

An Examination of Television Coverage in U.S. High School Athletics

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Abstract

This article chronicles the positive and negative consequences of televising interscholastic athletic events. The study further explores the extent and range of television coverage for each of the 51 state high school athletic associations within the United States through 26 collected responses (51.0%) from athletic association executive directors. Specifically, the questionnaire addressed or focused on (a) how extensive television coverage of state association sponsored regular seasons games (e.g., High School Game of the Week) were in their respective state and (b) whether or not states reached an agreement to broadcast championship games/events. Overall, this study suggests a great opportunity exists for those institutions and organizations interested in broadcasting high school sport but suggests schools recognize the need to responsibly managing those broadcasts because of the age group involved. Finally, this paper offers several topics related to television and high school sports we should consider studying more closely in the future.

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The commercialization of high school athletics emerged as a significant topic of discussion in recent years likely due to national and regional broadcasters increasingly opening spaces for interscholastic sporting events or sport-related shows on their networks. Take for example 2006, ESPN and its sister networks (e.g. ESPN2, ESPNU, and ESPN360) contracted to broadcast twelve high school football match-ups (up from four in 2005). MTV developed an eight-week show, which documented Alabama football power, Hoover High School's 2005 season. NBC also produced a television series called "Friday Night Lights," based off the popular book and film about a high school in Texas (Spanberg, 2006). Notably, this exposure prompts the use of television to surface as a major topic for debate among school boards and their communities because some anticipate interscholastic athletic broadcasting "will become consistently profitable within five to ten years," (Spanberg, 2006 p.6).

The first regular television broadcasts of American high school athletics started during the early 1980s in a small Midwestern community as a result of their local radio station signing-off well before the start of the local school's Friday night football contests (Philadelphia Inquirer, 2001). In order to assuage local citizens' concerns about the progress of the game, a single camera was mounted on the stadium to broadcast the football contests into the community's roughly 2,000 homes (Philadelphia Inquirer, 2001). As the 1980s progressed, the cable television industry grew which allowed some select high schools to broadcast various athletic contests on local, regional, or national channels.

Debate about the appropriateness of televising high school

athletics contests began in the 1980s and continues today. Again, the recent public attention high school student-athletes received from the Internet, ESPN, MTV, Fox Sports Net, NBC, and other local/regional stations along with restrictions or specifications implemented by national, state, and local association governing bodies incited dialogue and interest about the special benefits and drawbacks of combining television with high school sporting events (Spanberg, 2006). Criticism and support for the broadcasting of high school athletics materialized from a variety of individuals.

This article seeks to identify these sources and recognize the positive and negative consequences of televising U.S. high school athletic events for schools and their communities as a commercial product. In addition to this objective, the study also intends to describe the current position or status state high school athletic associations hold related to the televising of high school sport. State high school athletic associations are important to survey because they typically exist as the major governing body, which regulates, coordinates and promotes member athletic programs in their attempt to reach educational, financial, and media objectives. This article also addresses the television issue as a potential marketable product for high school institutions based on this combination of sources. Finally, this work offers future areas to study so we can understand television's impact on high school athletes and athletics in order to more adequately manage television broadcasts in this unique environment.

Negative Consequences

Sports Illustrated brought national attention to the high school sport and television debate with a series of articles and editorials between 1989 and 1990. Reilly (1989) mentioned his various concerns with SportChannel America, a national cable network appearing in 8.5 million homes in 1989, and their desire to broadcast fourteen high school football games and 24 other high school events from all across the United States. Within his article, Reilly suggested television will influence high schools to engage in more illegal recruiting, practice win or die coaching methods (e.g. playing injured players or trying to hurt others), allow sponsors to dictate the terms of the contest or student-athlete choices, and encourage the athletic department to first focus on the bottom line rather than the student-athlete experience. Additionally, Reilly posited television adversely affects the student athlete by creating more "prima donna" or vain tendencies, increasing injury rates, and perhaps negatively affecting student-athlete maturation if their failures are broadcast to thousands or millions of people.

