this case study will range from August 19, 2004, the day after the men’s all-around competition, to August 31, 2004, two days after the closing ceremonies when most of the news coverage of the Hamm controversy died down. Excluded from this case study is newspaper coverage from late September and early October 2004 when Hamm and Yang’s case was heard in a sports arbitration court. While this coverage was important to the controversy, it takes place a month after the Olympic Games’ conclusion. This time separation is large enough that its coverage, while significant to audience’s viewpoints of the Games, is not as closely associated with the media’s Olympic coverage. Additionally, the stories covered in both papers express similar sentiments as those in the August sample, with some journalists

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25 According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation, USA Today is the top circulated American newspaper with Monday through Friday circulation averages of 2,220,863. The third most circulated newspaper is The New York Times, with an average circulation of 1,121,057 (“Top Ten”).
contending that Hamm should have returned the medal, and others agreeing with Hamm’s decision to keep the medal, or other commercial or nationalistic sentiments appearing in the articles. For example, one USA Today articles highlights the money and fame Hamm received from winning the gold medal by mentioning the “hometown parades,” talk show appearances, and “lucrative commercial endorsements” Hamm received (Lieber “Going”). Another USA Today article noted that “had the difficulty of [Yang’s] routine been properly rated, he would have won the gold” (“Gold belongs”). Because of their similarities to the August articles, and because many of the articles are written by the same journalists, it is not necessary to include the later articles in this analysis.

This case study will look at multiple dimensions of the Hamm controversy by examining 23 news stories, 13 editorial pieces, and 22 letters to the editor because they all serve different functions for readers. The news stories typically provide readers with facts about the situation; however, in most of the Hamm articles the news stories tended, through language, structure, and the inclusion/exclusion of information, to take an indirect, less straightforward stance on the controversy. In the editorial pieces columnists knowingly give their opinions on the readers; the influences on the audience were more direct and apparent, and oftentimes the language was more creative and biased. Finally, this case study also will look at letters to the editor in order to see how people responded to the newspapers’ articles. Those who write letters most likely have formed their opinions based on past experiences and exposure to the broadcast and print media and directly to USA Today and The New York Times because they had no other access to the events but through the media. Therefore, these letters to the editor reflect how audience viewpoints might have been influenced by the media.

This chapter will explore four topics. First, it will look at how newspapers support Olympism in the Hamm controversy coverage. Then it will look at how this Olympism is contrasted by nationalism and capitalism. Finally, it will look at how depicting these events as a scandal potentially harmed or helped readers’ notions of Olympism.

However, before exploring the various ideologies and issues raised in these articles, it is important to get a detailed understanding of the events. Thus, a detailed timeline of events and

\[26\text{ According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation, The Los Angeles Times has a 902,164 Monday through Friday circulation, the Daily News has a 715,052 circulation, The Washington Post has a 706,690 circulation, and The New York Post has a 686,207 circulation (“Top Ten”).}\]
As noted before, in its revival, the modern Olympic Games were intended to serve as a “vector of universal peace in the face of international tension,” and to promote international peace and friendship through sport (Parienté 11; Downing 27). The Olympic ethic is central to this goal because its athletes and officials are expected to “uphold the equality of opportunity by rejecting abuse or manipulation” and honor sportsmanship and fairplay (Parienté 13). This ideal is essential to the Olympics, and it is important for the press to keep it in the forefront in its portrayal of the Games. In the Hamm controversy these Olympic ideals were often highlighted by the media. This section will briefly show some of these examples, while other examples will be used throughout the chapter to contrast the articles that promoted American ideologies of nationalism and capitalism, and the development of the controversy into a scandal.

First, Olympism focuses on the human spirit in sporting competition through athletes’ physical form, determination, and perseverance. The media tend to focus on stories of perseverance in order to dramatize Olympic competition. This perseverance begins with stories of the athletes’ Olympic dreams. For example, in his victory Hamm is quoted as saying: “I think I probably daydreamed about winning the Olympics thousands of times” (Macur “U.S.”). His fall on vault, Hamm continued, showed “how strong my character is” and how he was able to “overcome something” (Macur “U.S.”). The focus of many of the articles was that he was able to overcome adversity, never give up, and realize his dream (19USA). Even after the controversy broke out, articles still included recollections of this perseverance.

Also emphasizing Olympism, many of the newspapers focused on sportsmanship and fairplay. The news stories, editorials, and letters to the editor repeatedly raised these issues, showing them to be significant to the Olympics. These sentiments were apparent throughout the controversy and were further emphasized by the International Gymnastics Federation’s (FIG) letter to Hamm that said “the world would view the gesture [of giving his medal to Yang] as ‘the ultimate demonstration of fair play’” (Macur “Federation”). A letter to the editor commented: “The Olympics once again has become more than a showplace for athletic skill. It is a grand stage for a morality play illustrating the greater truths of doing what is right rather than winning.”
 (“Hamm draws”); the Olympics, another reader wrote, are “about something more important than winning” (“Hamm need”). Similarly, Hamm echoed these sentiments: “The Olympics isn’t about medals. It’s about representing your country with pride and integrity. It’s about the glory” (Chow). The editorials and news articles all stressed the importance of keeping the Olympics distinct from other sporting competitions by eliminating “arrogance” and “selfishness,” and demonstrating “dignity, sportsmanship and honor” (Brennan “Just one”). To these letter writers, such a display is even more important that medals—Hamm must return the gold medal in order to maintain the integrity of the Olympics. Despite some journalists’ desire to keep such Olympism in the forefront, many of the articles made the bulk of the coverage into controversy. These articles contradicted Olympism through their emphasis on nationalism, capitalism, and scandal.

Nationalism

Expressing nationalistic sentiments in news articles is significant because Olympism calls for equality of all nations and the erasure of all nationalistic sentiment. Despite this ideal the newspaper articles focused on patriotism and nationalism, revealing the hegemony and ideology of the reporting nation. As a Toronto Star journalist noted, “Whatever the Olympics stood for in the past or in people’s fond imagination, today it clearly stands for greed, destructive nationalism, political posturing, and corruption” (Bennett). Many of the newspapers articles created national enemies, emphasized the importance of country even in an “equal” sporting event such as the Olympics, pointed out the double-standard Americans are held to at the Games, brought politics into Games that are supposed to abandon political affairs, and emphasized the competitiveness among competing countries. There were a few newspapers, however, that countered these nationalistic sentiments by creating national friends.

Unequal Countries

While Olympism calls for putting nations on an equal playing field, it is obvious in the newspaper articles that country is important. The importance of country is most obvious in the “privileges” American athletes receive and by the “double standard” Americans face when competing in the Games.

27 Such privileges might include higher scores in competitions, rulings in their favor, or special media attention.
First, some articles showed the inequality of some nations. This inequality for South Korea lies specifically in their inability to reach the Western audience, which hinders their ability to get media and fan support. In relating the 2004 controversy to the 2002 figure skating scandal, one journalist noted that the South Koreans “need Canada on their side” in order to get more public support (Roberts “Do Not”); Canada was able to gain audience support for its figure skaters in the 2002 Olympics and the South Koreans needed their help to rally up the same kind of support for its athlete. This comment not only shows the importance of gaining other country’s support despite the supposed equality of the Olympics, but also highlights the audience’s ability to relate to certain country’s athletes. For example, it was easier for the American media and public to support the Canadians than the Russians in 2002, just as it was easier for the public and media to support an American athlete in 2004. America’s historical political rivalry with the Russians and the language barrier makes the Russian athletes harder for the American public to support.

This lack of media and public support for certain country’s athletes can possibly hinder their ability to petition results. As one journalist noted, in the 2002 speed skating controversy the South Koreans’ “rants changed nothing,” and this controversy will most likely have similar results because: “They don’t speak English. Their charms don’t translate on the tube in the Western world. Without public opinion from the powerful West, without Olympic outrage en masse, Rogge isn’t likely to broker a fair split of the gold” (Roberts “Do Not”). These sentiments expressed in these newspaper articles contradict the Olympic principles, which hold that all countries should be treated equally despite their language or public opinion.

It is also the lack of newspaper coverage on other nation’s athletes that reflects the Americans’ supposed feelings of superiority. This absence is specifically seen in the abundant coverage of the Hamm controversy in comparison to the lack of coverage when Canadian gymnast Kyle Shewfelt complained of wrongful scoring.28 Shewfelt’s complaints were widely covered in what some Canadian newspapers called a “judging scandal” (Francis). However, Shewfelt’s protests were not mentioned in USA Today or The New York Times, although they were briefly mentioned in some other American newspapers.

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28 In the vault finals competition, Canadian officials protested the fourth place finish of Shewfelt, saying that the scores awarded for third place vaulter, Romanian Marian Dragulescu, were “technically impossible” (Johnson and Sandler). Dragulescu was awarded a 9.90 on his first, near-flawless vault, but was awarded a 9.325 on his second vault despite stumbling and touching his hands on the mat.
Some journalists noted, however, that American athletes are not always given special treatment, but must live up to a double standard, as Mike Lopresti stated in an editorial:

To be strong, but not overbearing. To win, but not annoy the rest of the planet. And to understand there is a double standard at the beginning, that will only grow more so by the end, by which time the host city usually wants the Yankees to go home, anyway. Comes with the territory. It is tricky work, and we don’t always get it right. Sometimes we talk too much. Here is where the world of Olympic gymnastics had turned (Lopresti).

By pointing out this double standard the press reveals inequality in the Olympics and at the same time reinforces the notion that American athletes are dominant and superior. Lopresti continued, observing that: “All this [gymnastics controversy] comes as the boos for the United States have been growing in Greece, which happens nearly every Olympiad. By then, the world has seen quite enough American victory laps, heard quite enough American anthems” (Lopresti). Editorialist Selena Roberts wrote about the carefulness involved for Americans at the Olympics in not “strut[ting] on the Greek’s last nerve” or “preen[ing] over anti-American tripwires” (Roberts “I.O.C.”). Instead American athletes were instructed to “be nice and no one gets hurt” despite “their Olympic hosts’ red-white-and-blue conspiracy theories,” “Schadenfreude-induced mocking the American men’s basketball team faced,” and hostile chants at the track (Roberts “I.O.C.”). Later in the controversy an editorialist asked if Hamm would even have been sent the FIG’s letter if he was from Romania and not Wisconsin (Lopresti). These statements contradict Olympism by showing an anti-American sentiment. They also set up American athletes as victims because other countries are tired of their superiority—other countries are jealous of America’s athletic dominance. Such sentiments reinforce the notion of American superiority and inequality of nations.

