



The Play of Time in Sports

Muhammad A. Z. Mughal
Department of Anthropology
Durham University
Dawson Building, South Road
Durham DH1 3LE
United Kingdom

mughalmaz@gmail.com

The Play of Time in Sports

Various qualities and expressions of time, such as temporality, timing, and tempo are unequivocally involved in the physical activities of sport. Similarly, social, managerial, economic and political aspects of sport are also intertwined with time. In the contemporary world, where sport is a big industry and implicates international economic and political dynamics, the politics of time is critical to the management and impact of sport on the socio-economic and political dynamics of countries and regions. This special issue of *Recreation and Society in Africa, Asia and Latin America* on time and sports aims to highlight the role of time in sports by presenting examples of the political and economic context of sports in which time plays a pivotal role.

Time provides grounds for all human activities to occur and is, therefore, an important concept to study in the arts, humanities, the social sciences (Adam, 1990; El Guindi, 2008; Geertz, 1960; Gingrich, 2002; Mughal, 2009, 2014a; Nowotny, 1975). It is the complicated nature and thus pervasive role of time in all spheres of human activities that make studying it require multidisciplinary approaches (Bergmann, 1992; Hassard, 1990; Mughal, 2014b). The concept of time is used in sports and leisure studies in several ways (Beck & Arnold, 2009; Biddle *et al.*, 2009; Godoy-Pressland, 2014; Harvey, 1990; Ramos & Folkers, 1994). Studying time in sports, on the one hand, elaborates on the categories of time and, on the other hand, generates typologies of sports (Martínková & Parry, 2011). All the papers included in this special issue deal with the concept of time in a variety of ways. Among the major themes that emerge from these papers are the seasonality of sport events and the politics of time in sports. Season or seasonality is a cyclic expression of time that regulates the timing of a sport event. Seasonality provides continuity to specific sport events on a cyclical basis. Similarly, the politics of time, also interconnected to seasonality, points to the articulation of and control over time in order to manipulate ethnic, regional, and economic factors in sport events.

There are three papers included in this special issue. The first paper, by Glen Duerr, on the participation of Caribbean teams in North American professional soccer, highlights the issues of time and money in club and international football. This study deals with the issue of time on two levels. Firstly, it analyses the game from a horology perspective in which time affects football in a myriad of ways. Secondly, drawing on the literature on time and institutions, the study argues whether a “Caribbean division” plays in either the North American Soccer League (NASL) or United Soccer League (USL)-Pro league, it would be beneficial for all the participating teams in terms of their qualifying for the FIFA World Cup. The appropriate timing of the creation and retention of Caribbean division in 2011 could have changed the scenario for small Caribbean teams that are talented but lack resources. Drawing on the concept of supra-nationalism (Duerr, 2007), Duerr argues in favour of the “Caribbean division” in North American soccer. The study

highlights the issue of timing that limits the participation of Caribbean teams in North America, influenced by economic constraints.

Through a case study of Nigeria, James Okolie-Osemene and Rosemary Okoh in their paper address the threatened stability of Nigerian football seasons. They highlight the issues of mismanaging the events and occurrence of disputes related to the choice of venues and refusal by losing teams to play until the 90th minute or the abandonment of matches, among others, as the reasons behind not having stable football seasons in Nigeria. Okolie-Osemene and Okoh have provided a comprehensive account of the use and politics of time in Nigerian football as operationalised in the game and in the administration of sport events. The central theme in the paper is seasonality, and underpins the continuity of football seasons without disputes as healthy for the Nigeria Football Federation and Premier League.

Cristina Jönsson and Crystal Lewis, in their paper, assess the social impacts of hosting a sport event in tourism high season in Barbados. The study takes into account the perceptions of people residing near the event venue with regard to the social, economic and environmental impacts of sport events. The authors are of the opinion that the seasonality of the event and the manner in which local residents perceive the impact of a road racing event in the Run Barbados Series is critical to its future. Furthermore, the suitable timing of the event is critical for tourist participation. The study also recommends a longitudinal analysis of social impact assessment of such events over different seasons.

With these three papers, this issue contributes to our understanding of the concept of time and its role in sports. It also provides some new dimensions to analyse sports from social, cultural and political perspectives. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank the chief editor of *Recreation and Society in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, Peet van der Merwe, for his support during the editorial process. I am grateful to Hamza Hasan, Dalia Iskander, Dori Beeler and Chris Diming for their immense cooperation during the editorial process.

References

- Adam, B. (1990). *Time and Social Theory*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Beck, M. E., & Arnold, J. E. (2009). Gendered time use at home: an ethnographic examination of leisure time in middle-class families. *Leisure Studies*, 28(2), 121-142. doi: 10.1080/02614360902773888
- Bergmann, W. (1992). The problem of time in sociology: An overview of the literature on the state of theory and research on the 'sociology of time', 1900-82. *Time & Society*, 1(1), 81-134. doi: 10.1177/0961463x92001001007
- Biddle, S. J., Marshall, S. J., Gorely, T., & Cameron, N. (2009). Temporal and environmental patterns of sedentary and active behaviors during adolescents' leisure time. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 16(3), 278-286. doi: 10.1007/s12529-008-9028-y
- Duerr, G. M. (2007). Traversing borders: Supranationalism, public policy and the framing of undocumented immigration in the United States and the United Kingdom. *CEU Political Science Journal: The Graduate Student Review*, 2(2), 175-191.

- El Guindi, F. (2008). *By Noon Prayer: The Rhythm of Islam*. Oxford: Berg.
- Gingrich, A., Ochs, E., & Swedlund, A. (2002). Repertoires of timekeeping in anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, 43(Supplement), S3-S4. doi: 10.1086/339564
- Godoy-Pressland, A. (2014). The weekend as a male entity: how Sunday newspaper sports reporting centres around male activities, interests and language (2008 and 2009). *Leisure Studies*, 33(2), 148-163. doi: 10.1080/02614367.2013.833286
- Harvey, A. S. (1990). Time use studies for leisure analysis. *Social Indicators Research*, 23(4), 309-336. doi: 10.1007/bf00572527
- Hassard, J. (1990). *The Sociology of Time*. New York: St. Martin's.
- Martínková, I., & Parry, J. (2011). Two ways of conceiving time in sports. *Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis. Gymnica*, 41(1), 23-31.
- Mughal, M. A. Z. (2009). Time, absolute. In H. J. Birx (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Time: Science, Philosophy, Theology, and Culture*, Vol. 3 (pp. 1254-1255). New York: Sage Publications.
- Mughal, M. A. Z. (2014a). Calendars tell history: Social rhythm and social change in rural Pakistan. *History and Anthropology*, 25(5), 592-613. doi: 10.1080/02757206.2014.930034
- Mughal, M. A. Z. (2014b). *Time, Space and Social Change in Rural Pakistan: An Ethnographic Study of Jhokwala Village, Lodhran District*. PhD thesis. Durham University.
- Nowotny, H. (1975). Time structuring and time measurement: On the interrelation between timekeepers and social time. In J. T. Fraser & N. Lawrence (Eds.), *The Study of Time*, Vol. 2 (pp. 325-342). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Ramos, C. I., & Folkers, E. (1994). The relationship of perception of time and attributes of leisure in daily experiences. *Leisure Studies*, 13(2), 140-147. doi: 10.1080/02614369400390101