Similarly, Freeman (2002) and Wolff (1990) also offered television coverage allows high school student-athletes to become mythical or national figures well before they start a college or professional career. For example, LeBron James was well known for his basketball ability before he started his career in the National Basketball Association (NBA). The Internet also can aid television producers seeking to broadcast high school sports stars because

fans of college programs increasingly want more information about “Blue Chip” or highly prized recruits (Spanberg, 2006). The Internet provides continuous replays for those who wish to see high school students in action. Obviously, this sort of attention could improperly intrude or disrupt the life of a young person and negatively affect their future. Wolff (1990) suggests this intrusion and image creation could provide serious problems for the likely ill-prepared student-athlete because the tremendous pressures to succeed can overwhelm his/her immature or underdeveloped coping skills. That was often the debate following the television coverage of James and other interscholastic athletic stars.

In recent years, televising high school athletics provided the opportunity for *USA Today*, Fox Sports Net, *Street & Smith*, and others to rank high school athletic teams (Fisher, 2003; Wolff, 1990). For example, Fox Sports Net (FSN) broadcasted nearly 500 hours of high school sport throughout the 1999 school year, primarily covering state and regional championships in forty states (Berry, 1999). This significant amount of airtime provided the above groups the ability to rank high school teams of various sports because increased viewing access makes it easier for them to adequately judge the playing ability of each team and compare them to other institutions. Interestingly, as a by product, this access also prompted these groups to suggest a national playoff or bowl game for its number one and two ranked high school football programs (King, 2005a). For example, recent efforts by the Television Football Network (TFN) and FSN demonstrated they made an effort to promote and produce a national high school championship game (Berry, 1999; King, 2005a; Wallace, 2003). Many criticized this effort by FSN and TFN to promote a national high school championship game for reasons similar to those discussed earlier (Berry, 1999; Wallace, 2003). Still, Berry pointed out a television prompted national high school football championship should also be criticized because it conflicts with school final exams before winter break and the start of the winter sport (e.g. basketball, wrestling, and hockey) season.

Berry (1999) additionally suggested not every state competes over the same sport calendar. Thus, as southern high schools in the United States start their seasons much earlier than northern schools, those schools from the south would likely compete under a five or six month sport season when making a national title game. Besides the length of the season, the State of Michigan also showed it would be problematic to include all states into a tournament or championship because they complete their girl’s basketball season during the fall, while all other states mainly compete during the winter. Other sports like tennis, golf, and volleyball also follow different sport schedules between states to prevent a “true” national champion from being declared.

High school athletic departments also demonstrated television broadcasts impose a lot of difficulties or stressors, which they appear ill-equipped to handle. For instance, St. Vincent-St. Mary’s (Akron, OH) hosted the above mentioned, NBA All-Star Guard LeBron James of the Cleveland Cavaliers, on their team from 2000 to 2003. As a desirable commodity for the entertainment and sport industry, television enticed St. Vincent-St. Mary’s into moving its games from its own 1,700 seat gym to the University of Akron’s arena (6,000 seats). Furthermore, television prompted them to broadcast their games on local pay-per-view and complete

a near 9,000-mile tour of the United States during the 2002-2003 season (Hyde, 2003; Morgan, 2002; Smith, 2002; Steinberg, 2003; Zitrin, 2003). Overall, the small Catholic school participated in tournaments all across the United States in places like Pittsburgh (PA), Philadelphia (PA), Los Angeles (CA), Trenton (NJ), Greensboro (NC), Dayton (OH), and Columbus (OH).

The school itself first drew criticism for its pay-per-view broadcasts from Hyde (2003), who suggested the school primarily focused on revenues. Specifically, in a deal with Time-Warner Cable, nearly 400,000 subscribers of Northeast Ohio enjoyed the opportunity to pay the cable provider and the school over \$7.00 a game (Morgan, 2002; Smith 2002; Zitrin, 2003). Many condemned the long road trips and the perceived impact they likely inflicted on their student-athletes, but the school itself suggested the largest problems were associated with a lack of staff and time to meet all the demands of a heavily commercialized program (Steinberg, 2003). St. Vincent-St. Mary’s Athletic Director Grant Innocenzi suggested he worked eighty hours a week during the 2002-2003 season and fielded roughly 100 emails and 300 phone calls per day (Steinberg, 2003). Additional stressors arrived from attempting to coordinate press conferences, plotting escape routes for the team during home and road games, and handling the various requests of the school’s 2,500 season ticket holders (Steinberg, 2003). Clearly, television impacted, if not created, all these problems for the St. Vincent-St. Mary’s athletics.