National Enemies

Many of the newspaper articles pitted the United States and South Korea against each other, creating national enemies. Right away newspaper articles made it a controversy between nations, and not just between athletes and officials in search of the truth, as Jill Lieber wrote: “Sports fans in South Korea already are protesting the scoring mistake that handed the gold medal to Hamm” (Wall). In a competition after the all-around finals, Liebers and Vicki Michaelis emphasized this rivalry between the two nations implying a bias by South Korean and
North Korean judges against Hamm, noting that both judges gave Hamm the lowest scores of his routines on his Sunday night performances (“Controversy”).

Some articles depicted the South Koreans as violent and dangerous by alluding to past South Korean anti-American sentiments, such as the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic speed skating controversy. Three USA Today news articles referred to this incident in connection with the Hamm controversy. As one journalist noted, “The controversy has reached the streets of South Korea, where the media has whipped up anti-American sentiments. The situation is reminiscent of U.S. speedskater . . . and Ohno had to be accompanied by Utah state troopers because death threats were among 16,000 emails the USOC received over the controversy” (Michaelis and Lieber “Controversy”). Similarly, another article referred to the Ohno incident and how South Korean fans posted “numerous anti-American statements on the Internet,” “ridicule[ed] and threaten[ed] Ohno,” and “launched online campaigns to boycott U.S. goods” (Wall).

One article linked the South Korean’s threatening behavior in the Ohno affair to the Hamm affair. It did this by referring to past events and then immediately stating that South Korean protests of the Hamm controversy were emerging. It quoted Pressian.com, an Internet-based South Korean newspaper, as urging “‘a strong nationwide reaction to reclaim the gold medal that we have been robbed of’” and Naver.com as protesting: “‘Let’s flood the IOC web site with our protests, urging it to reverse the decision on the medals. We should ask IOC, ‘What makes it so afraid of the United States?’’” (Wall). Although the journalist did not directly relate the violent behavior in the Ohno controversy to the Hamm story, she connected these two “protests” by placing them side-by-side in the story. By connecting the two controversies, the newspapers created a national rival or enemy in South Korea. Further fabricating a tension between the countries, some journalists portrayed an animosity between the countries’ athletes. For example, journalist Christine Brennan stated: “It’s pretty clear that if you put the gymnasts from South Korea and the USA alone in a room with a set of parallel bars, an argument would ensue” (Brennan “Athens”).

When athletes compete in the Olympics, they idealistically compete for their country. Therefore, it is easy for journalists to create national enemies out of competing countries. Because the athletes represent their countries, it is important from them to have their country’s support behind them. Some articles noted how supportive Yang’s country was to him in contrast to Hamm’s. For example, Hamm complained in one article that “‘The Koreans have their entire
country behind them, and I can’t get one official from my country to stand up for me”’” (Macur
“Hamm Set”). Without their country’s support it is difficult for athletes to gain public favor, and
consequently, support from Olympic organizations such as the USOC and IOC who might feel
pressure from the public to change results. However, once Hamm returned from Athens, it was
apparent that the American superiority would dominate over the Olympism sentiments, and the
public would be supportive of its champion:

Hamm began making the talk-show rounds to explain why he wouldn’t [have to
give back the medal] and guess what shocking news he discovered? He was
preaching to a star-spangled congregation that didn’t know the name of the South
Korean opponent who had lost out to him on a technicality any more than it
understood how to score a gymnastics meet (Araton).

Thus, in emphasizing each country’s supportiveness, the articles also emphasize their rivalry and
conflict.

**POLITICS**

Similar to creating national enemies between competing countries in the Olympics,
newspapers also tend to bring politics into their stories. By relating athletic rivalries to political
conflicts, newspapers contradict the Olympic ideal of abandoning politics and entering peaceful
competition.

Because the Olympics took place during the United States’ military presence in Iraq,
international opposition to the military action was difficult for journalists and Olympic
participants to ignore. For example, Lopresti wrote: “‘If you want to be liked, don’t invade Iraq,’
a taxi driver said. He probably could have added don’t win 90 medals, either. And so the United
States, presumed bully, must play by different rules” (Lopresti).

This emphasis on politics was also seen in the relations between South Korea and the
United States. Ideally, the relationship between countries on the playing field should have
nothing to do with politics. However, numerous articles made political connections between
South Korea and the United States. For example, two articles specifically alluded to politics in
relation to the controversy involving Hamm and Yang. One news writer wrote: “Many young
South Koreans harbor particular resentment toward the United States because of the long-
running U.S. military presence in their country, and feel Washington is disrupting their efforts to
reconcile with communist North Korea” (Wall). Lieber pointed out that
South Koreans have a contradictory relationship with the United States. The two countries have close alliance that dates back to the 1950-53 Korean War, but many South Koreans view the Bush Administration as overbearing and aggressive. U.S. and South Korean defense officials are trying to agree on a timeline for the planned reduction of American forces on the divided peninsula amid South Korea’s concerns the departing troops will weaken its defenses against North Korea (Wall).

While it most likely has nothing to do with Yang’s protest of his parallel bar score, the newspaper articles brought politics into the controversy. By addressing politics the journalists were able to reinforce their creation of national enemies, as discussed earlier, and reinforced their political viewpoints as well. Most importantly, though, relating political issues to the controversy contradicted the Olympic notion of friendship in sport by showing that countries were not able to put political conflicts aside for the duration of the Olympic Games.

**COMPETITION**

The medal count and standings are also very important to the notion of nationalism because nations feel superior and prideful based on where their athletes place in the Olympics. As a *South China Morning Post* article noted, “It is no news that the Olympics, once imagined as a celebration of individual competition in sporting prowess, has become a festival of nationalism whose daily symbol is not the Olympic rings but the national medal tables” (Bowring). This focus on competition is seen in the broad basis of the controversy—Hamm’s defense of his gold medal and Yang’s fight to claim the gold. This emphasis is also seen in the focus on competition results and historical figures, which is apparent in many of the articles.

When initially reporting on Hamm’s victory, many *USA Today* and *New York Times* articles cited various statistics reinforcing the success of American men in Olympic competition. For example, some articles recalled that American gymnast Peter Vidmar was the only other male gymnast to get close to the “coveted gold,” by earning a silver medal in the 1984 Olympic all-around competition (Roberts “Hamm”; Macur “U.S.”). Other articles pointed out that Hamm’s finish was the closest margin of victory ever in the event, trumping the 1924 competition where the all-around title was won by 0.017 of a point (Macur “U.S.”). Pointing out these statistics heightened Hamm’s victory, added drama to the competition, and positioned the United States as superior to other nations. Recalling the United States’ men’s team silver medal (the men’s first Olympic team medal in 20 years), along with stating Hamm’s potential to win
even more medals in the event finals competition, further increased the nation’s superiority and
domination of the event (Macur “U.S.”).

In addition, other articles mentioned that Hamm became only the second male in history
to win both Olympic and World all-around gold medals, having placed just ahead (by only 0.64
of a point) over Yang in last year’s world championships (Lieber “.012”). By pointing out this
statistic, the journalists not only reaffirmed Hamm’s superiority over his competition, but also
dramatized the competition by hyping a rivalry between Yang and Hamm (Macur “U.S.”).

In contrast to this depiction of superiority, the journalists also deem athletes as failures
when they fall short of media hype. This depiction of failure is both indirect and direct.
Journalists can indirectly depict athletes as failures by not mentioning athletes who do not medal.
For example, although Hamm won the all-around competition, teammate Brett McClure finished
in ninth place (only 0.625 from first place or 0.543 from the bronze medal)—a great
accomplishment for an American male gymnast. However, despite this finish he is only
mentioned in a few of the articles, buried in the middle of a story about Hamm’s victory.

The direct depiction of athletes as failures was seen in numerous articles during the
Olympics, and this portrayal was particularly evident in an editorial about the Hamm
controversy:

This has been the careworn anthem of so many American front-runners at these
Summer Games, many of whom arrived in Greece with good intentions only to
fumble expectations like a soap bar. I’m done, Venus Williams could say after
she double-faulted at match point yesterday. That’s it, Andy Roddick could say
as he found himself on the downside of an upset, too. America’s B-movie all-
stars hummed the same blues lyrics when they hit bottom in a humiliating loss to
Puerto Rico in men’s basketball earlier this week. What about the United States
swimmers failing to qualify for the men’s 100-meter race? And the American
women finding themselves squeezed out of a gold by the Aussies in a swim relay
they owned shares in? Even Michael Phelps, with more gold bling-bling than a
lounge lizard, has had to answer to the overreach of his Mark Spitz bravado.
Even the women’s gymnastics team, with silver as an honorable keepsake for its
effort, was all but forced to apologize for failing the gold hype on Tuesday night
(Roberts “Hamm”).

Labeling athletes failures contradicts the Olympic ideal that it is an honor just to participate in
the Games. It highlights the American ideological emphasis on success and superiority by
deeming some of the best athletes in the world as failures based on one competition. This same
article relates these “failures” to Hamm by noting his “unassuming,” un-hyped role as an athlete
going into the Games. This role allowed him to counter these “failures” and represent the Olympic ideal of a “normal” person audiences can relate to, the “boy next door,” rising to the top when other heroes failed the public. Hamm embodies the American Dream where anyone can achieve greatness and celebrity.

**ANTI-NATIONALISM**

While newspaper coverage expressed nationalistic sentiments and contradicted Olympism’s notion of equality and peace, many articles expressed an anti-nationalistic viewpoint, reinforcing Olympism. These anti-nationalism statements were generally expressed in quotes from the South Korean spokeswoman Jac Soon Yoo, showing that despite the participants’ efforts to keep nationalism out of the controversy, newspapers forced the issue and created enemies.

In numerous articles Jac was quoted as emphasizing that the conflict was not against America or Hamm, but as a matter of fairness: “Our appeal is not against America, not against Paul Hamm. Why do people try to make a link between America and Seoul? We’re all friends and here for the Olympics. We’re talking about judging and judges, not about America” (Michaelis and Lieber “Controversy”). However, the article quickly contradicted her expressions of friendship by noting that “the Hamm family is taking it personally” and attributed both Morgan and Paul Hamm’s failure to medal in the floor exercise and pommel horse event final competitions to the controversy whose distraction prevented them from performing their best (Michaelis and Lieber “Controversy”). Furthermore, the notion of wanting to award a second gold medal rather than strip Hamm of his gold relates to this notion of friendship; parties sought to seek an “equitable solution” that would be “fair to all” (Chow). As Jac noted, they did not want to take the gold away from Hamm: “We are here as friends, not to hurt anybody. . . We are just asking FIG to make a decision. We feel sorry that Paul Hamm gets so much pressure” (Chow).

