



Gridiron Consumers: The Billion-Dollar Ascent of Football in America

Curriculum Unit 10.01.06

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At the dawn of the twenty-first century, pro football stood alone as the apotheosis of modern American sport, a financial and cultural dynasty, both tempted and plagued by greed and always in danger of overstretch. At the same time, it was a mass media juggernaut responsible for the ten most-watched television programs in history, and one of the few solid pieces of common ground left on the increasingly balkanized map of modern American popular culture. ¹

- Michael MacCambridge

Adding show business to football broadcasting initially meant enhancing the game's storytelling ability, not reducing but amplifying football's epic or mythic power. More cameras, including the use of close-ups, slow motion, and relays, meant an ability to capture the raw human emotions of joy, agony, disappointment, and rage." ²

- Michael Oriard

Over 100 million Americans watched Super Bowl XLIV on February 7, 2010, setting an all-time record for viewership; an 8% increase over the previous Super Bowl. The CBS network sold 30-second advertisements during the broadcast for \$2.6 million. The National Football League generates well over \$8 billion in revenue annually and has its own cable television network. Why do fans continue to spend millions of dollars on supporting and rooting for their favorite football teams?

While football fans enjoy the Super Bowl and BCS Championship game every year, few gridiron aficionados know the history and growth of college and pro football as big business in American consumer culture. After WW II, two cultural transformations--television and consumerism--intersected to catapult football to the top of the sports industry. This unit offers students an opportunity to appreciate the impact on themselves as

consumers of the dynamic between sports, technology, big business, and the federal government. The NFL has dominated the sports industry during the past fifty years by marketing, branding, programming, and promoting its athletes and the game through shrewd decisions by its owners and commissioners. Students will watch documentaries and films, read secondary sources and research topics to learn how football and consumerism converged in the mid-1960s to create a billion-dollar industry. The unit will provide new classroom strategies, ignite students' intellectual curiosity and connect sports and consumer culture to contextualize and enhance their knowledge and appreciation of the game. It provides the opportunity to identify the growth of amateur and professional football as one of the most profitable consumer industries in the country and trace its influence on American consumerism especially male consumption, an understudied phenomenon given the stereotypically feminine association with shopping and consumption. All lessons are designed and presented in order to examine and answer the following essential question: How have gridiron industrialists, competitive coaches, college athletic departments, the federal government and fanatical fans embraced amateur and professional football and kindled a multi-billion dollar consumer culture in the United States?

The students will employ critical thinking skills to synthesize historical knowledge of football with current consumer theory, free-market enterprise, and the rise of television. The classroom scholars will increase their business vocabulary and study how the game has shaped the consumer culture. Students will explore the ascent of college and professional football while investigating the myth of the amateur athlete and the impact of federal legislation on the industry. The curriculum unit also focuses on the research process in order to prepare students for the demands of college. The scholars will research the immense business of college and professional football, profits in our consumer culture and marketing and branding of the sport to the American public.

Several essential questions guide the unit:

- Why do Americans spend billions of dollars of discretionary income on NFL and college football products in the consumer culture?
- How did college football effectively forgo its amateur status and become a billion-dollar industry?
- How did technology and the federal government intersect to create a gridiron consumer culture worth billions?
- How has the film industry, corporate commercials and NFL Films illustrated and portrayed professional football in America?
- Why did League Think increase revenue in the NFL?
- How did the NFL rise to the summit of American sports and market itself in America's consumer culture?
- How did the NFL retain its dominance over the AFL and USFL?
- How have the courts ruled in antitrust lawsuits against the NFL?

Rationale

The purpose of this unit is to encourage students to explore college and professional football and to pursue research to ignite their intellectual curiosity in consumer culture. Specifically, the lessons require students to synthesize their knowledge of football films, business acumen, and historical inquiry with reflection on their own consumer habits. Students will explore and analyze sources as well as data acquired throughout the unit to understand the football industry and its impact on consumer culture.

I teach social studies in an urban magnet arts high school. We have students from the city of New Haven and surrounding suburban communities: a very diverse student body from all socio-economic, racial, and religious backgrounds. Every student studies an art (dance, music, chorus, visual arts, theatre or creative writing) and must earn three social studies credits in order to graduate. As seniors having fulfilled their requirements, many students take an elective course in social studies. In organizing this unit, I envisioned working closely with students who enjoy filmmaking in my History Through Film course, which is an elective. The lessons will be coordinated within the framework of the social studies curriculum in New Haven, which is outlined in Appendix A at the end of the unit plan.

When inspecting the statistics of incoming freshmen at colleges and universities across the country, I find it stunning that only 43% of the students are boys. ³ Scholars and educators are looking at the causes of low attendance of young men and strategies on how to keep boys interested in intellectual matters. In *Why Boys Fail*, author Richard Whitmire provides some grim numbers for young boys in school: they are more than four times likely than girls to be expelled from pre-school and they endure greater attention-deficit ailments. ⁴ Boys are also behind girls on state-wide standardized tests for both reading and writing. As a result, many boys' intellectual aspirations and career dreams have fallen behind those of their female peers. In the early 1990s, educational reforms focused on getting students ready for college and focused on increased reading and writing skills. Unfortunately, boys have not adjusted to the new paradigm in education as easily. Whitmire states that parents must promote literacy at home and allow young sons to engage in reading no matter the topic or subject in the book. "Just keep them reading. The largest gender gaps are found in writing skills," Whitmire writes.

As a teacher, I witness first hand the difference between boys and girls in classroom studies, and I am very concerned about the lack of young men on college campuses. In an attempt to spark intellectual endeavor and curiosity, I explore two subjects that enthrall some boys: football and business. The History Through Film elective provides the perfect opportunity to think outside the box, and hopefully, spark boys' academic curiosity and keep them focused on pursuing a bachelor's degree. Girls are also able to register for this course and female sports fans would surely enjoy all of the historical rigor and creative assignments throughout the lessons.

