# PROCEEDINGS OF

**SPORT LITERATURE ASSOCIATION**

**42nd Annual Conference**

***Proceedings Editor: Maxence Leconte***

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**June 18-21, 2025**

**Host: David Kilpatrick**

**Program Chair: Adam Winkel**

**President: Matt Tettleton**

**Wednesday, June 18,2025**

**Welcome**

Host: D. Kilpatrick Program Chair: A. Winkel

President: M. Tettleton

**Panel One: President’s Panel.**

**Chair: Adam Winkel**

***“#FireNico: On the Luka Dončić Trade and the Will of the Crowd.”***

Matt Tettleton, University of Texas at Arlington - matthew.tettleton@uta.edu

# Sometime between February 1 and February 2, 2025, the Dallas Mavericks traded their 25-year-old global superstar, Luka Dončić. That night will be remembered in the culture of Dallas sports fandom as an event that surpasses the most shocking decisions made in the history of our local sports teams. The closest historical comparisons come from outside the city: the trade of Wayne Gretzky to the Kings, the sale of Babe Ruth to the Yankees, and the departure of the Baltimore Colts under cover of night for Indianapolis. But the favorite comparison on the streets of Dallas has nothing to do with sports: Mavericks GM Nico Harrison, who engineered the trade, is the most reviled man in Dallas since Lee Harvey Oswald. Fans expressed a unified sense of betrayal, and a demand for justice expressed in the chant that hasn’t gone away in the six weeks since the trade. This creative nonfiction work explores the aftermath of the Luka Dončić trade from the perspective of the fans. The outrage and grief that fans expressed through art and protest was met with force from the organization. A struggle for power is under way in Dallas. Will the normally docile fans accept this trade, or will they realize that they have agency when they act together? A city cries out, tired of its beloved community institutions being dominated by billionaire owners who are not part of the community. What we do next matters a great deal.

***“Writing as Resistance – Reclaiming Space in Literary Sports Journalism.”***Kasey Symons, Deakin University - kasey.symons@deakin.edu.au

# Where we have new voices challenging the status quo of sports media, we have writing as resistance. This paper explores emerging sports media platforms developed by independent content creators and investigates how creators engage with sports journalism and storytelling as activism by telling sports stories differently and engaging with literary techniques, devices and framings not often employed in the modern coverage of men’s sport. Sometimes referred to as ‘citizen journalists’ (Sherwood, 2019), women and non-binary folk in independent media that cover women’s sport in particular are using their platforms to create journalism and narrative sports writing that offers a point of difference to mainstream media, amplify voices omitted and excluded in traditional sports media and advocate for marginalized communities in sport (Symons et al., 2022). Here memorabilia, ‘femorabilia’ (Williams, 2023; Fenwick, 2023) and long-form literary match reports that include reflections on fandom, feminism, gender equality and lived experiences are an act of resistance in the writing. With a focus on the Australian landscape, we also consider the emotional labor and ‘volunteerism’ in the space that can lead to burnout and the risk of placing folks from marginalized communities in vulnerable positions as they advocate for change in sport through distinct and diverse literary sports writing.

***Poetry Reading.***Joel Sronce, Independent Scholar - joel.sronce@gmail.com

I will be reading several poems, set in North Carolina, New York City, Gaza, and beyond. Each poem attempts to illuminate how sports and politics weave together into a tapestry reflecting our turbulent times. Through these poems, I aspire to lay bare the demands – for better and for worse – of the world we’re living in and, when possible, call for the world we all deserve.

**Panel Two: Sport in the French speaking world.**

**Chair: Roxanna Curto**

# “Re-visiting 1950s Hockey in Quebec through a Gender Lens.” Rebecca W. Wines, Cornell College - rwines@cornellcollege.edu (Virtual Presentation)

# Hockey in Quebec has been studied as an assertion of a more specific Quebecois identity, with Maurice “Rocket” Richard and the Canadiens de Montreal anchoring many such discussions. Roch Carrier’s 1979 story “Le Chandail de hockey” (“The Hockey Sweater”), which was subsequently adapted into a well-loved animated short, is understood to capture the growing Quebecois nationalist sentiment of the 1950s through its tale of a francophone boy who receives a Toronto Maple Leafs sweater instead of a coveted Canadiens sweater with Richard’s number 9 on it.

