

From Hero to Headline,
The Role of Investigative Journalism in Exposing Sports Scandals: A Comprehensive Analysis

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Abstract

Analyzing the concept of investigative journalism in the context of sports media and how, paradoxically, it may both assist as well as harm sports journalism by revealing illicit conduct in the industry.

This paper explores the complex link between sports and investigative journalism, showing how, by exposing unethical activities in the sports industry, investigative journalism positively impacts and hampers sports media. This study attempts to clarify the complex role investigative journalism plays in influencing the sports media environment through in-depth research and analysis.

1. Introduction

The common yet unfamiliar principle of investigative journalism is to uncover topics that have been disguised, either intentionally or unintentionally, behind a chaotic mass of facts and situations - and to analyze and expose all pertinent information to the general public. Investigative journalism therefore plays a vital role in the advancement of media and freedom of speech. It has been remarkably shown historically in a number of events, including the inception of the term “muckraking” in the 20th century in the United States, when early newspapers in British Colonial America dated back to 1690, took it upon themselves to uncover and present British schemes to the citizens. They were often suppressed by the authorities for their investigative journalism.

Coverage and analysis of athletic events were further goals of sports journalism at the time of its foundation. It stayed mostly to reporting on gaming events, team strategy analysis, and match commentary. There has recently been an upsurge in the field's setting toward more in-depth and investigative reporting. The growing scrutiny of off-field activities and the role of sports journalists in exposing controversies that go beyond the confines of the game itself are two examples of this development. This research paper's later parts will examine this development and examine the thorough role that investigative media plays in bringing sports crises to light.

Seeking the truth about off-field disputes is becoming more vital, which is an avenue to see this growth. The media now delves deeply into the individual growth of the player, the team as a whole, and the organization that oversees the sport, going beyond scoreboards. Every detail of the event is covered by the media. From the warm-up to the match to the post-match. When it became clear that context and background information were needed to explain the stark results displayed on the scoreboard, the media quickly began to chronicle not just the athletes' exploits but also their mere existence.

Beyond the on-field heroics, fans wanted to know more about their beloved players' personal lives, which led to an exploration of these dynamics in-depth reporting. Athletes' personal lives, hardships, and victories were emphasized in in-depth feature articles and profiles that quickly became standard. It was predictable that some unsavory details would surface when delving far into one's personal life. Journalism soon expanded to include Off-Field Controversies in addition to inspiring stories.

This research study aims to investigate how some of the major issues in sports media have been uncovered thanks to the growth of investigative journalism in the media. The issues of what information should be released to the public, how to get information ethically, and what freedom entails when it comes to disclosing private information to the media.

2. Literature Context

Every sport, at all levels, has sporadic instances when players may take advantage of the rules and twist them to their advantage. Sports will always include some kind of cheating in one form or another. It has been at the core of some of the most spectacular sporting scandals and contentious events for hundreds of years, calling into question the integrity of the sport and, frequently, leading to major modifications to the rules itself.

A complete list of instances of sports cheating would be hard to compile due to the length and breadth of the history. Beginning from ancient Greece, in the days of plato and sparta, in the 98th Olympics of 388 B.C. Eupolus of Thessaly allegedly bribed all three of his opponents to let him win, prompting games organizers to impose "heavy fines" on all four men. From Ancient Greece to the Late 90s, in 1994 Formula One World Championship Benetton saw great success in both 1994 and '95, winning two Drivers' Championships and one Constructors' Championship. However, these wins come with a major asterisk. In 1994, Teams accused Benetton of using illegal software in their cars. An investigation was launched by the FIA, and Benetton cars were found equipped with a launch control system. But Benetton wasn't the only team to harbor electronic aids, as this type of software was found in the cars of numerous teams.

Sports Scandals and foul play go hand in hand with sports. It can be due to human psychology and the very concept of greed and maliciousness, cheating cannot be eradicated, but it can be exposed and jeopardize the athlete as well as the sport in general.

Some Journalists who have keenly been involved in the disclosure of such scandals are, Wright Thompson for his in depth research with ESPN on the case of Jerry Joseph, a made up persona that student Guerdwisch Montimere pursued for the fame of his highschool basketball career.