While young women likely see themselves as consumers in modern America, many boys do not make the same connection. During the 1950s, many Americans believed that shopping and consumption pertained only to the woman's world. Popular culture and advertising executives fostered a bias viewpoint in which men earned the family income while women made purchases and spent it. However, *Playboy* magazine, a groundbreaking venture, illustrated men's consumer desires and promoted new avenues and marketing strategies that catered to male consumers, who are an underappreciated social and historical topic. Technological advances in the last fifty years have provided the ideal opportunity to match products with male customers.

Bonding over their favorite college or pro football teams since the beginning of the sport, male gridiron consumers and NFL executives have benefited greatly by this relationship. Fans' desires and willingness to purchase football-related goods and services have driven this multi-billion dollar industry. Students will hopefully appreciate themselves as consumers, not just as fans, after completing this unit.

Equipped with the latest technology in our school, I constantly use PowerPoint presentations to provide information and guide instruction. In order to "hook" students on individual lessons, topics for Socratic discussions are offered throughout the narrative, and homework assignments are provided at the end of the unit. Students will scrutinize historical films and documentaries throughout the unit, and employ critical thinking in order to analyze television broadcasts, product advertisements and federal court rulings.

An examination of the history of college football will provide students with vital knowledge to incorporate a better understanding of the game's impact on American consumer culture. Students will also investigate how the NFL markets and brands its product to fans, and the roles of NFL owners, commissioners, and players in the front offices and on the field. At the conclusion of the unit, students will work in groups and complete one of five final projects outlined in the assignment section.

Lessons and Objectives

- Students will examine the marketing and branding of consumer products.

To open the unit, students will be asked to brainstorm and answer the following questions as a Do Now! assessment: What is marketing? Why does a company license its name and product? Why is the branding of merchandise important? When you make a purchase, what is the most important feature? What are some the biggest technological advances of the last twenty years?

I will ask the students to think about the questions and write down their thoughts for about 15 minutes. The questions are purposefully challenging and some students may need guidance. After everyone has written at least a paragraph in response, I will ask for volunteers to read their answers to the entire class and write notes on the board in order to initiate a Socratic seminar discussion.

- Students will explore the myth of the amateur athlete.

Throughout the majority of the 20th century, the Olympic committee and college presidents and officials promoted the fairy tale of the amateur athlete competing for glory without financial compensation. During the last twenty years, historians have taken a closer look at the legend, probing the historical facts and debunking the myth. At the birth of the ancient Greek games, Olympians were not noble amateurs but well-paid professionals and vices similar to our modern games plagued the ancient contests. ⁵ Greek athletes harvested vast rewards for their athletic accomplishments on the field. City-states competed for the preeminent

competitors and rewarded them lavishly with "free meals and front row seats at local sporting events for the rest of their lives." ⁶ The athletes also collected pensions and financial prizes as well as slaves and livestock for their sweat and labor. By the sixth century B.C., Athenian champions on the field were endowed with financial bounty comparable to \$700,000 today. Like modern free agency, Greek athletes shopped their abilities among the city states and switched allegiances. The Greeks also sponsored less exalted sporting events in which athletes earned cash rewards; these games were known as "money games." Even coaches moved from city to city, seeking superior financial wealth for their expertise. Kroton, a Greek trainer, collected a salary 12 times greater than a skilled worker in Aigina, only to double his compensation when he took a job in Athens. ⁷

As the sun set on the 19th century, the first modern Olympics took place in Athens, Greece. The Olympians in 1896 were not sponsored by nations and came at their own expense. The myth of the amateur athlete originated in Victorian England from aristocratic elites who opposed competing against the working class. With the assistance of Victorian historians, the fable of the Greek athletes who competed without reward and practiced for only a few hours a day became ingrained in the Olympic image. The myth allowed the upper class to compete at the Olympic games and garner the medals while keeping the working and lower socio-economic classes out of the events. Former International Olympic Committee President Avery Brundage furthered the legend by proclaiming that the original Olympics "were abolished when they 'lost their purity and high idealism' and became a business." ⁸

Students will examine the historical roots and paradoxes of college football in the early years of the game.

In the late 19th century, the Industrial Age brought tremendous technological changes, and the closing of the western frontier threatened dreams of further manifest destiny in the continental United States. Americans looked for definitions of manhood, and sport rose to the forefront as a potential answer. Colleges in the Ivy League wanted to prepare elite men for leadership positions in society, and football provided a wonderful avenue to challenge their students. The gridiron exposed a paradox in American sport; athletes competing gallantly and heroically was canonized by sports writers and fans, but beyond the fields, brutal competition, gambling assertions and cheating scandals infiltrated the new game. "Violence and moral edginess were its chief attractions, because they toughened the sons of the rich and prepared them to wield to authority." ⁹ Ever since the Roman gladiators fought in the Coliseum, people have paid money to witness the events and wagered on the outcome of the contests. College football was not the exception either. By the late 1890s, scandals littered the college game and universities began to struggle with the issues of professionalism. Despite the criticism, the enthusiasm of the fans continued to grow for the gridiron game. ¹⁰

In the early years of the game, coaches were usually former alumni or undergraduates. The founding father of the college game, Walter Camp, worked at the New Haven Clock Company and every day succeeded in finding the practice field during working hours to coach the Yale team. However, as the competition between schools increased, a desire for superior and specialized coaches arose. In 1891, Amos Alonzo Stagg signed a contract to coach at the University of Chicago and earned a professor's salary. ¹¹ Two year later, J.H. Sears wrote in Harper's Weekly that the modern game had become too complicated and players needed a professional coach to tutor them in the essential skills. Glenn "Pop" Warner never had any qualms about earning a paycheck for his football acumen and shopped his skills to different schools throughout his career: Iowa State, Georgia, Carlisle, Cornell, Pittsburgh and Stanford.