# I propose to approach Carrier’s story from a different angle by analyzing hockey in Quebec through questions of masculinity. In addition to “Le Chandail,” I will examine a small corpus of texts (short story, non-fiction, and film) that present 1950s Quebecois hockey looking back from the standpoints of different decades. My analysis will focus on masculinity—both how each text defines gender in the context of the postwar years and how each text analyzes that gender from its own historical context—in order to better understand the construction of gender as part of not only hockey but also Quebecois identity.

***“Boxing like a Girl: Claiming a Ring of One's Own in French Literature.”*** Wilfrid Erwan Grandhomme, University of California Los Angeles - wgrand22@g.ucla.edu

# With the emergence of amateur female boxing in France in the 1990s and its Olympic recognition in 2012, French female athletes began claiming their voice through writing. Drawing on feminist phenomenology, I examine how these narratives express self-discovery through testing physical limits and affirming bodily autonomy. Sarah Ourahmoune and Aya Cissoko wrote autobiographies connecting their trajectories to post-colonial France. Their narratives extend beyond autobiography: Cissoko adapted her story for the stage, while Duval's "L'Odeur de la guerre" interweaves Thai boxing with dramatic arts. These works engage with boxing's visual culture – in Adjina's "Transformers", boxers’ comment on melodramatic scenes, revealing media's shaping of the sport. This dialogue between experience and imagination appears in Bernheim's "Stallone", where the protagonist reappropriates the "Rocky" series into an ethic of care. Female boxers tell stories that reveal the gap between boxing's media culture and lived reality. Through close readings attentive to embodied writing styles and rhythmic language, I analyze how these texts develop new modalities of boxing narrative that privilege joy and embodied experience over traditional masculine tropes of violence and triumph.

***“Soccer and Swimming in Albert Camus.”***Roxanna Curto, University of Iowa - roxanna-curto@uiowa.edu

# Camus had a lifelong passion for sport. He was a serious soccer player during his youth, until he was forced to abandon the game due to lung damage from tuberculosis. Nevertheless, he remained an avid fan for the rest of his life. In the essay, “La Belle Époque” (1953) Camus describes his experiences with the RUA club in Algeria. Soccer is also mentioned in his most famous writings, including La Chute (1956), L’Étranger (1942), La Peste (1947) and Le Premier homme (1960/1994). In addition, he greatly enjoyed swimming, whether in a pool, the sea, or the ocean. This activity figures prominently in La Peste and L’Étranger, where it is portrayed as a means of acquiring transcendence and harmony between the mind and body, the body and nature. Camus—who did not consider himself a philosopher—claimed that in sport there was often a moral clarity that did not exist elsewhere. Moreover, he described theater and sport as having been his “two universities,” declaring that he much preferred the latter. Ultimately, the representation of sport in Camus’ literary writings provides a means of enacting the critique of Cartesian dualism that characterizes the philosophy of the Existentialist movement.

***“The Soccer Stadium from the Pen of Maurice Carême”***Thomas Bauer, University of Limoges - thomas.bauer@unilim.fr (Virtual Presentation)

Two years after the publication of his collection of poems entitled Hôtel Bourgeois (1926), for which he received the Verhaeren award, the Belgian poet Maurice Carême (1899-1978) published an extremely dark novel about football called *Le Martyre d’un supporter*. The novel tells the story of Prosper Goffineau, a loving father and conscientious employee, who becomes bewitched by the lure of fandom and gradually begins to neglect his wife and daughter. In fact, he ruins his quiet life to follow a dream that sees him end up in a cold hospital room. Although the text is somewhat dated, Maurice Carême nonetheless shows a degree of modernity with his realistic and sensitive style, not only through his choice of topic – let us remember here that sport was one of the avant-garde subjects widely addressed throughout the 1920s (Cravan, Apollinaire, Géo-Charles, Philippe Soupault and Blaise Cendrars) – but also through his satirical vision of obsession with football. By combining analysis of the work itself with interviews, photographs, archive material and press reviews, this paper aims to show how, under the guise of a moral message about human cruelty in the Brussels working-class and petite bourgeoisie, the author raises the issue of fandom and its excesses. While the chosen term “martyr” is both provocative and a forewarning of a future social phenomenon, it represents above all a deviant form of “sport heroism” in the noble sense of the term.