American Journalist Byron Calame, notably an editor for Wall Street Journal and New York times, covered the Duke Lacrosse Rape Scandal. He delved deep into the subject addressing not only the entitlement of college athletes but also the element of racialism involved. His insight and neutrality on the scandal provided a multifaceted perspective to the entire case.

Similarly, Martin Williamson, former managing editor of Sky Sports, investigated the formula one crashgate scandal of Renault in 2008, Singapore Grand Prix. He featured the timeline as well as the responses to the entire

scandal by fellow grid drivers. His research provided, what actually went down behind the scenes of the entire dirty deeds and the disqualification of Team Renault for two years.

3. Case Study

Andrew Jennings and the FIFA 2015 scandal, is presumably one of the biggest foul plays uncovered by a journalist. The FIFA 2015 incident involving Andrew Jennings is perhaps one of the greatest blunders ever discovered by a journalist. When attending a FIFA press conference in 2001, freelance reporter Jennings had one question for Herr Blatter: "Herr Blatter, have you ever taken a bribe?" The question was intended as a signal and an encouragement to conscientious FIFA employees to come forward with what they knew, not to force the FIFA president to make an admission. After six weeks, a covert meeting in Zürich at midnight was set up by an unidentified FIFA representative, who gave Jennings access to a cache of detrimental documents and connections for his further investigation.

Following a significant investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the US charged 14 current and former FIFA leaders and affiliates with deep rooted corruption in May. Additionally, 16 additional officials were indicted in December when two Fifa vice presidents were apprehended at the same Zurich hotel. Among those charged with being "involved in criminal schemes involving well over \$200m (£132m) in bribes and kickbacks" was former head of the Brazilian football association, Ricardo Teixeira.

Jennings conducted research for and produced a series of BBC Panorama films on FIFA and this very scandal, which helped his work gain international recognition. Most significantly, investigators (and soccer fans) employed by the FBI, the IRS, and the U.S. tax authority became aware of his book and essays.

In 2009, they got in touch with Jennings and requested him to help with their covert criminal investigation against FIFA. After 15 years of study culminating in "FIFA, Sepp Blatter and Me," Andrew Jennings began recording his fifth and last BBC Panorama show in May 2015, following the Department of Justice's (DOJ) forced retirement of Sepp Blatter. Andrew Jennings had a stroke during the production of some of the last scenes in New York, which limited his ability to work in his final years.

4. Impact and Consequences

Investigative journalism in general and sports journalism in particular are in crisis. Officials are shielded from accountability by slick public relations and the decline of traditional press conferences. AI-generated content is growing, social media is consuming more of our time, and few resources are available to fund investigations that might or might not lead to a story because of the sharp decline in advertising revenue. Investigative journalism has been declining for an assortment of reasons, such as major structural shifts in the media industry's ownership and structure, disputes with governments, and the use of the law and other tools to stifle reporting.

Journalists are reluctant to pursue inquiries in such life-threatening circumstances due to the severe risks they face. Due to his attempts to expose wrongdoing, investigative journalist Ahmed Hussein-Suale of Ghana was murdered and killed by assailants. Hussein-Suale had assisted in exposing a high-ranking official at FIFA as corrupt. Investigative journalism is rapidly declining as a result of several journalists encountering similar potentially fatal

scenarios while conducting research, Journalists prefer safer options than the extreme ones that lead to such untimely demise. High-end publication owners have severely suppressed investigative news from appearing due to control of large media conglomerates.

Every step of a journalist's reporting is being watched; unmarked trucks were stationed outside the residences of reporters covering the Snowden story (Luke Harding, interview, February 29, 2016) are an example of that.

Under the supervision of two security officials from The Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), who took notes and photos, The Guardian was forced to destroy the hard drives of computers used in its reporting using pneumatic drills and sledge hammers in the basement. Journalists are frequently led to the brink of destruction when pressure from higher ups results in them destroying their research and investigations. Because of these severe repercussions, journalists either cease doing investigative reporting entirely or drastically reduce it.

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