While coaches mastered their chosen profession, the game on the field became bloodier. By 1905, eighteen deaths and 149 serious injuries had occurred throughout the nation. ¹² Americans became disgusted as photographs provided close-up glimpses of the carnage. Even President Teddy Roosevelt, who was a fanatic of the game, felt that football had become too violent. Reformers pointed out the extreme violence on the field and believed that football "encouraged loafing, gambling and drinking." ¹³ Concerned that this crisis would destroy the game, Roosevelt convened the principal men in charge of the game from Harvard, Princeton and Yale to the White House. The President stressed the need for reform from within as a way to forestall an outright ban. Shortly afterwards, the National Intercollegiate Football Conference was formed by representatives of twenty-eight schools and new rules were passed to make the game less harmful for its players. Forward passes were legalized, ten yards were required for a first down and mass plays were outlawed. ¹⁴ The game would come closer to the one played today that thousands of fans watch.

- Students will explore the rise of branding and marketing in college football.

In 1968, Don Canham became athletic director at Michigan, and brought with him substantial marketing knowledge as a successful businessman. Canham was at the forefront of collegiate branding and marketing for profit in the consumer marketplace. When he arrived, the athletic department had hemorrhaged \$200,000 the year before, and Canham wanted to correct the deficit. He noticed the thousands of empty seats at Michigan Stadium in 1967 and immediately sought to rectify the situation by advertising in Ohio newspapers for Buckeye fans to buy tickets in 1969. At the time, his idea was revolutionary as college "football games were seen as community events not commercial ventures." ¹⁵ Before Canham took office, Michigan officials felt that television hindered attendance at games. However, Canham dissented from his predecessors. He wanted a packed stadium and thought that television would benefit the game by bringing a mass audience to support Michigan football. Canham contacted ABC Sports president Rooney Arledge and informed him that the athletic department would provide any assistance ABC wanted. He was now able to sell Michigan football to people all across the country as the Wolverines became a staple of ABC Saturday games in the early 1970s. Canham was anointed the king of athletic directors across the country in the seminal article in *Sports Illustrated* ("No Death for a Salesman") by Frank Deford in the July 28, 1975 issue. "Deford noted some of Canham's successes: alumni gifts to the athletic department had gone from \$46,000 annually to \$300,000; Michigan was now making \$100,000 a year off parking, of all things; and football attendance had jumped from an average of 67,000 per game to 90,000." ¹⁶

As for branding, Canham envisioned Michigan as a national brand and made the University's yellow block M a nationally recognized logo. He promoted and sold products across the country with the Michigan logo on it and propelled college football into America's mass consumer culture. Amazingly, Michigan Stadium had sold out over 200 consecutive games since 1975, averaging over 100,000 fans. Canham even foresaw the rise of cable television on college football and its huge financial impact on the game in 1979. "Cable television has more potential than anyone has a chance to think about," he predicted. ¹⁷

When the 1980s commenced, college football predominately remained a local sport and a minority of schools in the NCAA, which acted like a corporate oligarchy, enjoyed a near monopoly on television. In 1984, a Supreme Court decision--*NCAA v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma and Georgia Athletic Association*--changed how fans watched college football. Justice John Paul Stevens, an authority on antitrust law, declared that the NCAA restricted free trade of broadcast rights for its members. "...by curtailing output

and blunting the ability of member institutions to respond to consumer preferences, the NCAA has restricted rather than enhanced the place of intercollegiate athletics in the Nation's life." ¹⁸ After the court's decree, individual teams and conferences could make their own agreements to televise games. At the same time, cable television became a dominant player in the broadcasting industry, and college football provided additional programming for starving cable stations in order to satisfy the fans' appetite.

- Students will watch *The Program*--a fictional account of a college football team in the 1990s.

Hollywood has a profound impact on the culture of the United States and one avenue that the industry has explored is college football. At times films have romanticized players, coaches, and teams while at others it has taken a critical lens inside the locker rooms and off the field and debunked the myths of the game. In order to boost their knowledge, students will inspect the game from a behind-the-scenes perspective instead of just observing the spectacle on campuses every fall on TV and analyze how Hollywood portrays the pastime. While watching *The Program*, students will complete a worksheet (please see Appendix E) in order to analyze the movie.

Afterwards, I will debrief the students on film and pose some philosophical questions on the appeal of football as reality television. Why do you watch football? What fascinates you most about the game? How much money do you approximately spend buying football paraphernalia for your favorite team and player? In your opinion, is football a game, an entertainment or a business? How do clubs make a profit?

- Students will inspect the ideology of *League Think* by Pete Rozelle.

As college football descended across America's sports landscape, pro football took a similar trajectory across the consumer culture of the 1950s. After the Great Depression and WWII, soldiers returned home looking to reap the rewards of a consumer culture. The television, a relatively new technological advancement in the 1950s, altered and intensified Americans' demand for products. Consumers across the country wanted to purchase TVs, and broadcast companies needed a profitable avenue in order to produce entertaining shows. Advertising products on television and sponsoring programming provided a perfect opportunity, and the NFL offered the first reality television for networks with huge audiences.

During the early years of the decade, individual franchises negotiated contracts with the networks to televise its games. In 1950, the Los Angeles Rams were the first franchise to broadcast its games. While the fan base increased on television, the gate receipts dwindled. Fortunately, the Rams' agreement with the sponsors reimbursed the club for lost ticket sales. By the end of the campaign, the sponsors paid \$307,000 to the team. ¹⁹ The following season, Los Angeles only televised away games in the home market, and eventually, the home blackout rule was endorsed by a U.S. District Court in 1953. ²⁰ In 1953, the DuMont network paid \$75,000 to broadcast the NFL Championship Game between the Browns and Rams to fans nationally.