**CAPITALISM**

Along with supporting their nationalistic ideologies, many journalists also promoted their capitalistic ideologies. Such a focus contradicts the Olympic ideal that says Olympic coverage should be reported accurately, fairly, and free from commercial influence. Ideally, the Olympics should promote amateur competition and create a competitive environment where countries and
athletes are equal, regardless of monetary resources. However, despite this ideal, as established in previous chapters, there exists a commercial interdependence between media and sports. For example, while countries are supposed to compete on an equal playing field, more than half of the IOC’s budget comes from United States tax breaks, American television companies, and sponsors (Jennings and Sambrook 3). As a result of this interdependence, commercialism has entered into the Games with sponsorship and has given the media a significant economic interest in the Olympics. The economic benefits of reporting on the Games negatively will be further illustrated in the scandal section later in this case study. This section will illustrate the media’s emphasis on the commercial benefits for Olympic athletes, which contrasts the Olympic focus on amateur athletic competition, and highlights the profit-driven nature of newspapers and athletes.

First, the newspapers directly discussed commercial benefits for Olympic athletes in many of the articles. Many of these discussions related to Hamm’s ability to gain endorsements for his Olympic experience. For example, one newspaper article noted how Hamm’s gold medal would benefit him financially: “The instant Hamm stuck his high bar landing, his life changed. Hamm, the first American man to win all-around gold, spent seven hours Thursday doing interviews and meeting sponsors” (Lieber “U.S.”). Such discussion shows the importance of money in this culture; the athletes are not just competing for glory and pride, but for money as well. The more the audience reads about such financial gain, the less pure the athlete’s motives for competing might seem. For example, it is not just the endorsements that can earn athletes money, but the medals themselves as well. As one article pointed out, after winning gold Hamm became the “highest-paid U.S. man in the history of the sport,” earning $200,000 that week from “gold medal clauses in his several endorsement contracts,” as well as the $25,000 per gold medal the USOC pays its athletes (Lieber “U.S.”). Such payment for medals is a direct conflict with the Olympic notion of amateurism and highlights the American ideological emphasis on wealth and capitalism. On top of these endorsements, athletes can be paid anywhere from $2,500 to $60,000 for giving speeches, earning in just one or two months “an income few Americans can match” (Horovitz).

Furthering this contradiction, it is the athletes with a great Olympic triumph who get the most endorsements and money. For example, one article estimated that 1984 Olympic champion gymnast Mary Lou Retton could earn up a $20,000 speaking fee based on her Olympic success and the renewed interest in her after American gymnast Carly Patterson won the 2004 Olympic
all-around gold medal. The article also estimated that swimming legend Mark Spitz, who set a record by winning seven gold medals in the 1972 Games, could earn up to $30,000 per speaking engagement (Horovitz). Many editorials and letters to the editor argued that Hamm could probably make more money being “the guy who handed back his gold” than as a champion because he would exemplify the Olympic spirit (Brennan “Just one”). Often it is not the gold medal that earns athletes money from corporate speeches, but Olympians who “clearly exemplify teamwork,” “overcame adversity,” or “whose heroic tales can motivate a sales force” (Horovitz). One article predicted Hamm could charge and estimated $15,000 per appearance based on his “compelling stories of overcoming adversity” (Horovitz).

While these articles were quick to mention the large sums of money Olympians can earn, they also pointed out that the American sporting public is fickle and the athletes had to be quick to take advantage of their fame: "time to cash in on the glitter and the gold before an American sporting public that has the attention span of a toddler in a toy store forgets this latest cheesy Olympic controversy, or which Hamm is which” (Araton). This conclusion illustrates the media complex. Newspapers must satisfy the needs of a fickle public with a limited attention span; the American audience values athletes who stand for these Olympic ideals and want to read stories of triumph. At the same time, though, they easily abandon these Olympic values and “snap back to the less ambiguous values of a culture defined by money, not medals” (Araton).

**SCANDAL**

In relation to the American ideology of capitalism, many newspapers focus their coverage on controversies and scandal in order to sell newspapers. Therefore, it important to look at how some of the media escalated the Hamm controversy to the level of scandal. Based on Lull and Hinerman’s ten criteria²⁹ for determining if something is a scandal, the Hamm controversy should not be considered one. The ten criteria include the transgression of the dominant morality, transgressions by specific persons, intentional or reckless actions, differential

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²⁹ According to Lull and Hinerman, the ten criteria for considering something a media scandal include: (1) “social norms reflecting the dominant morality must be transgressed” (ex. Cheating is wrong); (2) “transgressions must be performed by specific persons who carry out”; (3) “actions that reflect and exercise of their desires or interests” (the person must actually do something where their selfish desires go against social norms); (4) “Individual persons must be identified as perpetrators of the act”; (5) “They must be shown to have acted intentionally or recklessly”; (6) “Must be held responsible for their actions”; (7) “The actions and events must have differential consequences for
consequences, widely circulated media coverage, and widespread interest in the story. Because there was never any proof of judges, athletes, or officials acting “intentionally or recklessly” during the competition, the Hamm controversy does not meet all of the criteria. However, the media gave much attention to this story and treated it as a scandal, drawing attention to the validity of Olympic competition, sportsmanship, and fairplay.

As mentioned before, media coverage of the Olympics is crucial to the perpetuation of Olympism; thus, the media should “take a critical, but not negative approach” towards the Olympics (de Córdova qtd. in Marchand 67). However, the large amount of space devoted to this controversy brought much negative attention to the Olympics. This negativity is seen in the depiction of the Hamm controversy as a scandal, the divisive, conflicting positions taken in the media over the issues involved, and the negativity expressed toward the Olympic governing bodies. As a result, there can be many negative effects caused by the media’s coverage of this controversy. This section will look at the Hamm controversy’s depiction as a scandal, the newspapers’ use of narratives, the journalists’ conflicted positions, and the media’s role.

DEPICTION AS A “SCANDAL”

The media both directly and indirectly dubbed the Hamm controversy as a scandal. In one article, Brennan referred to the events as “the biggest non-doping scandal of these Games” (Brennan “Just one”). Also, indirectly the media implied a scandal with the large amount of attention devoted to the issues—one of Lull and Hinerman’s ten criteria for scandals. The media also indirectly called the Hamm controversy a scandal by linking it to other past Olympic scandals, such as the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic figure skating scandal, with some noting that Hamm’s situation showed no signs of impropriety (Wall, Dodd), and others not differentiating the two situations. For example, one editorialist requested:

If you do happen to see the International Olympic Committee president, would you mind telling him that the gymnastics arena has turned into the figure skating venue right before our eyes and it might be a good idea if he decides to let someone know what he intends to do about it sometime between now and Beijing in 2008, when perhaps the diving venue can erupt in self-imposed chaos as well (Brennan “Just like”).

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those involved”; (8) “Widely circulation via communications media”; (9) where they are “effectively narrativized in to a story”; (10) “which inspires widespread interest and discussion” (11-13).
This quote not only compares the Hamm situation to the 2002 figures skating controversy, but implies that this trend of problems will continue in future Olympic competition unless something is done.

**USE OF NARRATIVES**

Oftentimes, reporting scandals “is done via the media narrative, the story which frames the scandal, populates it with characters, gives it a structure and longevity”; then, with such narratives, “the privileges of privacy are disrespected, given coherence, and converted into media products and profits” (Lull and Hinerman 3). This use of narrative contrasts the hard-news style, which uses an inverted pyramid. With this style, oftentimes much of the important information is buried in the middle of the story, showing that the writers’ focus is more on style and drama than it is on facts. For example, one article used a narrative style to describe Hamm’s win, beginning the articles:

> When he walked over to the high bar at the Olympic Indoor Hall, the final gymnast of the event of the men’s all-around competition Wednesday, Paul Hamm, had no idea he needed to score more than 9.875 to pull himself out of fourth place and take home the gold medal (Lieber “.012”).

It is not until the fourth paragraph of the article that readers find out that Hamm won the Olympic gold medal. An article the next day also used narrative, beginning the article with:

> Paul Hamm had a slight letdown after winning the Olympic men’s gymnastics all-around title Wednesday night at Indoor Hall. When he finally got back to the athlete’s village about 3 a.m., after answering hundreds of questions from reporters, in a variety of languages, he excitedly burst into his room but quickly realized his best friend, teammate, training partner and confidant wasn’t there (Lieber “U.S.”).

The rest of the article goes on to describe Hamm’s reunion with his twin brother, Morgan, after winning the gold medal. The Hamm articles’ use of narrative can add drama to events, alter public opinion, and personalize Hamm for readers.

First, many newspapers used a narrative structure to tell stories; such narratives can add drama to events, allow the audience to relate to the characters, and influence readers’ opinions. Some articles even directly referred to events as a “faireytale” or “soap opera,” emphasizing their drama. The newspapers furthered this drama and altered public opinion of Hamm by contrasting
the image of Hamm as a hero with that of a victim. Many articles noted how he “felt alone” during the controversy, how he felt his “Olympic experience had been ruined” and turned into a “nightmare,” and how Hamm had to leave Athens early in order “to escape the commotion” (Michaelis and Lieber “Amid”; Macur “Hamm Set”).

Next, the initial description of Hamm’s all-around victory was recounted in most of the articles as a narrative. For example, one article reported this the day after the competition:

After a disastrous landing on the vault that sent him stumbling off the mat and nearly onto the judges’ laps, Paul Hamm thought his night was over. So, with two events to go in the gymnastics competition on Wednesday night, he climbed to his feet and walked off dejected, holding back tears—certain, he would recall, that his dream of becoming the first American man to win the Olympic all-around gold medal was gone (Macur “U.S.”).

Then, on the high bar, “Hamm took a deep breath and began swinging powerfully through the air, executing his technically difficult routine and then nailing his landing. When his score came up—9.837—he still wasn’t sure if it would be enough” (Lieber “.012”). Such a structure allowed readers to feel like they were actually witnessing the event, adding to the drama.

Through the use of narrative, the media also personalized Hamm for their readers. They did this by giving readers personal information about Hamm, quoting him, and focusing on him. For example, in an article two days after his victory, one newspaper focused on Hamm’s reunion with his twin brother after the competition, because “just as on the greatest night of his life, on the greatest day after, Hamm was thinking about sharing a special moment with his twin brother” (Lieber “U.S.”). The articles also included quotes from his father and coach, and referred to Hamm’s childhood dreams of winning Olympic gold, portraying him as someone audience members could relate to. In addition, the articles focused on Hamm’s innocence, calling him a “freckled-face 21-year-old from Waukesha, Wis.,” who is as “polite as a scout, wholesome as peanut butter and jelly” (Macur “U.S.”; Roberts “Hamm”).

