

2-9-2022

Winter Olympics Part I

Richard C. Crepeau

University of Central Florida, richard.crepeau@ucf.edu

 Part of the [Cultural History Commons](#), and the [Other History Commons](#)
Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety>
University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Commentary is brought to you for free and open access by the Public History at STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in On Sport and Society by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "Winter Olympics Part I" (2022). *On Sport and Society*. 874.
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety/874>

SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE - WINTER OLYMPICS PART 1
FEBRUARY 9, 2022

At times during the past two years of Covidlife, it has seemed difficult to keep track of the time or the days of the week. Life could occasionally become a blur. For the fans of Sportsworld, the problem could sometimes be alleviated by reference to the patterns of the sports schedule. Days of the week could be tied down by knowing that professional football generally meant it was Sunday, or a preponderance of college football indicated it was Saturday. Monday Night Football, of course, was self-evident. Then there are the seasons: football meant fall, basketball or hockey meant winter, baseball indicated summer. March Madness was self-evident.

In the world of Covid, these guidelines didn't always help. Recently, things have gotten muddled, not only by schedule shifts, but also by an explosion of sport available via television and the internet. Seasons have become blurred, and seasonal boundaries began to collide.

In the past few weeks. Sportsworld seems to have collapsed in upon itself as the NFL playoffs and the Super Bowl have crashed head-on with the Winter Olympics. Super Bowl Week, which of course is really two weeks, in normal times dominates the sports landscape. All eyes are on betting lines, injury reports, offensive and defensive analysis, and most important of all, the highly anticipated commercials slated to debut on Super Sunday. By this time, or course, these commercials had been sufficiently previewed across the internet and streaming services creating, what now can only be thought of as "post-facto anticipation."

This second week of Super Bowl Week is usually full of reports on the cost of Super Bowl Tickets, conspicuous consumption events at all income levels featuring high end caviar or low-end beer, the number of private jets and private yachts on site, and the endless parade of Super Bowl parties running the gamut from gaudy to classless.

This first full week of the Winter Olympics now competes for print and band width with the Super Bowl. One wonders if Roger Goodell and his television masters are rethinking the decision to extend the NFL season by one week thus producing this conflict with the Olympics.

As to the Olympics, it has its own package of problems. The host nation made it clear that political references would not be allowed. Then, at the formal opening, the torch lighting itself was turned into a political statement by the hosts. This would not seem so egregious if so much had not been made about the absolute ban on political controversy. It is not clear how many arrests were made as a result.

Then, there is the matter of the games themselves. Covid is already the overall gold medal winner with events being postponed, athletes missing out because of positive tests, and teams weakened by players lost to Covid. In one of the more bizarre turns, the Russian/Canada women's hockey match was delayed because Covid testing had not been completed on time. The game finally started with both teams wearing N95 masks. Breathing apparently was deemed optional.

There are only a handful of fans at the venues and not many more than a comparative handful watching on television, at least in the United States. NBC and its sponsors must be bleeding losses.

For those few watching in the United States the NBC announcers and analysts, for the most part, have been both lackluster and jingoistic. This is the established norm for United States Olympic coverage, and so, is no surprise. As to the television host, there has been what is now clearly a decades long decline. The descent from Jim McKay to Bob Costas to the highly overrated Mike Tirico, who has now gone off to the Super Bowl, resembles the downhill course.

NBC has done its best to make it difficult to locate events in its mad maze of platforms and has found it difficult to offer any kind of stable scheduling. For example, the men's short program in figure skating, which seemed to be scheduled to end about 11:30 in the east, ran well past midnight making it impossible to watch the first two periods of the highly anticipated U.S./Canada hockey game live. Choices always have to be made, but at least NBC could offer multiple broadcast times for the highest profile events. It should not be necessary for viewers to become video engineers and editors to capture and unravel events.

While all of this has been happening, the NBA is still playing its regular season games on a daily basis with the All-Star Game approaching. The NHL decided not to send anyone to the Winter Olympics and has instead played make-up games of Covid

postponements. In any case, watching both the NBA and the NHL, not to mention college basketball and hockey, has been another sort of guessing game. It is seldom clear what the composition of the teams will be on any given night. At the college level, and less so at the professional level, the chances of a game being cancelled or postponed remains high.

At the end of a day, can the records of teams be trusted at all? Who won and who lost may not be as important as who has not played against whom. Does a win over a top team without its star player count as much as a win against a merely good team? When the choices and seeding for March Madness come around, how will those Covid factors be weighed?

In the end, trying to track all this is a task for the latest computer rather than the normal sports fan. There is just too much out there. At some point, if you consume too much sport in a given block of time could it produce some sort of sports nausea? Are we gorging ourselves with sport and running the danger of killing interest in these activities that have offered a glimpse of the highest forms of achievement and competition? Are we running the risk of killing or diminishing interest in sport?

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that in this Olympic season you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad luger.

Copyright 2022 by Richard C. Crepeau