The decisive television moment came in 1958 when the New York Giants and Baltimore Colts met in the NFL Championship Game at Yankee Stadium in New York City. Over 45 million football fans turned on NBC that afternoon and watched what many fans consider the greatest contest in NFL history as the Colts beat the

Giants in the first overtime game ever behind the strategic acumen and pinpoint passing of signal caller Johnny Unitas and the eloquence and athleticism of flanker Raymond Berry. The game had nearly every element that would entice fans to turn on their televisions in future years: competitive teams, glamorous players, controversial decisions and last minute suspense. However, how would the NFL take advantage of this new synergy rising between television and sports?

In 1960, the New York Giants earned \$170,000 from television while the Green Bay Packers received \$75,000. ²¹ Pete Rozelle, who had become commissioner the year before, saw the disparities between the big and small market franchises and attempted to orchestrate a new strategy that would change the NFL forever. League Think, a term coined by journalist David Harris, promoted the ideology that each club's individual success would be guaranteed by sharing revenue equally among all the teams instead of seeking different streams of income for each organization. And construct competitive balance and parity on the field, which would draw more fans to the game. Nevertheless, Rozelle still needed to convince all the owners of his plans to broadcast games as a league package. He wanted to negotiate a league-wide national contract with the CBS network instead of individual teams.

After Rozelle convinced George Halas, the Bears owner, Wellington Mara, the Giants proprietor, and other big-market owners of his League Think plans, the NFL signed an exclusive deal with CBS; however, the NFL still had to overcome some antitrust issues after a federal court ruled the new \$9 million contract invalid. A strong-minded visionary, Rozelle would not allow his new television strategy to terminate so easily. He forged important political alliances with members of Congress and a bill (Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961) was passed that "legalized single-network packages by professional sports leagues." ²² The new legal landscape solidified an alliance between the NFL and television that endures today. Rozelle's new League Think policies began to take shape and solidified financial success among all the teams. By the end of the 1960s, the league had signed a \$46.25 million deal with CBS and NBC. ²³

Students will examine the impact of NFL Films on the escalation of America's obsession with football in the 1960s consumer culture.

The creation of NFL Films and NFL Properties became a critical component of the League Think policies pursued by Rozelle in the mid-1960s. ²⁴ Formerly a public relations specialist and general manager of the Rams, Rozelle implicitly understood that the league would thrive in the consumer marketplace if the fans became intimately allied with its teams and players. NFL Films became the preeminent agent of marketing the league, documenting the narrative and veracity and promoting the mythology of the league on film. "NFL Films had a more immediate and enduring impact as pro football's troubadour and epic poet," than NFL Properties. ²⁵ Fans loved the documentaries that NFL Films produced, and the company earned many accolades for its work. In 1962, Ed Sabol offered the NFL \$3,000 to capture its Championship Game on film, employing "eight cameras instead of four, from ground level as well as high in the stadium, and in slow motion as well as normal speed." ²⁶ By 1964, Rozelle treasured the products produced by NFL Films, and the fourteen owners agreed to pay \$20,000 per team to bring Sabol's company under the league umbrella. In 1966 an influential documentary, *They Call It Pro Football*, aired for the first time that solidified NFL Films' supremacy. At this juncture in the unit, the students will watch *They Call It Pro Football* and complete a worksheet (please see Appendix F), in which they analyze the key elements of NFL Films success: Images, Sound, Narration, Editing and Story. ²⁷

- Students will inspect the growth of NFL Properties and the marketing and branding of the league to its fans.

While Rozelle immediately grasped the power of Ed Sabol's company, the commissioner did not pursue the revenue generating potential of his other visionary initiative. In the 1960s and 1970s, NFL Properties remained a relatively small endeavor in which the modest profits were donated to charity. ²⁸ In 1969, gross revenue reached only \$1.5 million, and the owners agreed to give the money to NFL Charities for its public relations value. As the league grew in popularity, so did the revenue of NFL Properties. In 1979, it grossed \$100 million, and in 1986, \$500 million entered its coffers. ²⁹ By 1993, NFL Properties attracted \$2.5 billion in revenue, "licensing to nearly 350 manufacturers of over 2,500 items in 1991." ³⁰ The promotions division orchestrated close sponsorships with major companies--Coke, Hershey's and Gatorade--to sell corporate products. In 1994, Sara Levinson, who previously worked at MTV, arrived to manage the mammoth vessel, and she began to advance the NFL as a mass market "brand" in the sports entertainment business. During her six-year tenure, NFL Properties reached new heights with a 40% increase in income. A paradigm shift occurred in the corporate think tank at NFL Properties; the games themselves became less important as the NFL brand moved to the forefront. Also, the league wanted to market the games to the casual fans around the country and identified three categories of consumers: hard-core fans, women and children. ³¹ "Play Football targeted kids, ages 6 to 15, with consumer products on the one hand and instructional clinics and flag-football programs in more than 20 NFL cities...Football 101 seminars and an NFL For Her product line targeted women, who made up 40 percent of the NFL's audience." ³²

NFL Properties also streamlined its marketing with fewer licensing agreements and major partnerships. At the turn of the millennium, the league instituted new marketing and branding ideas to increase the mass-market appeal to consumers: NFL.com, NFL Kickoff, Direct TV's Sunday Ticket, EA Sports Madden Football, and fantasy football. Despite the NFL's calculated strategy to market and control its brand to the consumer, it has not always been able to control its image in the public eye and consumer marketplace. The students will watch ESPN's 30 for 30: Straight Outta L.A. by Director Ice Cube. In this insightful documentary, Ice Cube investigates why the gangs of Los Angeles during the 1980s embraced the Oakland Raiders, wearing their silver and black colors and glamorizing violence in the streets and on the field. It is also a first-rate glimpse into the sport/gang dyad among African American young males during the 1990s and a rich example of popular/consumer culture percolating from the streets upward to the suits and skyboxes.

- Students will study the rise of the AFL and its merger with the NFL.

