

The Narrative of Sport: Themes, Authors, Stories, Perspectives

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www.cesh2025.com

CALL FOR PAPERS

Without the storytelling of the media, sport could not exist – at least in the form we know today. Even in ancient times, the Olympics and other competitions drew the attention of poets and storytellers. In the modern era, the narrative of sport has developed through various media: periodical press, literature, visual arts, radio, cinema, television, collectible cards, and social networks. Media storytelling has made sport a central element of social, cultural, and political dynamics. It has also influenced the evolution of sports activities, for example, by popularizing some disciplines at the expense of others and shaping the organization of competitions. While high-level competitions have been the primary focus, amateur sports have not been entirely overlooked.

The 28th CESH Conference aims to examine how sport has been narrated over the centuries, considering all forms of communication. The intention is to involve not only historians but also scholars from other disciplines (sociologists, literature experts, anthropologists, etc.) interested in the storytelling of sports activities. Presentations can focus on case studies – related to any area of the world and any historical period – or propose more general analyses.

Proposals on any topic related to the narrative of sport will be considered. However, the scientific committee will prioritize certain themes during the evaluation process:

Sport in Periodical Press

The periodical press was the first medium to transform sport into a mass phenomenon. Even today, newspapers and magazines play a key role in popularizing sporting events. Many generalist newspapers allocate space to sports, and nearly every country has publications specifically dedicated to the subject.

Presentations can analyze the coverage of sports events in newspapers, focus on individual publications, examine the press from specific periods or countries, or explore the portrayal of individual events.

Sports Literature

Over the centuries, numerous storytellers and poets have chosen sport as the subject of their works, recounting the history of real champions and teams or creating fictional characters and stories. For historians, literature is particularly valuable for understanding the meanings attributed to sport in different eras and countries.

Presentations can focus on any aspect of the relationship between literary works and sports activities.

Sport in Visual Arts

Since ancient times, sport has been a subject in the works of painters and sculptors, who often depicted competitions and athletes, assigning them diverse meanings depending on historical and political contexts.

Presentations can examine how artists have portrayed sport and the messages they sought to convey through their works.

Audiovisual Media

Since their origins, audiovisual media – photography, radio, cinema, television – have featured sport. In the 20th century, they became the primary means of “experiencing” sporting events. Consequently, these media have had an extensive impact, influencing the organization of events and promoting some disciplines over others.

Presentations can focus on individual media, specific events, or offer more general analyses.

Social Media

Social media are profoundly changing the “consumption” of sport, allowing audiences to participate actively in the narrative by sharing opinions and ideas. Moreover, news spreads rapidly on social platforms, enabling real-time updates on sports events from anywhere in the world.

Presentations can examine the impact of social media on sports narratives and event organization, including their influence on traditional media storytelling.

Trading Cards, Stamps, and Other Objects

Sports narratives also extend to rarely studied but highly influential tools, like trading cards, stamps, coins, marbles, and even toys. These items have popularized sports events, particularly among children and young audiences.

Presentations can explore the use of such objects in sports storytelling, highlighting the elements emphasized and how their “narrative” has evolved over time.

The Narrative of Major Sporting Events

Media attention to sport peaks during major events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games and World Championships. Media coverage is essential for making these events known to the public and often influences how they unfold.

Presentations can analyze how major events are narrated, identify the themes that receive the most attention, and study the changes in storytelling over time.

Icons and Champions

Sports narratives create myths and icons. Through storytellers, some athletes have become globally recognized figures and role models admired by the public. The creation of icons is one of the most distinctive aspects of sports storytelling.

Presentations can examine how champions are presented by the media, how narratives have evolved over time, and their impact on public opinion.

Famous Journalists and Storytellers

Some sports journalists and storytellers have achieved great notoriety, becoming icons themselves. While most remain famous within their countries due to language barriers, some have gained international renown.

Presentations can explore the contributions of renowned sports storytellers, reconstruct their biographies, analyze their work, and highlight the specificity of their narratives.

The Narrative of Sport in Antiquity

Sport already its narrators already in Greco-Roman times: poets and other authors who described competitions and celebrated the achievements of champions. Their narratives, of course, served different purposes than today, but were essential for popularizing sports activities.

Presentations can analyze how Greek and Roman authors narrated sporting events, the meanings they attributed to competitions, the messages conveyed, and any other relevant aspects.

The Political Use of Sport

Sport is often used for political purposes: to consolidate support for governments or political forces, establish diplomatic relations, etc. Media play a critical role in achieving these goals. In authoritarian regimes, media must convey government-approved messages about sport; in democracies, political forces sometimes use sports narratives to promote specific values and principles.

Presentations can examine how journalists and other authors have used sport to disseminate political messages, focusing on individual athletes or events, or analyzing specific phenomena, like sport in conflict areas or discrimination against certain groups of athletes.

The Narrative of Paralympic Sport

In recent decades, Paralympic sport has gained attention from the media and the public. Coverage of the Paralympic Games and other competitions has increased and some athletes have become nationally and internationally renowned. Over time, the narrative of Paralympic sports has shifted: while earlier media often adopted a tone of pity and rarely presented disabled athletes as true competitors, today Paralympic events are generally covered similarly to other sports, although the pity-based interpretation has not disappeared.

Presentations can analyze how the media narrate Paralympic sports, focusing on specific athletes or events.

How to Submit Proposals

Abstracts

Abstracts, no longer than 300 words, must be submitted within 15 February 2025 through the Congress website www.cesh2025.com/submissions/abstract. Each abstract should include the title of the presentation, the state of the art, sources used, and a summary of the research findings. Abstracts and presentations can be in any European language; however, if the presentation is not in English, a PowerPoint presentation in English is recommended.

Abstracts should also include a brief biography of the author (no longer than 100 words), listing key publications.

Panels

Proposals for entire panels (4-6 presentations) are welcome. Each proposal must include the panel title, a brief description, individual abstracts, and the name of the chairperson. Preference will be given to panels with contributors from different countries. To propose a panel, abstracts must be uploaded individually. Additionally, the form on the website page

www.cesh2025.com/submissions/panel must be completed.