**Keynote Luncheon Joseph O’Neill
Chair: David Kilpatrick, Mercy University**

**Panel Three: Fiction 1.**

**Chair: Kasey Symons**

***“Germany Is for Lovers.”***

Shelly Sanders, Abilene Christian University - shelly.sanders@acu.edu

At a raucous soccer match in the Berlin Olympic Stadium, a woman looks for her lost child and drifts between memories that are sparked by passion and paranoia.

***“The Other Side of the Sun.”***
Justin Staley, DePaul University - jstaley1@depaul.edu

I would be pleased to read an excerpt of my (unpublished) novel, *The Other Side of the Sun*, which draws on my experience playing in the Little League World Series, and my experience teaching sports and baseball writing over the last decade. About the novel:

When Spoon, disillusioned with his life, sees former batterymate Cash catch a foul ball in front of a boy’s head at Wrigley Field on TV, he thinks wistfully about playing in the LLWS together long ago, and wants to organize a team reunion. Cash travels and lives without attachments after quitting baseball following his overbearing father’s death, trying to escape his past as a can’t-miss prospect. He’s hesitant about the reunion but recalls his bond with his catcher and sees in him a desperation he both pities and understands. Members of the team teeter between youth and middle age, clinging to their pasts, accepting them, or trying to outrun them; as they come together, they must confront the death of boyhood dreams, the faultiness of memory, and the relentlessness of time.

The excerpt is from Cash’s perspective as he thinks about his childhood, his family, and the boys he ends up spending the best summer of his life with.

***“Consolation Final.”***
Hannah Anderson, University of Calgary - hannah.anderson@ucalgary.ca (Virtual Presentation)

# The distinction between expectations and reality for athletes can be hard to recognize when predictable stories – even those with “very little connection to the truth of athletic lives” – are repeated and reaffirmed in literature and popular media, and even harder when expectations around sports literature as a genre are so engrained that these predictions are accepted as truth (Abdou 7). Though sports and sports literature operate as patriarchal systems built to exclude female identified and BIPOC athletes, “writing is an extension of the body” for athletes (Diaz xl). Writing with and through the body as female identified athletes reclaims and rebuilds sports as a physical and literary space. Despite damage inflicted by patriarchal narratives like The Legend of Jesse Smoke and the literary prevalence of the Lone Girl, literature about female identified athletes – especially literature emphasizing physicality, identity, community, and athletes writing their stories as embodied practice – rewrites misrepresentations of the female identified “body on the page” (Diaz xl). If sports are “a relationship of movement and space, momentum, timing, a defiance of the body’s socialized limitations,” sports stories for, by, and about female identified athletes must continue to defy limitations (Diaz xv). This paper examines the failures of damaging representation; the reclamation of athletic representations through texts like Bodies Built for Game, The Bone Cage, Postcolonial Love Poem, and Twenty Miles; and the possibilities of rebuilding sports literature by writing through the body.

***“Loser's Neverland: Raccoon.”***Kim Shortreed, Independent Scholar - kss@uvic.ca  (Virtual Presentation)

Losers' Neverland is a collection of thematically linked autofiction short stories set in the early 1980s, in Semiahmoo Territory, or White Rock. This darkly comic chapter, "Raccoon," explores intersections of sports, games, wild play, and survival.

**Panel Four: Sport and Society.**

**Chair: Joel Sronce**

***“William Fay’s Saturday Evening Post Boxing Fiction, 1939-1962: A Closer Look.”***

Josh Sopiarz, Governors State University - jsopiarz@govst.edu

This paper examines the work of fiction writer William Fay, focusing on his boxing stories published in The Saturday Evening Post between 1939 and 1962. Drawing on historical context, this investigation of characters, themes, plotlines, illustrations, and tone, reveals how Fay’s stories reflected the cultural fascination with boxing during the mid-twentieth century.