In order to introduce the American Football League (AFL), students will watch a documentary: Full Color Football: The History of the American Football League, Part I: The New Frontier. The video looks at 26-year-old Lamar Hunt, and his quest to own a professional football team. After being spurned by the established NFL, Hunt decided to form a competitive league and convinced seven other men to pursue his dream.

In 1960, Hunt, the son of billionaire H.L. Hunt, did not want to go to war with the NFL, but the reality of the market place forced the two leagues to fight for more fans, higher television ratings and better players. The NFL coaches were typically conservative in their play-calling, and the games reflected their caution with a reliance on the running games. In an attempt to attract new customers on television and at the gate, the AFL

fashioned a more wide-open contest in which the passers flourished, and fans embraced the aerial assaults of the new league. Immediately, the AFL signed a new television contract with ABC sports, the weakest of the networks, worth \$8.5 million over five years to be shared equally among all teams. ³³ The AFL also filed an antitrust lawsuit against the NFL in January 1960, and in 1962, lost its case and appeal one year later. Despite the setback in the courts, the AFL continued to garner new fans and television ratings. Finally, in 1964, NBC acquired the rights to broadcast AFL games starting in 1965 for a whopping \$36 million dollar five-year agreement or approximately \$900,000 per club annually.

As television contracts spiraled upwards, so did the demand for players by both leagues, and their salaries followed. It became more and more costly to run a professional football franchise. Tackling escalating labor costs and possible financial losses, Tex Schramm, GM of the Dallas Cowboys, clandestinely contacted Hunt about a possible merger of the two leagues in the spring of 1966. On June 8, Rozelle announced that the two leagues had agreed on a merger to begin in 1970. Beforehand, the top teams in each league would participate in the AFL-NFL World Championship Game until the union was consummated. After watching his daughter play with a Super Ball by Wham--O, Hunt suggested to Rozelle that the game should be called the Super Bowl. The contest would be renamed in its current title when the Colts and Jets played Super Bowl III in 1968, and the first two games were retroactively renamed Super Bowl I and II.

Despite the success of the merger, one issue remained to be settled in the courts; with two leagues no longer competing for players' services, the new 26-team NFL appeared to violate antitrust laws for the players. Once again, Rozelle journeyed to the backrooms of Congress to acquire an antitrust exclusion. The league promised New Orleans a new franchise in 1967, and Louisiana House Majority Leader Hale Boggs fastened "an antitrust exception to a budget bill" for the NFL. ³⁴

- Students will investigate Monday Night Football, and the NFL's escalation as an entertainment medium to a wider national audience.

To open the lesson, students will observe a series of openings, interviews and introductions for Monday Night Football (MNF) over the past 40 years. All can be found on YouTube, and provide students with insight on ABC's fusion of sports and entertainment with video, music, graphics, and rhetoric to increase viewer ship among Americans.

- Introduction: Monday Night Football, 1973
- John Lennon on MNF with Howard Cosell, 1974
- Howard Cosell TV promo for MNF, 1977
- ABC's MNF Pro Bowl Intro, 1978
- John Lennon announced dead by Howard Cosell in 1980
- Introduction: MNF between Bears-Dolphins game, 1985
- Introduction: MNF between Broncos-Patriots game, 2003
- MNF introduction with Hank Williams, Jr.

While television in the 1960s transported football into more and more American homes on Sunday afternoons,

the league still had one hurdle to conquer: a prime-time audience in the mass consumer culture. In the late 1960s, CBS broadcast five contests on Monday evening, but none earned any memorable ratings. Rozelle needed to convince someone at a major network that football would succeed and thrive during prime time. ABC's Rooney Arledge concurred with the commissioner's vision, but the decision makers at the network did not. Rozelle shrewdly threatened to sell a television package to the Hughes Sports Network, which was an independent production company owned by Howard Hughes.³⁵ Already ranked last among the three-major networks, ABC could not risk dropping behind an independent program provider; it soon relented, signing a contract to air Monday Night Football. Immediately, ABC garnered dividends from its new investment. The first game ever between the Jets and Browns earned an 18 Nielsen rating and approximately 60 million homes turned into the game. By the end of its first season, MNF revolutionized the way fans observed the games as ABC deployed more cameras, hired a three-man booth, incorporated isolation shots and replayed action in slow-motion.³⁶

Howard Cosell's presence in the broadcast booth provided the final ingredient for success. A former lawyer and a master of hyperbole, Cosell's unique voice and use of narrative language drew viewers--who both loved and loathed him--to the television every Monday evening. Long before SportsCenter, MNF offered the best highlights of the previous day's games during the halftime show with Cosell recounting the action for the fans. "Cosell extemporaneously narrated the football--Michael Oriard writes-- 'marketing' with his own multi-syllabic vocabulary and pointed intonations providing an urgent counterpoint to the sweet and empty cadences of a generation of highlight readers."³⁷ Even coaches from around the league watched Cosell's highlights in order to catch a glimpse of other NFL teams and their players.³⁸

Another hurdle remained that prevented fans from watching their favorite teams on a weekly basis: the blackout rule. Prior to 1973, all home games could not be seen by devotees in the home-team markets in which the contest was televised, including championship games. In 1958, ticketless New York fans missed the "Greatest Game Ever Played" between their beloved Giants and Colts on television. President Richard Nixon, a hard-core football aficionado, opposed the blackout rule and wanted the NFL to repeal it in 1972. However, Rozelle felt that the decades-old tenet protected attendance at the gate and fervently contested any changes in the rule. Nixon and Congress presented the final resolution when the House passed a compromise bill in which the blackout rule was lifted if the game sold out 72 hours in advance of the kickoff.³⁹ The new law increased the number of home games fans watched and ratings spiked upwards, an unintended consequence of the conciliation, leading to an even bigger television contract in 1974.⁴⁰

- Students will examine competition from another new league.