In contrast, there was no narrative coverage of Yang in any issue of these two American newspapers. The Korean newspapers did use narratives of Yang’s experiences, though. For example, Korea Times writer Kim Hyun-cheol wrote:

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30 When using the inverted pyramid to write a news story, journalists include the most important, newsworthy information first and work their way to the least newsworthy.
Landing on the mat with a thud finishing his last routine on the high bar, Yang Tae-young clenched his fist signaling his confidence of becoming the first-ever South Korean gymnast to win an Olympic gold medal [. . .] Since at the 1988 Seoul Olympics when Park Jong-hoon won bronze in the vault, South Korea has aspired to win an Olympic gold, but came up short (Kim).

Other articles documented Yang’s return home and provided personal information about the gymnast. Therefore, the coverage of Yang in Korea was similar to that of Hamm in the United States; both country’s newspapers use narrative to portray athletes that audiences can relate to or to create drama.

**CONFLICTED POSITIONS**

In the Hamm controversy the media essentially took two positions; they either favored keeping the gold medal or they criticized Hamm for not handing the medal to the Yang. Generally, in writing news stories journalists should remain objective and not take sides on issues. According to author Lynette Sheridan Burns, journalists should use some level of objectivity when reporting on a story, and stories should be reported based on their importance to society (63). Despite this ideal of objectivity, many of the Hamm articles indirectly showed the journalists’ stance on what should be done in the Hamm controversy. More directly, other journalists are given the opportunity to voice their opinions in editorials, which clearly shows the strong divide on the issues and the ideals the journalists are trying to maintain. These conflicting opinions helped to create the controversial environment, giving the issue much circulation and inspiring “widespread interest and discussion” on the topic (Lull and Hinerman 12).

**Position #1: Hamm is not the true champion**

Many of the articles directly or indirectly concluded that Hamm should not keep his gold medal or that a duplicate medal should be awarded. First, many journalists, especially editorialists, directly urged Hamm to hand his medal over to Yang or encouraged the IOC to award duplicate medals. The basis of this position is that duplicate medals or Hamm’s sacrificing his own medal would illustrate Olympism’s notion of fairplay. For example, Brennan wrote that Hamm should give up the gold medal in the interest of fairplay and to become a “role model’s role model” (Brennan “Just one”). One editorialist stated that ultimately, Hamm’s handing over the gold medal to Yang would be “the magnanimous thing” but awarding duplicate
gold medals would be a secondary option (“Not as”). This statement both assumes that Yang was the true winner and that there was an injustice (“Not as”).

There were also two precedents set in past world or Olympic competition that many of the newspaper articles referred to in order to determine a suitable outcome for the situation. First, some articles referred to the 2001 world championship trampoline competition in which the champion, Irina Karavaeva, handed over her medal when it was determined there was a judging error in the competition, implying that Hamm should do the same.31 Second, many journalists used the 2002 Olympic figure skating scandal as a precedent for the proper outcome to Hamm’s situation. In this scandal the Canadian pair received a duplicate medal due to improper judging. In fact, some journalists note that the USOC and Korean Olympic Committee (KOC) agreed to accept duplicate gold medals, but the IOC refused the possibility. Taking the position that Hamm should give away his medal or that two gold medals should be awarded pulls upon past competitions as the models for what should happen in the present; however, these journalist made this comparison without exploring how similar or different these past events are to the Hamm controversy. Thus, they supplied for readers an exact precedent the situation should follow without noting the differences in the circumstances, and readers, therefore, see injustice when these outcomes are not supported by officials. This position of awarding dual gold medals is also a way to avoid controversy by trying to make both sides of the situation happy.

Also, in a less direct manner, many of the news articles endorsed this position by stating that Yang was the rightful winner of the competition—a statement with which many would disagree. For example, various articles stated that “a scoring mistake cost Yang Tae Young of South Korea the gold medal,” that “it now turns out that [Hamm] didn’t really deserve the gold” and the “medal was incorrectly given to Hamm, and “had they assigned the right value, the South Korean would have won” (Macur “Judges”; “Not as”; Brennan “Just one”; Macur “Federation”). With these statements, the journalists were able to imply that Yang was the true champion, discounting the defenses that support Hamm as champion. In contrast to this indirect support of Yang’s position, many newspapers used more neutral wording to state the facts, such as explaining, “the validity of Hamm’s gold medal victory last Wednesday had been in question

31 In the 2001 trampoline world championships, Russia’s Irina Karavaeva won the gold medal due to a judging error. As a result, she demanded that the gold medal be awarded to German gymnast Anna Dogonadze. Although FIG initially resisted changing the results, because official results cannot be changed after a medal is awarded, it eventually made an exception.
after a scoring error,” or “which a scoring error might have cost” Yang the gold (Macur “Hamm Ruling”; Macur “Hamm Set”). The differing styles journalists used to recount events show the biased reporting of some journalists in contrast to the more neutral reporting of other journalists. The journalists’ word choices can also add to the framing of the situation as a controversy. For example, journalists wrote that “it reeks of injustice that an athlete should lose a medal based on what amounts to a numerical error,” and the South Korean delegation was left “unsettled by the incorrect scoring that left their gymnast Yang Tae Young without the gold medal in the all-around” (“Not as”; Macur “Hamm Ruling”). Using words such as “injustice” and “unsettled” can add to the scandalousness of a situation.

Position #2: Hamm might be the true champion

While much of the media urged for Hamm to demonstrate fairplay and sportsmanship by giving his medal to Yang, there were some who defended Hamm’s position. This support was apparent in direct statements such as: “the USOC is on solid ground” because “Hamm is being asked to become the first Olympic champion in history to hand back a medal without breaking any rules” (Lopresti). These articles defended Hamm with three claims—that the South Koreans broke the rules, more deductions were found, and the psychology could have been altered.

1. The South Koreans broke the rules

One defense of Hamm’s victory that appeared in many articles was that the South Koreans broke rules by filing their complaint after the competition. These articles noted that the gymnastics federation should not have reviewed the tapes of Yang’s parallel bar routine in the first place because the rules state that a coach has only until the end of the next rotation to file a protest of an athlete’s score (23NY6). Thus, while it was “unfortunate that the judges didn’t have the right start value,” the “F.I.G. doesn’t have video replays” (Colarossi qtd. in Macur “Judges”). Hamm stated in one article that because this protest was not turned in on time, it seemed like the South Koreans only filed it after they “realized Yang’s high bar score was not good enough for gold” (Macur “Hamm Is’).

Furthermore, these articles suggested that mistakes are constantly made in sports. However, these mistakes cannot be reviewed after the competition by video replay; otherwise, the USOC spokesperson predicted, “there will be chaos and anarchy in sport” (Scherr qtd. in Robbins). Furthermore, “it’s not feasible in athletics to have a post mortem after every event and make decisions accordingly” (Zillgitt). As one letter to the editor suggested, by returning his
medal Hamm would essentially be endorsing the use of video replay in gymnastics where every routine would have to be re-evaluated (“Hamm need”). Consequently, such an endorsement could establish an untenable precedent for future competition. In this case, though, the rules do not allow for video replay. In fact, even many of the athletes supported Hamm keeping the medal based on maintaining the integrity of sports’ rules: “In the Olympic Village, athletes from everywhere—whose careers are governed by the kind of meet rules that the South Koreans failed to follow—encouraged Hamm to stand firm” (Araton). Only one article mentioned these athletes’ support for playing by the rules.

Furthermore, as one article noted, Hamm’s returning the gold medal would be insulting to the system, despite the nobleness of the gesture; receiving a medal from a colleague is uncomfortable for both athletes (Ottavio Cinquanta qtd. in Dodd). Returning the medal could also be perceived, according to a letter from Hamm’s mother published in USA Today, as “going against the judges’ decision and defying the outcome dictated by the governing body” (“Mother”).

2. Video review shows more deductions

Also, many articles pointed out that, while a video replay of Yang’s routine shows a 0.10 error in Yang’s favor, there were also 0.2 worth of deductions the judges missed, which could actually lower his score. This argument was not apparent in USA Today coverage until August 27, but appeared in the New York Times on August 23; this defense was raised six times in the sample articles. For example, it is reported in one article that Hamm, in order to get his defense out to the media, had planned to hold a news conference in which he would play a video of Yang’s disputed parallel bar routine and point out these errors (Macur “Hamm Set”). However, Hamm was discouraged from holding the press conference by the USAG because it would prolong the media’s coverage of the controversy. This defense contradicted the other articles that lobbied for Hamm to display sportsmanship and hand over his medal by arguing that perhaps Yang should not have even gotten a bronze medal.

3. One cannot predict athlete’s psychology

Finally, because the South Koreans did not file the protest in time (during the competition) it cannot be assumed the results would have made Yang the champion because the

32 Such additional errors included Yang’s having four pauses in his routine, which should have been a two-tenths deduction (Macur “Hamm Is”).
athletes might have performed and have been scored differently had a change in Yang’s score been made. It is mentioned in many articles that scores can psychologically affect how athletes approach their other routines. For example, an athlete who has a comfortable lead might approach an event more relaxed. Therefore, if Yang’s coach had filed the protest after his parallel bar routine, and had the score been adjusted higher, Yang and the other athletes likely would have approached their remaining events in a different mindset.

**THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA**

While there were problems in the scoring of the men’s all-around competition, the media played a large role in turning the situation into a controversy and depicting it as a scandal. This portrayal was primarily due to the large number of articles devoted to the story. The media’s role in this controversy is apparent in many of the articles in relation to how it can alter public opinion and create negativity. The large amount of coverage devoted to the topic allowed the controversy to be considered a media frenzy. *USA Today* and *The New York Times* devoted 43 articles to and over 28,000 words to the controversy. Such attention can have a significant impact on the Olympics, on those directly affected by the extensive coverage, and on public opinion of the Hamm controversy.

First, by focusing on negative events in the Olympics can be harmful to the Olympic movement. As editorialist Jeff Zillgitt pointed out, “Not only has this issue dragged out way too long, it has taken too much air time, news print and cyberspace. Above all, it detracts from a popular Olympic sport.” The media, with their focus on negativity took much attention away from the positive events to focus on this one instance, dragging its coverage into the Games’ conclusion. This negativity could potentially harm people’s outlook on Olympic idealism because they will begin to associate the Olympics with negative events, thus causing the Games to lose their purity and idealism in audience’s minds.

Next, being in the spotlight of negative media attention can also be harmful to those involved, including the FIG, IOC, and USAG, as well as Hamm and Yang. Many of the organizations involved in the controversy lost much credibility in the minds of readers resulting from journalist’s interpretations and coverage of the controversy. These effects can last beyond the media coverage and impact how the organizations handle future sporting events. Hamm also formed a new cynicism from his experience. The media’s negativity affected him personally:
Some people in the media have been great to me and others very hurtful. There was one really bad night when Morgan and I read some columns online that were so damaging to me, and my reputation, that both of us felt physically sick. That was a time when I felt the whole world had turned against me, and I kept hoping somebody would stick up for me (Hamm qtd. in Lieber “Despite”).