In addition to the problems mentioned above, St. Vincent-St. Mary’s also found television spoiled their relationships with other high school institutions. For example, Steinberg (2003) reported traditional rivals like Archbishop Hoban and Walsh Jesuit suggested they will not play St. Vincent-St. Mary’s in the future because of differing philosophical positions. Each school appeared displeased about rescheduling or canceling contests to fit St. Vincent-St. Mary’s national television appearances and various road trips. Additionally, rival Akron power Central-Hower cancelled future meetings with the school after a dispute over the distribution of ticket sales during their regular season game (Steinberg, 2003). Central-Hower felt they were owed their traditional share of the highly popular contests and St. Vincent-St. Mary’s should not receive more because of their recent popularity.

Similar to St. Vincent-St. Mary’s, De La Salle High School (Concord, CA) also emerged as a highly prized television attraction. However, in this case it was their remarkably successful football team, not one individual, surfacing as the marketable star. From 1991 to 2004, De La Salle High School’s football team won an amazing 151 straight games and multiple mythical national championships. Not surprisingly, this success attracted numerous offers to play throughout their own state and the rest of the country, often on television. For example, ARCO promoted a game between De La Salle and Long Beach Poly as an unofficial national championship game in 2001 and incredibly, the game scored a 2.0 Nielsen rating (Wallace, 2003). In the United States, one Nielsen rating point equals 1% or 1,152,000 households for the 2006-07 season.

More recently, De La Salle traveled to Shreveport, LA and Seattle, WA to play Louisiana superpower Evangel Christian Academy and Washington contender Bellevue for a national television audience (Peterson, 2004; Powell, 2003). Again, making appearances against

these opponents attracted some negative publicity as Head Coach Bob Ladouceur and Athletic Director/Defensive Coordinator Terry Edison suggested some people thought of them as a “traveling circus” and challenged them as scared when not agreeing to play another (Glier, 2003 p.14c).

Travel expenses also frequently materialize as a major drawback to national contests like those mentioned above because they could make the effort of attending the road contest not worth the endeavor. For example, Spanberg (2006) revealed a two-day high school football event planned in Ohio for 2006 could impose \$45,000 to \$50,000 in travel expenses on out-of-state teams. Added to the likely \$40,000 production cost per game, this imposes a great stressor on schools to assure event sponsors their image and public name can generate enough interest to help attract viewers and sponsors so the event can pay for itself (Spanberg, 2006).

Positive Consequences

Despite the many negative implications offered above regarding television and high school athletics, numerous proponents described how televising high school athletics helped their athletic program, community, school, and student-athletes. In a response to the Reilly (1989) column mentioned above, Dwight Thomas, Athletic Director and Head Football Coach of Escambia High School (Pensacola, FL) proposed his rationale for accepting the televising of his schools various athletic events (Thomas & Thomas, 1989). First, Thomas suggested gate receipts doubled those of the 1987 football season when the school decided to televise certain contests of the 1989 campaign (Thomas & Thomas, 1989). Consequently, the larger gate resulted in higher amounts of “revenue from parking, food concessions, and sales of programs, caps, and pennants,” (Thomas & Thomas, 1989 p.8). Thomas suggested this extra money helped the entire football program generate a profit for first time in many years and offered numerous benefits to the other athletic programs offered by the school. For example, new equipment and uniforms would expectedly appear as a benefit.

Thomas and Thomas (1989) proposed the larger gate surfaced because television prompted the community to care more about the contests. Specifically, these authors offered the community responded to become more cohesive as a national or statewide-televised event did not surface in their community on a regular basis. Essentially, the community saw the televised high school athletic event as a special episode in their history and they wanted their school and community to be seen in the best light possible while on television. To demonstrate this commitment by the community, Thomas and Thomas (1989) acknowledged television served as the primary source of motivation for the many financial and volunteer contributions needed to complete the renovations of the Escambia High School stadium and beautification of the greater school grounds. Wolff (1990) also promoted communities work harder for their school when their sports are televised.