During the summer of 1982, the USFL, a new professional football league, announced its formation to begin operations in the spring of 1983, believing that a football addicted nation would embrace its new product in the sports vista. Twelve teams kicked off the opening salvo armed with a two-year contract with ABC Sports and ESPN for \$13 million annually--a little more than \$1 million per club. During the first season, the USFL averaged a 6.0 Nielsen rating on ABC, which slightly surpassed those by the AFL in 1960. Also ESPN's coverage of the USFL earned a 3.3 rating which was 50% higher than the all--sports cable network's other primetime programming in 1982. Despite its modest success during the first year in luring fans to the television and stadiums, the league failed to earn a profit and some franchises lost upwards of \$4 million.⁴¹

The following season the league expanded to 18 teams and began a salary war with the NFL. The Pittsburgh Maulers signed Heisman Trophy winner RB Mike Rozier out of Nebraska, and the Los Angeles Express signed QB Steve Young to an unprecedented \$40-million dollar deal. Also construction mogul Donald Trump purchased the New Jersey Generals and signed former All Pro signal caller Brian Sipe from the Cleveland Browns. Competition for players between the NFL and USFL escalated salaries, and the spring confederation could not absorb such large-scale contracts without a huge boost in television ratings and revenue.

Unfortunately, the USFL never secured the ratings required for a huge increase in television revenue during the spring, and Trump orchestrated a new plan to play games in the fall against the NFL beginning in 1986. Without much hope remaining for success on the field, the USFL filed a desperate antitrust lawsuit against NFL for \$1.69 billion. ⁴²In the 1970s, a myriad of antitrust rulings against sports leagues gave the USFL some hope that its claims would be won in court. The USFL alleged that the NFL "conspired to pressure the networks to keep USFL games off television" and prevent it from operating franchises in major NFL cities. ⁴³As a smoking gun, USFL attorney Harvey Myerson presented a report written by Michael Porter, a Harvard Business School professor, for the NFL in which he outlined a proposal for putting the USFL out of business. Even Howard Cosell testified for the USFL and accused the NFL of antitrust monopolistic behavior. After a 42-day trial and five days of deliberations, the jury concluded that the NFL did operate an illegal monopoly and maintained its dominance through voracious tactics. Despite the verdict, the jury awarded the USFL only a dollar and the spring experiment subsequently lost all its appeals. The USFL never played another game after 1985 and all of its astonishing athletes moved onto the NFL. To conclude the lesson, students will watch ESPN's 30 for 30 Small Potatoes: Who Killed the USFL?

Students will inspect the technological advances of the past twenty years and its impact on the escalation of the NFL.

Sports Marketing 101 affirms that name recognition brings credibility to a product and eventually leads to ticket sales and television ratings in the consumer marketplace. In American history, no sports league has better provided young fans with breathtaking storylines and gallant champions than the NFL despite the plethora of challenges off the field: steroids, labor disputes, drugs, womanizing and scandals. Aided by new technologies in the 1990s, the NFL sought and captured a new generation of young fans, which ensured the league's financial future. Young males across the nation embraced video games as a leisure activity, and EA Sports linked video gamers and football fans with its new product in 1989: "Madden NFL" Football. John Madden, a Super Bowl coach with the Raiders and one of the greatest announcers in broadcasting history, provided instant credibility to the video game and fans embraced the product. Since its beginning, NFL Madden has sold more than 60 million games, generating over \$2 billion in revenue. ⁴⁴While Madden's name offered credibility in the marketplace, the NFL nearly guaranteed its success with an exclusive licensing deal with the league and NFLPA. Only EA Sports can use players' names and league logos in its video merchandise. ⁴⁵The game has become so popular that "Madden Challenge" is an annual nation-wide tournament aired on ESPN, awarding a \$100,000 prize to the champion. The adolescent and teenage fans who purchase and play NFL Madden become life-long consumers of the NFL and its products. "Every year it's our goal to get to the point where there's no difference from what you'll see on Sunday," stated EA producer Ryan Ferwerda. ⁴⁶

During the 1990s, the Internet exploded into American culture, and companies looked for ways to use the new technology to sell and market its products. The NFL did not vault onto the technological super highway

immediately, but once it did, the league garnered a new revenue stream and countless fresh customers. Fantasy football began as a grassroots operation among friends who yearned to manage a club or own a franchise, but would never get the opportunity. The hobby remained low key and many NFL officials thought that the game closely resembled gambling. However, the courts have ruled that fantasy sports are a game of skill, not luck, and entry fees are not the same as wagers; therefore, it is not betting. In 2007, the U.S. Eighth District Court concluded that the use of players' names and statistics in fantasy leagues are in the public domain; and that consequently, it is protected by the First Amendment. ⁴⁷

In 1999, the NFL hired Chris Russo to lead its new media division--technology and the Internet--into the next millennium. Commissioner Paul Tagliabue initiated the NFL Internet Network, and believed that the Internet could provide a new portal for fans' passion. In 2001, the NFL signed an agreement with CBS Sportsline, AOL and CBS for \$300 million, and the league leaped into the fantasy football arena. ⁴⁸ The arrangement increased the NFL's fantasy fan base from four million users to nearly 15 million ones five years later. When the contract expired in 2006, the NFL decided to run its in-house site (NFL.com) on the Internet. To increase interest in the booming hobby, the NFL reached an agreement with the NFLPA to have star players promote its fantasy game and direct traffic to NFL.com. Once again, the NFL instituted an additional route to augment revenue streams by connecting fans with their favorite players.

Students will compare and contrast well-known commercials and the film *Any Given Sunday* by Oliver Stone.

In order to synthesize consumerism and professional football, the class will first watch a series of famous NFL commercials and be asked to write down their thoughts and ideas during the airing. Afterwards, we will discuss the students' responses to the commercials.