The powerful effect of the media’s message cannot be underestimated. Negative messages can harm those involved. They can also hinder readers’ ability to receive objective messages because journalists’ viewpoints and newspaper ideologies filter the information presented to readers.

Finally, the articles also make it apparent that media coverage can significantly alter public opinion positively or negatively. For example, some newspapers covered Hamm’s appearance on the Late Show With David Letterman and the support the show’s audience showed him by chanting “‘U.S.A! U.S.A! U.S.A!’” (Sandomir). It is such mediated depictions from Letterman joking around with Hamm and depictions of audience support, as well as Hamm’s appearance on the Today Show that can significantly influence audience’s perceptions of events. These appearances allow Hamm to show himself as human and relate to American audiences, gaining him supporters who have not been similarly exposed to Yang. One editorialist notes the media’s impact on developing a personae for athletes and gaining them public support:

The South Koreans have a problem: Wisconsin’s adorable Paul Hamm has already gabbed about apple pie, gold medals and high-bar miracles while seated within the halo’s glow of Katie Couric. How is South Korea supposed to taint that pristine vision with pleas of fairness? How can their Olympic officials reverse the work of angels and stardust with the truth about the men’s all-around championship? Sure, the South Koreans have math on their side. As the officials of the International Gymnastics Federation agreed yesterday, a scoring mistake wrongly awarded Hamm the gold medal over to Yang Tae Young, who was left with bronze. Too bad, so sad, officials said. Three judges were punished for the unfortunate error, but the instant Hamm went from fourth to first with the high-bar act of a lifetime Wednesday night, he remained an indelible image of inspiration for NBC. To be almost certain, the network of the Olympic soft lens does not employ folds to edit cuddliness from its promo reels (Roberts “Do Not”).

This article shows how significant the media can be in perpetuating Olympic ideals and ideologies to its viewers. The media have formed audience expectations from their athletes and sports heroes, and can easily sway audience opinions by choosing to portray athletes in a way that meets this expectation.
These specific examples of newspaper coverage during the Hamm controversy illustrate the Olympic media complex. These newspapers uphold the integrity and importance of the Games on one hand, but also focus on scandal and negativity. The great emphasis on drama and conflict, and the focus on nationalism and capitalism contradict Olympism and reinforce dominant ideologies. Because most people’s only exposure to the Games is through mediated coverage, the media’s portrayal is important to understand. It is also important to acknowledge the profound impact this coverage can have on how audiences perceive the events and the Olympics themselves.
CHAPTER 4

As the previous chapters have established, the “super media” face a “media-sport complex” that can affect Olympic coverage and how audiences perceive the Games. This “media-sport complex” is formed from the media’s desire to endorse Olympism but also favor promoting their own nationalistic and capitalistic ideologies. In addition, the “super media” can have a profound effect on audiences because of their penetration into everyday life. As a result, “personal experience combines with media experience,” allowing powerful institutions to play a significant role in influencing perceptions and shaping consciousnesses (Real 15). How readers view Olympic events can be influenced by what newspapers or television broadcasters choose to put in or omit from their coverage. Because most people cannot witness the Olympics in person, their perceptions of events come straight from the media, giving the media a very powerful role in creating a pseudo-sports reality in which they ultimately reinforce their own ideologies such as capitalism and nationalism. This chapter will look at the immediate and future implications that reporting such scandals can have on the Olympic Games, and also highlight some areas of future studies of Olympic media coverage.

IMPLICATIONS OF SCANDALS

The future of the Olympics will be significantly impacted by the hyper-reality formed by the information the media provide their readers. This hyperreal sports world created by the media has conditioned audiences to expect and demand content that is more exciting than reality; readers’ ability to distinguish between what is real and imaginary “implodes” and blends reality with representation (Oberly “Reality). When the media represent sports and athletes as heroic, scandalous, or dramatic, the audience’s perceptions over time are influenced to reflect this mediated reality. This focus on the hyperreal can directly affect the future of both gymnastics and the Olympics. Although controversy can initially attract viewers, if the scandal “reaches into the fabric of the sport, as judging controversies do, the sport eventually suffers” (Brennan “Just Like”). This section will examine the possible effects the media’s coverage of the Hamm controversy and other such negative reports can have on the Olympics, including their potential to harm the validity of the Olympic Games, reinforce ideologies, affect the future of gymnastics, and influence audience expectations.
HARM OLYMPICS’ VALIDITY

First, the media risk harming the reputation of future Olympic competition when they continually report on Olympic scandals and controversies in order to attract an audience. In an editorial one journalist attributed the Hamm controversy to “the nature of the post-modern Games,” noting that controversies such as this will “accompany future Summer Olympics” because “the Games are too big, the media presence too great, the potential payoff for athletes too immense” (Brennan “Athens Scores”). Thus, outside elements such as media, money, and fame, are now major influences on Olympic competition and will encourage controversy in future competitions. For example, the same author noted that these Olympics would be “remembered as the Games of Controversy,” starting with two Greek sprinters being pulled from the competition and opening ceremonies because of drug suspicions, and continuing throughout the Games with “a gymnastics venue that turned into a den of inequity” (Brennan “Athens Scores”). Despite such controversy, he considers the Games a success because they ended with no terrorists attacks; his pessimistic outlook on the Games contradicts the optimism of an Olympic movement based on peace, equality, and friendship.

Furthermore, by arguing over whether Hamm should keep his medal, the media ultimately contradicted the validity of Olympic results and competition. This questioning of validity emphasized in the Hamm coverage is an important issue for the future of Olympic competition. The competition was touted as “another Olympic contest in the books decided not by the performance of athletes but by that of judges” (“Athletics”). A letter to the editor stated that “The Games have digressed into the Athens Protest Olympics with acronymic organizations running amok, scheming to change any results they don’t find agreeable” (Zillgitt “Enough Already”).

Olympic competition will always be subject to the same human error that is present in all sports. For example, mistakes have occurred in officials’ decisions in baseball, basketball, football, boxing, and diving. Mistakes are bound to happen, but more and more officials are expected to have the objectivity and reliability of machines. This expectation comes from complaints and hype in the media when mistakes do happen. Also, audiences tend to form

33 Terrorist attacks have plagued Olympic history, with the most recent attack occurring during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics when a bomb exploded in Centennial Olympic Park. At the 1972 Munich Olympics terrorists kidnapped and killed Israeli athletes. With the conflict in the Middle East terrorist attacks at the Athens Games were a concern of many.
expectations of perfection from watching events via an electronic medium where commentators point out errors they and the audience see in slow motion that judges and officials had to witness in real-time. Thus, officials’ mistakes are easily viewed as signs of corruption, when in reality, as Rogge points out, it was just “incompetence” and “human error” (Vecsey “Games Want”).

With their heavy reporting of these human mistakes, the media set a precedent for more athletes and viewers to question the validity of scores in other competitions and imply further scandals. Such questioning was seen in Athens with many of the news stories including quotes from athletes questioning not just the men’s all-around competition results, but also the entire competition’s scores. For example, Romanian gymnast Ioan Suciu was quoted in one article stating that “‘Everyone got fair judgment with the exception of the U. S. A. that got a little more’” (Macur “U.S. Gymnast”). Such attention detracts from the Olympics’ validity and its ideal of sportsmanship. Also, in the women’s gymnastics all-around competition, silver medalist Svetlana Khorkina accused the competition results of being “decided in advance” with American Carly Patterson winning gold (“Athletics”). This predetermined result was based, Khorkina stated, on the fact that she is from Russia and not from America (“Gymnastics”). Furthermore, as Kornheiser notes, athletes who do not win more often are accusing those who beat them of drug use.34

REINFORCE IDEOLOGIES

While scandals can have a negative effect on the Olympic image, audiences can use scandals as measures of human moral code and reinforce ideologies (Lull and Hinerman 3). Scandals and controversies are often used to raise a “moral panic” in order to reinforce the dominant morality. Although the Hamm controversy might cause readers to question the Olympic ideals, the media can use the controversy to achieve “ideological cohesion.” They do this by “draw[ing] on a complex language of nostalgia” to emphasize their own dominant ideals and ideology to readers by singling out those who breech the “moral code” as deviants (McRobbie and Thornton qtd. in Lull and Hinerman 5). In the Hamm controversy, the organizations were the deviants that went against the Olympic ideals. Therefore, in reporting on the controversy, the newspapers can reinforce their ideologies and single out the individuals and

34 Washington journalist Tony Kornheiser cites an incident during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics where American swimmer Janet Evans, who failed to qualify for the 400-meter freestyle, accused the 400-meter winner, Ireland’s Michelle Smith, of using performance-enhancing drugs to shave 19 seconds off her best time.
organizations as deviants to these ideals. In doing this, it appears that it is the people who run the Games—not the Games themselves—that are flawed. As one letter to the editor remarked, “Once again we have living proof that the last amateurs left in Olympic sports are the people running them” (Brennan “Just One”). In the Hamm controversy, as outlined below, newspapers tended to blame the problems on the sport of gymnastics, FIG, USAG, USOC, and but not the Olympic ideals themselves, thus reinforcing the Olympics and their ideals, and making these participants the deviants. In shifting the blame and focus to those other than the athletes of the Olympics themselves, the media can maintain the validity of the pseudo-reality they seek to create; audiences can dislike the organizations but still watch for the drama of competition.

1. Criticizing the Sport of Gymnastics

   First, the newspapers singled out gymnastics judging and its subjectivity as one of the controversy’s causes. For example, some articles portrayed controversial judging as a norm with comments such as “wouldn’t you know, another judged sport has self-destructed during another Olympic Games” (Brennan “Just Like”). Some noted the subjectivity of the sport allows for “constant errors, disputed verdicts, and corruption” (“Athletics”). However, though they point out problems in the sport, at the same time some articles leave hope that improvements can be made by tightening rules and judging to avoid future controversy (Dodd).