For the student-athlete, Thomas and Thomas (1989) promoted television as beneficial to their health during the hot and humid Florida weather. Timeouts were distinctively identified as a benefit to the high school athlete because they helped the competitors replenish their bodies with much needed fluids and rest to avoid heat related injuries such as cramping, exhaustion, and heat stroke. Under normal conditions (i.e. without television coverage), state

rules for football provide fewer and shorter timeouts during contests. However, when events are televised those timeouts are longer and more frequent to accommodate commercial interests of the sponsors. This obviously helps the student-athlete recover better under what could be difficult conditions and possibly produce a better or more well-played event.

Student-athletes of other sports offered at the school also appear to benefit from the commercial exposure of their sports during the football contests. The promotion of their activities in live and remote attendance created not only public and school awareness, but encouraged more participation interest (i.e. tryouts and game attendance) for the winter and spring sport seasons by students (Thomas & Thomas, 1989). Thomas felt this was important to building and sustaining a solid athletic program in their school, promoting a healthy lifestyle, and strengthening the overall social community of the school.

Television broadcasts also helped promote the abilities of student-athletes to institutions of higher education. Coach Thomas felt the television exposure helped motivate his players to perform better and work harder and thus attract colleges or universities to the school to recruit them and others (Thomas & Thomas, 1989). Consistently, the literature demonstrates others support the comments made by Thomas and Thomas. For example, Wolff (1990) also suggested televising high school sporting events helps motivate the players to work harder. Additionally, Dale Mueller, Athletic Director and Head Football Coach at Highlands High School (Fort Thomas, KY) specifically identifies television and the general recognition associated with being on it as a heavy contributor to some students obtaining a chance at a higher education (Berry, 1999). Primarily, these individuals feel television exposure provides the student-athletes with an opportunity to be seen during the National Collegiate Athletic Association’s (NCAA) Dead Evaluation Periods, gain access/entry into important camps or summer leagues, and earn recognition from recruiting publications or scouting services.

In addition to the exposure student-athletes received, many schools found television provided them with a valuable scheduling tool because of the publicity it generated. De La Salle and Evangel Christian Academy represent two institutions utilizing their television exposure to help them schedule future contests. Evangel Christian Academy’s recent success (multiple Louisiana State Football Championships and a mythical national championship in 1999) helped them get on television, but also appeared to intimidate other Louisiana schools from playing them (Powell, 2003). Consequently, Head Football Coach Dennis Dunn sought out a national schedule and television appearances to encourage teams to schedule contests against his traditionally successful program (Powell, 2003). Similarly, De La Salle suggests television exposure and their team’s success helped them attract enough competition to plan out their schedule for the years ahead which was often a challenge within the state against other institutions (Glier, 2003).

Still, athletic departments and schools give the impression television’s greatest resources are its financial contributions because its money appears plentiful (Berry, 1999; Fisher, 2003; Hyde, 2003; Steinberg, 2003). Again, one only needs to examine St. Vincent-St. Mary’s tour and pay-per-view deal to see this. During

the 2002-03 basketball season, according to Athletic Director Grant Innocenzi, St. Vincent-St. Mary's collected about \$400,000 of income (Steinberg, 2003). This money materialized primarily from tournament road trips, which garnered the school anywhere from \$10,000 to \$15,000 per appearance (Hyde, 2003; Smith, 2002). Additionally, the small pay-per-view investment of \$5,000 per game needed only 630 buys to break even. Thus, with roughly 400,000 available subscribers, a more than adequate buying base surfaced to help the school and cable station make a profit (Zitrin, 2003). Interestingly, many other writers mention appearances at televised tournaments should seem attractive to high schools (Berry, 1999; Fisher, 2003; Smith, 2002). For instance, the football national championship proposed by Fox Sports Net flirted with a \$50,000 appearance fee for participating schools and all expenses paid for the student-athletes and their parents to award schools and their athletic departments (Berry, 1999).