- Nike Leave Nothing: Fate with LaDainian Tomlinson and Troy Polamalu
- Nike Leave Nothing with Shawn Merriman and Steven Jackson
- NFL Fantasy File: Braylon Edwards, Zen and the Art of Receiving
- NFL.com Fantasy Football Commercials: Tips on how to dominate your draft
- NFL Fantasy Files: The Best Players
- Coca-Cola Classic Ad: Mean Joe Greene 1979
- Nike: Bo (Jackson) Knows and Bo Didley
- Brian Bosworth Right Guard Commercial, 1987
- Sprint Peyton Manning, 2006
- Peyton Manning 1st and 2nd MasterCard TV Commercials
- Bud Bowl Commercials: I, II and III

Following the discussion, the students will watch *Any Given Sunday*--a fictional account of a professional football franchise--by Oliver Stone. Al Pacino plays the head coach who must balance the loyalty of a veteran Super Bowl signal caller, Dennis Quaid, and the rise of a new young field general, Jamie Fox, of the Miami Sharks. The film provides a very interesting contrast with the aforementioned commercials and allows

students to examine the paradox of professional football, consumerism in America and the sports/gang dyad among African American males. Afterwards, the students will write an essay analyzing the paradox between the commercials and Any Given Sunday.

Activities (Homework)

1. Students will examine the imperial coach during the 1960s in college football. On the Sports Illustrated Vault web page, students must locate the August 15, 1966 issue on Alabama Coach Paul Bryant "I'll Tell You About Football" and complete worksheet. (Please see Appendix B)
2. Students must identify the salaries of the following NCAA football coaches in 2009: Nick Saban (Alabama), Bobby Petrino (Arkansas), Chris Petersen (Boise State), Jeff Tedford (California), Urban Meyer (Florida), Les Miles (LSU), Rich Rodriguez (Michigan), Jim Tressel (Ohio State), Greg Schiano (Rutgers) and Steve Spurrier (South Carolina). (Please see Appendix C)
3. Students will analyze "Schools Seek Budget Patch" that appeared in the USA Today on April 2, 2010 and complete a worksheet of questions. (Please see Appendix D)
4. Students will research the history of TV contracts between the NFL and television and cable networks. The scholars must create a bar graph in an Excel spreadsheet illustrating the growth of the deals for every even year between 1964 and 2008.
5. Students will produce a two-page proposal to Steve Sabol of NFL Films, recommending an idea for a new documentary. The scholars can choose from a current issue in the NFL, an historical team, a memorable event, and a player or owner profile feature. The students must use historical evidence to justify their suggestion and be resourceful and creative in their promotional pitch.
6. Students will complete a worksheet on the 30 for 30: Straight Outta L.A. documentary. (Please see Appendix G).
7. Students will research the television ratings (number of viewers) and advertisement costs for one-minute commercials during the Super Bowl for the following years after the merger: 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 2000, 2005 and 2010. The young scholars will also have to construct a bar graph in an Excel spreadsheet of their results.
8. Students must visit the Sports Illustrated Vault web page and acquire the articles "A New Round Of Star Wars?" by Paul Zimmerman on March 7, 1983 and "Can the USFL Cut the Mustard" by William Oscar Johnson on January 16, 1984. A worksheet will also be given to the students to complete. (Please see Appendix H)
9. Students will write an essay answering the following essential question: Could the USFL have survived in the spring and become a principal entertainer in America's consumer culture? Why or why not? Think about: television ratings and revenue, player salaries, the AFL, the antitrust lawsuit, Heisman winners, the players and fans.
10. Students will be responsible for researching the growth of the NFL Network since 2003 when the league

provided fans 24-hour access to coverage of its games, history, players, and owners. A worksheet will be provided to guide the assignment. (Please see Appendix I)

11. Final Project: Students will work in groups and produce any one of the following summative assignments.

- a. Write and generate a pre-game introduction for a fictional Monday Night Football contest. The segment must be three-minutes and presented to the entire class.
- b. Produce a fictional commercial for a product and present it to the class. The commercial must be one minute in length and feature a player selling a product.
- c. Write a 1,000-word game feature article of a fictional game employing the 1920s mythmaking style of Grantland Rice.
- d. Construct a 1,000 word speech for NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell to be presented to the fans on the state of the game to be presented at the Super Bowl.
- e. Create and film a Doritos commercial for the Frito Lays' competition to be aired during the 2012 Super Bowl. The project must include Doritos and be a half minute in length.

Appendix A: Curriculum standards for the city of New Haven.

1. Gather historical data from multiple sources.
2. Recognize primary and secondary sources.
3. Identify and analyze various causes and consequences of events.
4. Take a critical stand on current issues and defend a position on that issue.
5. Demonstrate understanding through written, verbal, visual and/or technological formats.
6. Use the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to complete at least two written pieces.

Appendix B: Worksheet for Paul Bryant, I'll Tell You About Football

1. Write down four items you learned about Paul Bryant and coaching in the 1960s.
2. What motivated Bryant to succeed in coaching? And why?
3. Discuss Bryant's obsession with his cleats as a young boy.
4. What values did Bryant attempt to instill in his players?
5. Describe Bryant's response to so-called quitters on his teams. Would such actions be permissible in today's game by a coach?
What are your thoughts and questions about the article? You might reflect upon Coach
6. Bryant, his coaching style and philosophy, challenges and pressures to succeed, or other ideas.

Appendix C: Salaries of NCAA College Football coaches (USA Today)

Name	School	Total Salary
Nick Saban	Alabama	\$3,900,000
Bobby Petrino	Arkansas	\$2,858,000
Chris Petersen	Boise State	\$1,123,150
Jeff Tedford	California	\$2,807,500
Urban Meyer	Florida	\$4,000,000
Les Miles	LSU	\$3,751,000
Rich Rodriguez	Michigan	\$2,521,000
Jim Tressel	Ohio State	\$3,722,000
Greg Schiano	Rutgers	\$2,070,932
Steve Spurrier	South Carolina	\$2,031,500

Appendix D: Worksheet for Schools Seek Budget Patch.