2. Criticizing the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG)

   Second, the FIG received much criticism, especially after it sent the letter to Paul Hamm requesting that he voluntarily hand over his medal in the interest of fairplay. The President of the FIG, Bruno Grandi, was criticized primarily for putting undo pressure on Hamm to make such a decision. For example, some articles called it “one of the most arrogant moments in Olympic history” and “an outrageous abdication of responsibility” by the “thugs,” “bullies,” or “spineless suits of the International Gymnastics Federation” (Veskey “Games Want”, “The Real”, Roberts “IOC Leadership”, Araton “Controversy”). Some articles referred to Grandi as a “preposterous” official, making things worse by “open[ing] his mouth with another wild-eyed scheme to settle a controversy the Americans considered to already be resolved” (Brennan “Athens Scores”). The FIG was portrayed as even more incompetent in the August 31 USA Today article in which Hamm listed four mistakes made by the FIG and attributed most of the responsibility for the controversy to them. Hamm was quoted in USA Today as stating:
“I believe that it was the actions that FIG took, and their timing, that caused the whole uproar. In my opinion, there are a number of things they did wrong: 1, FIG broke its own rules by accepting a protest after the end of the meet; 2, FIG officials reviewed videotape with the purpose of changing the outcome of a competition after it was over and the medals had been handed out; 3, FIG suspended judges during the Olympic Games. It was an action that caused the press to believe that there was some scandals involved and the frenzy began; 4, The very strange letter that Bruno Grandi wrote to me expecting me to fix things. I repeat, I do not have the power to decide who gets medals. The IOC had already refused to change the results” (Hamm qtd. in Lieber “Despite Scoring”).

The newspapers also indirectly criticized the FIG by making them appear inaccessible, with comments stating officials declined to be interviewed and calls went unanswered (Nacur “Hamm Set”). This avoidance was further supported with a journalist remarking, “You can always count on the international sporting officials to take the cowardly way out of a controversy” (“The Real”).

It was not just the newspaper editorialists criticizing the FIG. USOC and KOC members had criticisms as well. USOC chairman Peter Ueberroth was quoted as saying, “‘I don’t know of any comparison in any sport where you crown an athlete, crown a team and then say, ‘Oh, that was a mistake. Would you fix this for us?’” (Chow “F.I.G.”). Similarly, KOC spokewoman Jac remarked, “‘The F.I.G. said they made a mistake, but no action was taken, so it is the F.I.G.’s leadership’s fault and they should solve the problem [. . .] Why did the F.I.G. have to make it so stressful and put the athletes in the middle of all the hassles and headaches?’” (Macur “Federation”). In this media construction, Hamm and Yang appear as victims hurt by the FIG, rather than the media attributing negative attributes to the athletes themselves. Thus, the expectation established in the sports pseudo-reality where athletes tend to be heroic and competition is dramatic is still maintained. It is the organization causing the conflict, and the athletes are just victim of these organizations.

3. Criticizing the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Like the FIG, the IOC, specifically IOC president Jacques Rogge, was criticized for its lack of leadership in the Hamm controversy. Thus, the controversy was attributed to this organization rather than the Games themselves. For example, one New York Times journalist connected the IOC’s stance on the Hamm controversy to the entire Olympics, illustrating how the press and the IOC tend to handle scandals and controversies in order to keep the Olympic ideal intact:
To the I.O.C., there’s no reward for taking a controversial stand. That’s why the Ring-lettes choose safe, unassailable causes like children, humanity and antidoping. Rogge loves his position as drug czar in the Olympic fight against doping, almost too gleeful at the 20-plus head count of positive tests at the gold-today, stripped-tomorrow Athens Games. “People are always asking me, ‘Don’t you feel the set of positive tests taint the reputation of the Games?’” Rogge said on Friday at a breakfast. “But I’ve said many times: ‘On the contrary. Each positive test is a blessing for us because it eliminates a cheat and it protects the clean athletes’” […] It’s easy to play tough guy on nice-and-tidy issues backed by popular opinion (Roberts “IOC Leadership”).

Thus, because the IOC seeks “conflict-free-quick-fix[es]” the problems that endanger Olympic idealism are never fixed; Rogge is too concerned with adapting to popular opinion and avoiding conflict and criticism (Roberts “Do Not Mistake”). In addition, while the media were partly responsible for the growth of the controversy, some also attributed it to the IOC’s inaction and “ineffective[ness]” as “passive-aggressive enablers” that not only allowed the Hamm controversy to grow, but also allowed the Olympics to become “tarred by controversy” (Roberts “IOC Leadership”).

Some articles even made it seem like the IOC was afraid of the FIG, noting that while the IOC “strip[ped] medals for drug cheats, award[ed] duplicate medals in the judging corruption of the 2002 Winter Games,” it “failed to intervene before the bullies at the International Gymnastics Federation” tried to “coerce” Hamm into voluntarily returning his medal (Roberts “IOC Leadership”). This fear of punishing or decertifying the FIG for the letter, one article states, is most likely based on the IOC’s fear of losing the most popular Olympic sport for female viewers (Vecsey “Games Want”). The FIG, these articles concurred, should not be given complete autonomy. It was this autonomy and lack of leadership that largely attributed to this controversy.

However, many articles also depicted the IOC as powerful, with so much control over national committees that its actions often contradict the Olympic notions of equality and fairplay. The IOC’s power is truncated in its unwillingness to correct the gymnastics judging error. Many editorialists asked how the IOC could know about a mistake but do nothing about it. Along with the error in the Hamm controversy, there was also a technical judging mistake against a German equestrian team. In both circumstances the IOC denied the request for a second gold medal (Djansezian “Rogge”). Its ability to maintain the medal standings makes the IOC very powerful. It has the ability to uphold fairplay and equality in competition and maintain its authority over
national Olympic committees or sports organizations. Many reporters viewed its inaction in the Hamm controversy as an unwillingness to uphold Olympic fairplay.

4. Criticizing USA Gymnastics Association (USAG) and the United States Olympic Committee (USOC)

Much like the FIG and IOC, USAG and the USOC were also criticized in the media for their inaction during the controversy, leaving Hamm to fend for himself. Because USAG was the most closely associated organization to Hamm, Hamm felt “let down” when it failed to keep him updated on the situation or defend him: “‘Here is the press asking him to give up his medal, and he doesn’t even know anything about it,’ Sandy Hamm said. ‘Everybody else, USA Gymnastics, the F.I.G., was ducking and hiding. They left him out there alone” (Sandy Hamm qtd. in Macur “Hamm Set”). Hamm’s father questioned USAG President Bob Colarossi’s motives for putting Hamm in such an awkward position, attributing his inaction to the fact that Hamm decided to perform in a post-Olympic tour other than the one sponsored by USAG (Dodd). Thus, he implied that USAG was so interested in its post-Olympic tour profits that it wanted Hamm’s name to get tarnished in a controversy. Such criticism further separates the athletes from the organizations that the newspaper articles are criticizing. It further paints the athletes as victims in the controversy, which can maintain some of the integrity of Olympic competition, showing that the athletes are still pure and heroic.

Furthermore, the USOC’s inaction was criticized specifically with the involvement of Wisconsin Congressman and House Judiciary Committee chairman Jim Sensenbrenner. Sensenbrenner openly “blasted” the USOC for “not standing up for Hamm sooner,” leading him to pursue a possible hearing on the matter by the House Judiciary Committee. By involving the government in the conflict, journalists are able to reinforce the position of the dominant class as well as the idea that these problems can be fixed and the Olympic ideal can be maintained. The media also portrayed the USOC as a bully by stating that they “went a flexed-muscle too far” and that they overstepped their boundaries by saying that a second gold is not an option (Lopresti “No Ducking”). This depiction of the USOC as a bully over other organizations, such as the KOC, shows the power struggle and inequality amongst federations, but not in the sports themselves.
5. Criticizing the use of courts

Along with the involvement of the United States government, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) was also brought in to straighten out the controversy. Appealing the IOC’s decision to the CAS was always an option for the South Koreans if the IOC did not rule in their favor. The IOC’s role is much like the United States’ Supreme Court. It is meant to balance the power of the organizations. However, by involving the CAS, the authority of the FIG, IOC, and USOC are made less definitive. Many articles mentioned that the South Koreans were taking their case to court, showing the seriousness of their position.

However, members of the IOC also criticized the participation of a court in Olympic sport because “’judge’s mistakes or poor calls are a part of sport’” and “’shouldn’t end up in court’” because “’there’s too much law in sport’” (Thomas Bach qtd. in Dodd). Furthermore, the notion of whether or not the court should even be looking at the case was also raised; typically the CAS does not review cases in the field of play, but only those that have to do with “judges colluding or doping cases” (Hamm qtd. in Lieber “Despite Scoring”). By taking on this case, the CAS essentially treated it as a scandal, and took on more power and responsibility than normal.

By placing responsibility for the controversy on the sport itself, FIG, IOC, USAG, USOC, and the CAS and not on the athletes or the Olympic Games, the newspapers present the readers with flaws of governmental bodies without directly placing responsibility on the Olympics and its athletes. Thus, they are able to benefit monetarily from reporting on scandals, reinforce their own ideologies of nationalism and capitalism, and at the same time maintain some of the integrity of the Olympic Games.

AFFECT THE FUTURE OF GYMNASTICS

The media’s coverage of the gymnastics controversy has also impacted the sport’s future. In the media’s coverage, the FIG and IOC lost much credibility because of the journalists’ negative comments. Thus, the media’s power extends beyond the ability to just change audience’s perceptions, but can also directly impact a sport’s future. These effects are particularly seen in the FIG and IOC’s responses to the controversy that will have a profound impact on gymnastics, and in the media’s future coverage of the Olympics.
**FIG and IOC’s Responses**

In the case of gymnastics, the FIG has, since the Olympics, proposed numerous changes to the gymnastics Code of Points. According to *International Gymnast*’s Web site:

The FIG has taken action it believes will prevent repeats of the 2004 Olympic Games, which saw numerous judging scandals in the men's competition. Earlier this year, the FIG proposed abandoning gymnastics' traditional scoring system—scored out of a perfect 10.0—to implement an open-ended Code of Points. Gymnasts would instead be marked out of the sum of the values of the 10 highest-rated elements in their routines, with additional scores for execution. The FIG has championed the idea of a “world record for difficulty” (“Grandi”).

The “outdated” Code of Points used in the 2004 Olympics, according to Grandi, was the cause of the judging scandals that plagued the men’s gymnastics competition, not the judging itself:

“The judges who have not performed their job properly were immediately suspended. In other cases, how to explain to the public that the judges did not make any mistake, but they just followed a Code that was obsolete! A new Code, modern, understandable, that allows evolution in terms of development of gymnastics will become the best 'firewall' against scandals. We have good judges, in general. . . Let us give them a good working tool” (Grandi qtd. in “Grandi”).

Many contend, though, that this new Code of Points will harm the sport, not help it. Numerous former world and Olympic champion gymnasts have publicly spoken out against FIG’s proposed changes, fearing it will turn gymnastics into a dangerous, extreme sport. For example, those against this new Code of Points include: FIG Athletes Representatives, three-time Olympians Svetlana Khorkina (Russia) and John Roethlisberger (USA), and Olympic champions Rustam Sharipov, Shannon Miller, Vitaly Scherbo, Svetlana Boginskaya, and Lilia Popdkopayeva (“Grandi”). With this proposed Code of Points, then, it is evident that Grandi is trying to counteract the negative media attention and avoid future negative coverage rather than necessarily helping the sport.