Some propose television could also assist a high school athletic department with the acquisition of additional rewards from local, regional, and possibly national sponsors in the form of money or direct help through providing equipment, paying for uniforms and practice clothing, and supplying materials to maintain the athletic facilities (Harlan, 2005; King, 2005a, 2005b; Wolff, 1990). For example, Thomaselli (2004) reported that a mere mention (30-second spot) on the cable sports channel ESPN, helped Watersmeet High School (enrollment 78), located on Michigan's Upper Peninsula, earn roughly \$40,000 from merchandise sales because of the school's unusual nickname, the Nimrods. The Montour High School Spartans (Montour, PA) hired NFL Hall of Fame recipient Dick Butkus as a coach for their 2005 season. As part of ESPN's "Bound for Glory," television production, the Spartans received "new uniforms and equipment courtesy of Reebok, \$65,000 worth of goods and services supplied by school sponsor Dick's Sporting Goods, and a new, \$40,000 scoreboard," (King, 2005a, pg. 15). Clearly, this unexpected revenue boost served both schools quite well.

The previously mentioned rankings influenced by television also reported nice incomes for those schools able to remain on the lists at the end of the year. For example, Berry (1999) reported those schools gaining a Top 50 ranking on Fox Sports Net's football watch earned \$5,000 of in-kind gifts like equipment, shoes, and fan apparel. Obviously, some individuals would support gaining recognition for this accomplishment because of the attractive amount of money given out. Still, one can see the potential political battles teams or schools would likely engage in over this money could prevent some from seeking future television opportunities.

Logic further suggests coaches of high school teams appearing on television and in the various national rankings systems likely benefit financially. For instance, it is not unrealistic to think high school coaches such as Evangel Christian Academy's Dennis Dunn or Mater Dei High School (Santa Ana, CA) Gary McKnight could capitalize on their successes for their own profit. Specifically, this paper argues these individuals are more likely to attract paid speaking opportunities, earn their own private endorsement opportunities, and find an audience to buy books, workout materials, and other items designed by their accepted expertise. Additionally, this work believes television would help promote future camps and clinics offered by the head coach or institution,

which could benefit them and the school. For example, athletic departments can utilize camps and clinics to supplement assistant and/or head coaches' incomes to keep departmental costs down, while still retaining a high quality staff.

Finally, there appears to be significant educational value associated with the production of a television event for the general student population. Many schools today, implementing technology courses, include television production into their curriculum and specifically embrace or highlight sport broadcasting as a major topic. Performing a Google search on "television production and high school courses" demonstrates this point effectively as television production classes overwhelming cover issues related to sporting events like: (a) camera operation; (b) single and multiple camera shooting values; (c) graphics; (d) special effects; (e) shot selection and replay; (f) audio microphones; (g) lighting and set design; (h) maintenance of equipment; (i) ratings and advertising; and (j) occupational opportunities. Many of the syllabi found also specifically list sport as a unit of study or project area to produce. Overall, the sporting event emerges as an excellent opportunity for students to practice and learn skills, which could be necessary for securing higher education opportunities, performing well academically, or achieving a desired career path.

Method

The researchers developed each of the items for the 51 state high school athletic associations to answer. Specifically, respondents were asked whether their states had agreements for the broadcasting of their high school championships (and if so, in which sports). In addition, they were asked to rate the extent of coverage they received for regular season contests on a 7-point Likert-scale (from no statewide coverage to extensive statewide coverage).

These research questions were a small addition to a much larger study dealing with current issues in high school athletics. Research questions applicable to this paper were attached to a follow-up study initially conducted by Turner, Mahony, and Pastore (2005) on interscholastic rules violations in 1999 within the *International Journal of Sport Management*. The primary purpose of that inquiry was to determine if any significant changes in the types of rules violations committed occur and whether or not those sports engaging in illegal activities changed over the five-year period. A secondary focus of this investigation also sought to advance a general understanding about high school athletic participation in the United States, with respect to rule violations.