1. Write down four items you learned after reading this article.
2. What is the biggest drain on athletic budgets across the country on college campuses?
3. How have universities closed the budget deficit in athletic programs on campuses across the nation?
Discuss the football and athletic culture at the University of Houston, and the financial
4. demands on the institutions since 2005 in order to become an elite program across the country.

5. Is subsidizing athletic programs with taxpayer dollars and student fees justified?
6. What are your thoughts and questions about the article? Has your perspective on big-time college football changed? If so, how? If not, why not?

Appendix E: Response to film worksheet for The Program

1. Write down four items you learned about college football while watching The Program.
2. Describe the pressure on Joe Kane to succeed as a Heisman candidate, and how does the signal caller change throughout the film?
3. Illustrate the demands of success on head coach Sam Winters from the fans, alumni and media. How does Winters traverse the world of college football?
4. Discuss the commercialism of college football in the film, and how does the director portray the impact of big business on the program at ESU?
What are your thoughts and questions about the article? You might reflect upon the
5. characters, their problems, football, big business, amateurism and challenges and pressures to succeed or other ideas.

Appendix F: Response to documentary worksheet for They Call It Pro Football

1. Write down four items you learned about the NFL while watching the documentary?
2. How did NFL Films promote the mythology of the gridiron in this narrative?
3. How was music used to draw the viewer into the documentary and its story?
4. Discuss the narration and imagery used by Steve Sabol throughout the documentary.
5. How did the director illustrate the violence of the game?
6. What are your thoughts and questions about the article? You might reflect upon the players, their positions on the field, the violence, the highlights or other ideas.

Appendix G: Response to documentary worksheet for Straight Outta L.A.

1. Write down four items you learned about America's consumer culture after watching the documentary.
2. Why did NWA and gangs in Los Angeles wear NFL gear?
3. Discuss how the film examines the sport/gang dyad during the 1990s in Los Angeles?
4. What reaction did the NFL have to the Los Angeles gangs wearing Raider clothing?
5. What are your thoughts and questions about the article? You might reflect upon the players, the gangs, the violence, the Raiders, the NFL or other ideas.

Appendix H: Worksheet for "A New Round Of Star Wars?" by Paul Zimmerman and "Can the USFL Cut the Mustard?" by William Oscar Johnson

1. Write down four items you learned about the USFL after reading the articles.
2. Why did the New Jersey General sign Heisman Trophy winner Hershel Walker to a multi-million dollar contract?
3. Are stars necessary to draw fans to the stands and earn television ratings? Why or why not in your opinion?
4. Discuss the failures of the NASL as a professional league in America. What lessons can be drawn from its failure?
5. How did players benefit from the competition between the two leagues?
6. Why did A. Alfred Taubman oppose the salary war with the NFL?
7. In your opinion, can another league ever compete against the NFL for fans and advertising dollars in America?
8. What are your thoughts and questions about the article? You might reflect upon the league, Chet Simmons, spring football, the television contract or other ideas.

Appendix I: Worksheet for the NFL Network

1. What is the slogan of the network? How can fans watch NFL Network?
2. Identify five original shows that the NFL Network broadcasts?
3. How many regular and preseason games does the Network televise?

4. Describe the court battle between Comcast and the NFL over broadcasting rights. What was the court's decision in the dispute?
5. In your opinion, are there any antitrust violations for fans when the NFL owns the broadcast rights to its own games?
6. In your opinion, can the NFL provide the same in-depth coverage of major issues and legal challenges as an independent news operator?

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Sally Jenkins examines the Carlisle football team with Jim Thorpe and their dramatic victories over major college football clubs at the turn of the 20th Century, culminating in a victory over Army in 1912. The descriptions of the formative stages of college football also provide a wonderful analysis of the early decades of the game. A brutal and violent sport, football was dominated by Ivy League institutions and there was little regard for the rules and competitive spirit of the game. Jenkins writes a fantastic narrative tying together all of the cultural, historical, racial and contextual information about Native Americans in a Christian society, and the successes and failures of all involved. The book also provides vast insight into Pop Warner, Richard Pratt, Walter Camp, Amos Alonzo Stagg and Teddy Roosevelt.

MacCambridge, Michael. *America's Game: The Epic Story of How Pro Football*

Captured a Nation. New York: Anchor Books, 2005.

Michael MacCambridge has produced an outstanding account and analysis of modern professional football in America. During the past thirty years, the National Football League has eclipsed all other sports in popularity and revenue and has become many American sports fans' obsession. MacCambridge scrutinizes the industry of professional football and the important decisions made by commissioners, owners and television executives, leading to a thriving consumer-driven enterprise. The NFL, more than any other sport, is a game made for television, which propelled the league into the national spotlight in the 1960s and keeps it there today. Pete Rozelle's vision of competitive balance on the field and revenue sharing among clubs ensured a narrative that fans embraced.

Oriard, Michael. *Brand NFL: Making & Selling America's Favorite Sport*. Chapel Hill:

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Michael Oriard explores the establishment of the NFL as big business; it is a multi-media and entertainment enterprise in which Americans are willing to watch religiously and spend their hard-earned funds. Oriard's book is a first-rate history of the game, and its development from a second-tier entertainment business to the summit of the sports landscape in the late 1950s and 1960s. The author, a former pro-player himself, balances football and its personalities, such as Vince Lombardi and Joe Namath, with the awakening of football as a giant in America's consumer culture, primarily under the timely leadership of Commissioner Pete Rozelle. Conquering all competitors, the National Football League is more than a collection of athletes. It is a multi-billion dollar industry that has mastered marketing and branding, featuring media-savvy owners who have benefited by technological advances in the consumer market.

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