In addition to the FIG taking such precautions, the IOC appears to be taking similar precautions to avoid future negative media attention by pressuring FIG to make changes. According to an FIG press release, two recently published IOC documents seem to be pressuring FIG to make substantial adjustments to its rules. First, the IOC Executive Committee’s discussion at the Berlin SportAccord stated that: “On the sports front, it was reported that after constructive discussions with the IOC, the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) made
substantial changes to their judging systems” (“Budapest”). Second, the IOC General Assembly will meet in July to decide which sports will be omitted from the Olympic Program. Through an anonymous vote sports must receive a majority of votes or they will be eliminated from the 2012 Games; because of this vote, the FIG is worried that, “let’s say gymnastics, fails to get half the votes plus 1, it will disappear from the Olympic roster for 2012. Absolute majority. Secret ballots. Anything could happen” (“Budapest”). According to the FIG press release, these two IOC decisions could be “warning bells” that show a solution (that artistic gymnastics rules should be revised) and a “price to pay” if the FIG does not do some serious reviewing (“Budapest”).

Future Olympic Media Coverage

The amount of media coverage and how the media report on Olympic sports have the ability to shape the Olympic Games’ future. Recent events show that the media can influence the structure of the Olympic Games, since the IOC is taking media coverage into consideration when deciding whether to remove or add sports for the 2012 Olympics. In June 2005, the IOC reviewed 28 sports that were trying to remain in the Games and five sports trying to get into the Games; each of the 28 sports was evaluated in a 265-page review by the IOC and will be put to a vote. Any sport failing to get a majority will be dropped from the 2012 Olympics. Among the criteria evaluated in IOC’s report include global popularity, TV and media coverage, ticket sales, and anti-doping policies. Massive gymnastics TV coverage can positively impact the IOC’s decision. However, the IOC report showed that despite this coverage, its judging had “major flaws” in Athens (Wilson “IOC”). Sports such as boxing, rowing, and archery, on the other hand, were reported as having few primetime viewer hours and little press interest. The fact that the IOC takes the media coverage into such serious consideration when determining the future of Olympic sports shows the power the media have on the Games.

Despite FIG’s precautions to eliminate controversial media coverage, it is likely that, given the media’s inclination to report on scandals, the overall negativity of the Games will not change in the 2008 Beijing Olympics or even the 2006 Winter Torino Olympics. The media will continue to promote their ideologies of nationalism and capitalism and promote scandal in order to sell newspapers. Although this controversy may not occur in a gymnastics competition, it is likely that some other sport will be a focus of another scandal. It is evident that despite the Olympic ideals, Olympic competition will always be seeded in a “conflict-based deep structure”
that promotes “Western structures of space, time, knowledge, nature, and relationships” and imposes them on “multicultural world participants” (Johann Galtung qtd. in Real 246). The symbiotic relationship between the media and sport, therefore, has made conflict inherent in both the media as well as in the Games themselves. As Rowe notes, media sports coverage will continue to circulate “discourses of dominance” that “occurs as part of the overall flow of ideologies and mythologies in and out of the media sports cultural complex and the social structures, large and small, to which it is linked” (Rowe “Sport” 105). Thus, the media’s influence on how people perceive sports will continue to be influential on readers and viewers as the media act as the primary means of organizing media in a culture and sports coverage. As a result, as seen with each past Olympiad and likely future ones, the media’s focus shifts from reporting on sporting events to reporting sporting scandals and focusing on national dominance in order to promote their ideologies. Such a shift has been seen in the extensive media coverage during the past two Winter Olympics figure skating controversies and in the numerous scandals in diving, equestrian, and track and field competitions.

**Influence Audience Expectations**

Audience members form their expectations from television and written media. As far back as the creation of *Wide World of Sports*, televised sports took a dramatic turn from focusing on facts and news to focusing more on aesthetics and entertainment value (Kachgal 12). Since televised sports were depicted dramatically, newspapers had to meet audience expectations and supply their readers with similar elements of “drama and melodrama [and] suspense” (Kachgal 8). Because of this portrayal, a sports pseudo-reality is formed that can profoundly affect what audiences perceive and expect from sports and their athletes in several ways.

First, by adding such elements to their portrayal of the Olympics, the “super media” can form people’s Olympic experience by focusing on the Games’ “compelling combinations of drama, beauty, beauty, achievement, celebrity, and accessibility” and shift coverage away from newsworthiness (Real 223). Because the media have conditioned audience members to expect drama and entertainment, the athletes must supply it through accomplishments such as dramatic competition or record-breaking wins. For example, Grandi suggests that his proposed new Code of Points could be beneficial because it abandons the “perfect ten” maximum score by allowing gymnastics to score above ten points. This push for achievement and excitement is seen in the constantly improving equipment and technology that allows athletes to train better, jump higher
and run faster. For example, the pole vaulting stick has evolved from a bamboo pole used in the early 20th century to a fiberglass composite pole introduced in the 1950s that allowed athletes to continue to break records (Randerson). Speed skating skates and cycling bikes have improved to allow athletes go faster, and technology has improved training by equipping athletes with heart monitors to test their endurance (Randerson). In gymnastics, equipment has improved to allow gymnasts to flip higher and perform harder skills. Such improved equipment is necessary in order for athletes to provide for their audience record-breaking feats and harder, more extreme tricks.

Next, it is important to consider what happens when the athletes reach their human potential. Currently athletes who do not achieve perfection or break records are symbolically considered to be failures by the media by their absence in the sports pages. Athletes already are succumbing to the pressure to be the best with numerous athletes in each Olympics turning to performance-enhancing drugs in order to win medals, break records, and achieve Olympic glory. The media, in turn, focus on this drug use, condemning athletes for their use of drugs and for tainting Olympic competition, all the while promoting such athleticism and perfection that lead athletes to these drugs in the first place. When these athletes no longer are able to break records because they have reached human potential, the media will have to provide for their audience excitement and drama by increasing their focus on rivalries, conflicts, and scandals in order to encourage people to watch the Games and provide revenue for their papers.

**FUTURE STUDIES OF MEDIA’S OLYMPIC COVERAGE**

With so many dimensions to the Hamm controversy, it is no wonder the media chose to cover it so extensively. The story involved an innocent, “boy-next-door” character who achieved his Olympic dream by overcoming adversity only to find out that he may not have won the competition after all. It is the soap opera-like story the entertainment-driven newspapers look for. However, there are numerous dimensions of this controversy worth further study. For example, do scandals tend to be worse when they involve countries that are in conflict in real-life politics? Does foreign policy carry over to the Games? Would this story have been covered if Hamm’s rival was not from Korea, which is in an international conflict with the United States, but instead from Canada?
Past events show that international conflict does, in fact, play a role in creating rivalries that entice people to watch the Olympics. For example, in the 1936 Berlin Games nationalistic sentiments pitted Jesse Owens and democracy against a Nazi regime. Similarly, the Cold War made rivals out the United States and Soviet Union. This rivalry, for example, was illustrated in the 1980 Olympic hockey game between the United States and the Soviet Union. Here, the game represented one team’s superiority over another, as well as democracy’s victory over communism.

In a textual analysis of the 1992 Winter Olympics television coverage, Riggs et al. noted how after the break up of the Soviet Union the Games was supposed to act as a “non-political event” and serve “no particular national purpose” (253). Thus, when America’s Kristi Yamaguchi and Japan’s Midori Ito competed against one another in the 1992 Winter Games, journalists remarked how there was no longer a rivalry with communist nations. However, despite the lack of outward nationalistic jingoism, it has been difficult to depoliticize the Olympics. Journalists have found a way to just “repoliticize” them by “hyping selected contests between economic competitors” rather than the outward depiction of enemies (Riggs et al. 253).

However, while nationalistic sentiments are fostered in the modern Olympic Games by the media, there were nationalistic conflicts between nations in the ancient Olympics as well—politicization is not exclusively a modern Olympic Games issue. It is said that among the Greeks, the Olympics were so nationalistic in spirit that states were prouder of Olympic victories than of battles won (“The Olympics”). Even boycotts occurred in the Ancient Olympics, such as the one in the 420 B.C. Games when Sparta was banned from the Games for its failure to pay a fine after breaking the Olympic truce (Hoberman 5-6). A subsequent boycott resulted “from the murder of an athlete while he was on his way to the Isthmian Games” (Hoberman 5-6). The modern media, then, are responsible for promoting these nationalistic sentiments, but they were sentiments that existed in the ancient Games as well. Therefore, while the media obviously struggle with keeping their own nationalistic ideologies out of Olympic coverage, these nationalistic sentiments have always been part of the Olympic Games.

Another area of study could be Olympic television coverage’s effect on audiences perceptions of the Games. Such a study could focus on the impact of new technology on viewers’ perceptions of reality. For example, with the development and increasing popularity of high definition television (HDTV) and interactive television, the audience can increasingly feel
like they are present at the Games; HDTV’s crisp quality makes pictures so life-like that viewers feel like they are experiencing events in person. Interactive television can provide viewers with a participatory role in the Games, which can also make the events seem more real despite their mediated quality.

Furthermore, the implications of television technology such as slow motion and replays can affect audience’s perceptions of reality, as briefly noted earlier, forming an expectation of perfection from athletes and judges. The television viewer has the ability to see performances in slow motion over and over again. Thus, while gymnasts, for example, must try to perfect skills to be seen in “normal time” by the human eye, viewers now put more responsibility and pressure on these athletes to also have their skills appear as “perfect” in slow motion. These commentators and producers choose to show good skills repeatedly to highlight areas of routines, thus valorizing the gymnast in the audience’s mind and possibly affecting viewers’ perceptions of who is a good or poor gymnast. On the other hand, they can also show mistakes over and over again, making the audience question the judge’s scores if they are “too high” because the most significant part of the routine to them is the highlighted error. For example, in the all-around competition when Hamm crashed on his vault landing, the fall was repeatedly shown in juxtaposition to the commentators saying that he had blown his chance for the all-around title. In contrast, other competitors’ mistakes that were more technical and difficult to see, such as omitting a required skill, were not called out by the commentators or repeatedly shown. Thus, visually Hamm’s mistake was much more significant to viewers than it necessarily should have been.