Overall, questionnaires were sent to all 51 executive directors of state high school athletic associations, along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of this research. A follow-up postcard was sent to executive directors who did not return the questionnaire within two weeks. After one month, 20 questionnaires (39.2%) were returned. The researchers then made phone calls to those who had not returned the questionnaire. A total of 26 questionnaires (51.0%) were collected. Respondents ranged in age from 44 to 67 ($M = 56.58$; $SD = 5.99$), with only 2 of the respondents being female (7.7%). The respondents were primarily Caucasian (92.3%) but one Asian-American and Hispanic-American also completed the survey. The level of education varied but most respondents identified their highest level of education achieved as graduate

(Bachelors-8%, Masters-48%, Doctoral-44%). Respondents were also asked to identify what athletic and educational positions they held in the past. Athletically, the study's respondents indicated they previously served as assistant coaches (88.5%), head coaches (84.6%), and athletic directors (73.1%). Furthermore, within an educational context, the study's respondents indicated they held positions as teachers (96.2%), assistant principals (34.6%), principals (46.2%), district level administrators (11.5%), assistant superintendents (3.8%), and superintendents (11.5%).

To help control for non-response error, methods proposed by Miller and Smith (1983) were used. According to Miller and Smith, late respondents are often similar to non-respondents; in other words, late respondents are assumed to be typical of non-respondents. For this study, late respondents ($n = 6$) were defined as those who returned their questionnaire after follow-up phone calls were made. On all variables of interest for this study, chi-square tests (for categorical data) and independent sample t -tests (for continuous data) were used to determine whether there was a statistical difference between the means of early and late respondents. Results showed no significant difference between early and late respondents on all variables of interest. Thus, it was concluded that the non-respondents were not different from the respondents.

Table 1. Number of states broadcasting championship games (by sport)

SPORT	n	%
Baseball	2	7.7%
Basketball (Boys)	19	73.1%
Basketball (Girls)	18	69.2%
Cheerleading	3	11.5%
Cross Country (Boys)	0	0%
Cross Country (Girls)	0	0%
Field Hockey	0	0%
Football	17	65.4%
Golf (Boys)	0	0%
Golf (Girls)	0	0%
Ice Hockey (Boys)	4	15.4%
Ice Hockey (Girls)	0	0%
Indoor Track & Field (Boys)	1	3.8%
Indoor Track & Field (Girls)	1	3.8%
Lacrosse (Boys)	0	0%
Lacrosse (Girls)	0	0%
Outdoor Track & Field (Boys)	0	0%
Outdoor Track & Field (Girls)	0	0%
Soccer (Boys)	0	0%
Soccer (Girls)	0	0%
Softball	2	7.7%
Swimming & Diving (Boys)	1	3.8%
Swimming & Diving (Girls)	1	3.8%
Tennis (Boys)	0	0%
Tennis (Girls)	1	3.8%
Volleyball (Boys)	0	0%
Volleyball (Girls)	6	23.1%
Wrestling (Individual)	3	11.5%
Wrestling (Team)	1	3.8%

Results

Statewide Coverage of High School Championships

Of the 26 respondents to the questionnaire, 14 (53.8%) stated they had an agreement to broadcast their states' championship games/events. The sports with the most states broadcasting their championships were boys' basketball ($n = 19$; 73.1%), girls' basketball ($n = 18$; 69.2%), and football ($n = 17$; 65.4%). Fifteen different sports received coverage in at least one state (see Table 1).

Extent of Regular Season Television Coverage

Each of the state executive directors were asked how extensive television coverage of state association sponsored regular seasons games (e.g., High School Game of the Week) was in their respective state on a 7-point Likert-scale. The average rating was only 1.73 (out of 7) with 15 of 22 respondents giving their state a "1" (no statewide coverage). In addition, only one executive director gave their state a "7" (extensive statewide coverage).

Discussion/Concluding Remarks

Despite the limited exploratory nature of this investigation, the results of the survey indicate that while the televising of high school sports may be growing, its potential has not yet been maximized. For example, many state associations indicated they currently only control championship coverage and do not seek to control access over regular season or other playoff contests. Interestingly, some states also acknowledged they did not broadcast the championship games of the most popular American sports (e.g. football and basketball). It was even more limited in the other sports along with regular season games too. Data from this study also shows over 25% of surveyed state associations fail to sell any television championship rights to popular revenue producing sports like football and boys' or girls' basketball (See Table 1).

Taken together, the results suggest state associations and high school athletic programs are likely leaving a lot of possible financial, political, social, and educational benefits listed "on the table" by not fully utilizing the television opportunities. Thus, if one peers into the future, as Burke Magnus, vice president and general manager of ESPNU has, he or she might see high school athletics and television hold a promising opportunity to expand their relationship for the profit of each (King, 2005a). Rashid Ghazi, vice president of marketing and sales for the Paragon Marketing Group (Skokie, IL), a co-producer of several high school contests aired on ESPN, also espouses this belief as he feels the high school market possesses incredible potential for growth with the television industry (King, 2005a; Spanberg, 2006).

Financially, this concept is important to recognize because high school athletic departments all across the country are experiencing budget cuts. Therefore, they must search for alternative sources of revenue to assure the survival of their athletic programs (King, 2005b). Concurrently, local or national businesses also search for opportunities to advertise their products and services to potential and current customers. The significant audience numbers (up to 2.0 Nielsen ratings) achieved for recent high school football and boys' basketball broadcasts demonstrate television transmissions exist as a potential revenue stream for high school athletic departments and sponsors (Martzke, 2002; Reed, 2003; Smith,

2005a; Spanberg, 2006; Wallace, 2003). The evidence shown here indicates many institutions and state athletic associations across the United States support the use of television to broadcast high school athletic events and that television broadcasting of these contests are not rare episodes and can be supported even by the school's own students. Thus, television and high school sport can be a suitable match.

For example, towns and high schools in Central Massachusetts annually broadcast football games during the Thanksgiving weekend through Charter Communications. Utilizing four to five camera locations and providing instant replay, these simple broadcasts regularly earn positive feedback from the community (Doyle, 2003). Additionally, Cox Communications demonstrated its interactive broadcasting of high school sports in Mesa, Arizona appears popular enough for local businesses to promote their products and services to the surrounding community (Taylor, 2003). Politically, in these instances, television provided an excellent opportunity for a positive connection of both the school and sponsor to the viewer at home because of their preference for high school sport or a certain product or service. Still, state high school associations, governing bodies, and individual school districts looking to secure television contracts should examine the market to make certain it is not too saturated. Furthermore, they should scrutinize possible sponsors before jumping into production to make sure they exist as an appropriate match for their institution. This is especially important in communities or cities with multiple private or public high school athletic programs.

Ghazi suggests the college model currently serves as an exemplary standard for high school athletics to follow for this purpose because they traditionally host marketing and sponsorship personnel within their athletic departments and educational setting who help make such decisions about market saturation and sponsorship match (Spanberg, 2006). In the future, high school athletic departments might want to take advantage of the college model to recruit sponsors and develop marketing plans for their events. Unfortunately, Ghazi indicates most high school athletic departments do not realize this possibility because their athletic directors and district administrators appear uninformed or unaware to the many marketing, sponsorship, and educational opportunities television provides. Therefore, as colleges and high schools each similarly operate to protect students and service their community, high schools should look into expanding the size of their athletic department through embracing the technology faculty need, hiring marketing and sponsorship personnel, or developing marketing and sponsorship proposals themselves with student help to take advantage of television's opportunity properly.

Clearly, this research supports the notion that high school principals, athletic directors, and community members need to recognize and implement safe procedures to protect their student-athletes and schools from the negative consequences of television listed above. Undoubtedly, multiple athletic associations possess the ability to sell exclusive broadcasting rights to championship and playoff contests for a variety of sports. Additionally, individual high schools can benefit greatly from the educational opportunities and the marketing of their athletic events through television. Yet, as this study shows, not all associations or schools attempted to reach for the rewards television broadcasts can provide and many might

hesitate to embrace television because of the various negative consequences offered above. Consequently, this work advises schools to work together through conference or state associations in order to increase efficiency and develop an approach that would increase cohesion and avoid many problems that emerge when schools work alone.

Finally, this piece calls for more research on television coverage of high school events because this work was exploratory research and limited by the size of the initial instrument. Future inquiries could address many of the topics listed above. For example, we could more closely examine television broadcasting and webcasting by schools and how sports impact and/or aid student learning. Also future research could more formally examine television's impact on game attendance, participation rates, and athletic program finances. Next, we could analyze how illegal recruiting, injury rates, and event scheduling relate to television. Television's influence on coaching salaries or supplemental income could also be measured along with its effect on identifying recruits by college coaches and camp invites received by high school students. Lastly, this work offers we could determine more distinctly how television affects the nature of high school sporting events or how they are conducted.

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