Consequently, through the use of replays and slow motion, viewers who are uneducated about gymnastics feel that they can judge who the rightful winner of the competition is. Real-life judges who do not have access to replays and slow motion are expected to have super-human capabilities to catch every mistake in an action-packed 90-second routine; when the judges fail to exhibit the accuracy that technology provides, people cry foul play. The Hamm controversy is centered on the use of fact-checking through replays. In gymnastics competitions video replays of routines are not allowed. Judges are expected to make scoring decisions based on seeing the gymnasts’ routines once and not on video. Judging performances live and not on video does allow human error to enter scoring, but all gymnasts are judged in this manner and with such possible errors in mind. However, despite these rules, once Yang contested the competition
results, the officials used video to replay Yang’s routine to see where the judges’ errors were made. Using such replays allowed viewers, officials, and editorialists to see the judging error missed during the competition, causing many to contend that Hamm should return his medal. Thus, they defined for the audience what was considered to be sportsmanship and fairplay based on the technology, when the competition rules and governing bodies said Hamm was the rightful winner.

Along with researching the impact on politics and the implications of television technology on Olympic coverage, numerous other studies could be performed. Such studies could examine broadcast news coverage of the controversy and the media’s coverage of other 2004 Olympic scandals. One could also compare the American coverage of the Hamm controversy to Korean coverage or other international coverage.

**CONCLUSION**

Each Olympiad begins with opening ceremonies that symbolize the Olympic ideal. These ceremonies “call on the grandest myths of all—those which pertain to universal, humanity, and the capacity of the Olympics to promote global ‘peace, harmony and progress’” (Rowe “Sport” 104). However, this triumphed display of Olympism will continually contrast with the scandals fought out in the media for the duration of the competition. Television commentators and newspaper writers during the course of the Games, try to find a balance between promoting Olympism “mak[ing] sure that their audiences differentiate between their compatriots and the other branches of the great human family whom they fervently hope will lose,” leading to a “schizophrenic quality in their coverage, or a sports-media complex (Rowe “Sport” 104).

The media will continue to struggle with their media complex by printing both positive coverage that promotes Olympism and coverage that promotes its own ideologies of nationalism and capitalism. As Real notes:

Selective national coverage and announcer commentaries, together with written reports, create an invigorating national focus in each country as it follows the Games. If such coverage ignores the traditional values of fair play, sportsmanship, and respect for opponents, it cheapens the Olympics and becomes a disservice to that country and all others (245).
However, it is unrealistic to think that the media can promote the idealism of Olympism and abandon these ideologies. It is important that viewers understand these conflicting roles of the media and the effects the media have on audiences’ perceptions of the Olympics and on reality. While the media appear to have a powerful role in shaping readers’ perceptions of Olympic events, it is possible that with an awareness of media’s effects, the audience can “buffer” itself against those in the media using “ideological powers” (Rowe “Sport” 106). Public skepticism of the sports media can allow for “resistance to the cult power of the sports media” and lessen the power of “one of the most efficient and extensive factories of meaning and value yet devised” (Rowe “Sport” 106). Maybe then, viewers could begin to differentiate between reality and the media influenced pseudo-sports reality that puts controversies such as the 2004 Athens Olympic Hamm controversy into the forefront of public consciousness, and realize the impact the media have on their everyday lives.
APPENDIX A

KEY PLAYERS IN THE HAMM CONTROVERSY

Avery, Miles- Hamm’s coach
Bango, Benjamin- One of the three parallel bar judges (from Spain) suspended after the men’s all-around competition.
Beckstead, George- One of the three parallel bar judges suspended (from America) after the men’s all-around competition. Acted as the Chair of Judges on parallel bars.
CAS- Court of Arbitration for Sport
Colarossi, Bob- USAG President
de Coubertin, Pierre- Former president and founder of the IOC in 1894
Dragulescu, Marian- Romanian vault bronze medalist whose score was subject to controversy.
FIG- International Gymnastics Federation
Grabowsky, Chris- Canadian high bar judge who claims he was pressured to raise Alexei Nemov’s high bar scoring during the event finals competition.
Grandi, Bruno- FIG President
Hamm, Morgan- Paul Hamm’s twin brother and teammate.
Hamm, Paul- American gymnast whose all-around gold medal was questioned after a judging mistake on South Korean Yang Tae Young’s parallel bar score.
Hamm, Sandy- Paul Hamm’s father.
IOC- International Olympic Committee
Jac, Soon Yoo- South Korean spokewoman
Khorkina, Svetlana- Women’s all-around competition silver medalist from Russia who contested the validity of the competition results.
Kim, Dae Eun- South Korean gymnast who won the silver all-around medal.
KOC- Korean Olympic Committee
Lee, Joo Hyung- South Korean head coach
McClure, Brett- American gymnast who place ninth in the all-around finals.
Nemov, Alexei- Competitor in the high bar finals. The crowd protested his score for ten minutes.
Reyes, Oscar Buitrago - One of the three parallel bar judges suspended (from Columbia) after the men’s all-around competition.
Rogge, Jacques- IOC President
Sensenbrenner, Jim- Wisconsin Congressman and chairman of the House Judiciary Committee who pursued hearings on the USOC’s actions in the Hamm controversy by the House Judiciary Committee.
Shewfelt, Kyle- Canadian gymnast who many say was robbed of a bronze vault medal due to another “judging controversy.”
Shin, Bark Jae- South Korean Chef de Mission of the Korean Delegation
Silicci, Philippe- FIG spokesperson
Stoica, Andrian- FIG Technical Committee President
USAG- United States Gymnastics Association
USOC- United States Olympic Committee
Yang, Tae Young- South Korean all-around bronze medalist. Consider by many to be the all-around champion due to a judging error that cost him a 0.10 points on his parallel bar score.
APPENDIX B

TIMELINE OF EVENTS\textsuperscript{35}

August 18-
10:13 PM- Yang performs his parallel bar routines. After the routine, according to South Korean officials, parallel bar judges Kim Dong Min and Oscar Buitrago discussed, within earshot of parallel bar judge Benjamin Bango and Chair of Judges on parallel bars George Beckstead, the 9.9 start value. Kim notices that the start value was lower than it had been in previous competitions. Buitrago explains how he reached the start value and Kim appears satisfied with the explanation and does not take the matter further.

10:40 PM- Hamm wins the men’s all-around competition by 0.012 points over South Korea’s Kim Dae Eun and .049 points Yang Tae Young.

11:00 PM- Following the competition, Kim informs South Korean head coach, Lee Joo Hyung of Yang’s 9.90 parallel bar routine start value.\textsuperscript{36} Lee replies that the start value should have been a 10.0.

August 19-
12:00 AM- (approximate) Immediately following the competition (around midnight) members of the Korean delegation question the FIG Technical Committee President Andrian Stoica over Yang’s parallel bar routine start value in the parking lot.

2:30 AM- South Korean official Shin Bark Jae, Chef de Mission of the Korean Delegation, faxes Stoica a request to change Yang’s parallel bar start value.

9:00 AM- Stoica informs the South Korean delegation that he cannot change the score once the competition concludes.

12:00 PM- Shin faxes FIG president Bruno Grandi requesting a “video replay analysis and change in Yang’s parallel bar score.

August 20-
10:00AM- Grandi responds to Koreans, stating that “our rules do not allow a protest against judges’ marks. The judges’ marks have to be accepted as a final decision and cannot be changed.”

Grandi calls for an emergence meeting of FIG Executive Council where Bango, Buitrago and Beckstead are temporarily suspended by FIG.

\textsuperscript{35} This timeline is comprised of dates outlined in an \textit{Inside Gymnastics} magazine article and in the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruling.

\textsuperscript{36} A routine’s start value is based on the degree of difficulty and the performance of required elements in a particular routine, with the maximum being a 10.0. Once the start value is determined, execution deductions are subtracted from the start value. During this competition, the start value was posted on three sides of an electronic score board for approximately 15 seconds after each routine.
Later, the KOC appeals to the IOC for a “thorough investigation” of the incident (Williams “Golden” 29).

**August 21-**
FIG releases a statement admitting Yang’s parallel bar routine start value should have been 0.1 higher (a 10.0 start value rather than a 9.9 start value).³⁷

**August 22-**
The USOC and KOC meet with the IOC to discuss the possibility of awarding duplicate gold medals. Rogge confirms that the IOC will not issue two gold medals, but would respect a request from FIG to have the scoring error corrected and the medals re-allocated.

Hamm competes in the first night of event final competitions and place fifth on floor exercise and sixth on pommel horse.

**August 23-**
During the second night of event finals, controversy arises in the men’s high bar final when the crowd protests the judges’ score for Russia’s Alexei Nemov’s routine and stop the competition for ten minutes. It was only after Nemov waves and gestures to his fans that Hamm, the next competitor is able to compete. Following the competition, Canadian high bar judge Chris Grabowsky says he was pressured to raise Nemov’s score by Stoica in order to appease the angry crowd. Feeling that if he did not comply with Stoica’s request to raise the mark, Grabowsky and another judge increase their scores, increasing Nemov’s average from a 9.725 to a 9.762.

Adding to this controversy, Gymnastics Canada protests the vault competition results. They claim that Romanian Marian Dragulescu’s vault average was not properly judged. Of the five scores issued on the vault, with the high and the low scores being dropped, the scores should be within 0.2 of each other when the average score is 9.0 or above. The scores did not fall into this range on Dragulescu’s vault. This error, they say, cost Canadian gymnast Kyle Shewfelt a bronze medal.

**August 25-**
As the competitions ends the Russian Olympic Association complains about the series of judging errors. This protest stems from what they view as a judging bias that underscored Nemov’s high bar routine. Previously, newspapers reported complaints from women’s all-around silver medalist, Russian Svetlana Khorkina, who claimed the medal standings were determined before the competition even began.

**August 26-**
FIG sends Hamm a letter entitled “Fair Play” regarding comments Hamm allegedly made to the Associated Press that he would return his gold medal if FIG requested him to do so. In the letter

³⁷ Upon video replay, it was discovered that the judges mistook an element named a “Belle” (valued as more difficult “E” element) for a “Morisue” (valued at a less difficult “D” element). Both elements are similar, but the Belle involves a straight horizontal position over the bar before the swings, and the Morisue involves hanging underneath the bar before the swings.
Grandi states that Yang is the “true winner” and asks Hamm to give his medal to Yang in “the ultimate demonstration of fair play by the whole world. The FIG and IOC would highly appreciate this gesture” (qtd. Williams “Golden” 29).

The IOC claims no knowledge or support of the FIG’s letter. The USOC refuses to deliver the letter to Hamm.

**August 29**
Yang lodges an application with the CAS, complaining about the error made in his parallel bar routine.

**September 27**
The CAS hears 11 hours of testimony from all parties.

**October 21, 2004**
The CAS dismisses Yang’s appeal and confirms the Olympic results. The arbitrators issue a 44-page document dissecting the controversy. This decision is final.
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