The *Saturday Evening Post* was the most popular periodical of the mid-twentieth century with weekly circulation numbers running into the millions. By analyzing this selection of Fay’s boxing stories, the paper highlights the ways in which he both participated in and shaped the narrative around boxing in popular culture. The paper also considers the social and political undertones of his stories, revealing how boxing became a metaphor for larger issues such as class struggle, racial tensions, and the quest for personal redemption. Ultimately, this study sheds new light on Fay’s contributions to American fiction and offers a deeper understanding of how boxing served as a vehicle for storytelling in mid-century American literature.

***“Jacobins on the Oval: How CLR James uses Cricket as Vision of Colonial Liberation.”***Christopher Anderson Davis, Adelphi University - cdavis@adelphi.edu

This paper connects CLR James’s famous work, 1938’s Black Jacobins, and a critical predecessor pamphlet, 1933’s “The Case for West Indian Self-Government,” to another legendary work of James, 1963’s Beyond a Boundary. Each of these works advocated for the demolishing of colonialism and waved flags for Black Liberation from an Afro-Trinidadian Middle-Class Marxist Point of View. With my paper, I intend to highlight the overt and covert messages about overseas rule in the British Caribbean through a Marxist retelling of the Haitian Revolution and a semi-autobiographical work connecting James’s life to the development of Cricket’s popularity within the British Empire. His access to historical documents allowed him to craft a detailed and engaging narrative of the leaders of the Saint Domingue uprisings, and his global travels allowed him to rethink what is possible in a sports history book. Yet, James did not take for granted his position as a global Black scholar during a time when much of Africa and the African Diaspora lived in some position of subjugation, whether it was Jim Crow segregation in the United States, absentee colonialism in the Caribbean, or imperialism in Africa. Thus, I argue that James recognized and grappled with his middle-class lifestyle during the twentieth century as millions of Black People could not reach self-determination for their communities and nations. Thus, he used this position as a prominent Caribbean intellectual to demonstrate his literary prowess and inspire revolutionaries to think about how to dismantle structures of oppression.

***“Sports Autobiography: Janusz Kusociński and His Times as Portrayed in Light of His Memoirs from Palant to the Olympics.”***

Michał Mazurkiewicz, Jan Kochanowski University - michalmazurkiewicz@op.pl

# Sport has been a source of literary inspiration worldwide. Autobiographies have long been a powerful medium for people to tell their personal stories, the world of sport being no exception. Research on sport literature, also autobiography, has been growing in importance. The aim of the paper is twofold: to present the sporting journey of the renowned Polish athlete Janusz Kusociński as demonstrated in his memoir, and to analyze its contribution to the field of sport literature. It is equally important to acknowledge the significance of the historical and social contexts in this regard. Although autobiographies usually concentrate on private issues, there are numerous examples that prioritize the socio-political context of the era in which the authors lived over the focus on personal experience or introspection.

# Kusociński was an outstanding athlete of the interwar period. He went down in the annals of sport history for his triumph at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, being the first Polish winner of the men’s Olympic gold (10km). He became a sporting icon. In addition to his athletic pursuits, Kusociński was also a writer. His memoirs are a great example of sport literature and serve as a primary source for historians. He also marked his place in Polish culture, including poetry.

***“‘The Prettiest Weapons in the World’: Women’s Archery, Domesticity, and Empire in Daniel Deronda (1876).”***

Jessica Tebo, University of Colorado Boulder - jessica.tebo@colorado.edu

\*Winner of the Sport Literature Association's 2025 Lyle Olsen Graduate Student Essay Contest

Unfolding within a single chapter, the archery competition in George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda demonstrates how even brief instances can reveal both the often-overlooked presence of women’s sports in the nineteenth century and the broader social critiques that are often embedded within such events. In this chapter, Eliot explores themes of rootlessness, gender, and imperialist entanglements through the lens of physiological cognizance in sport, and posits that communal belonging depends upon a corporeally based rootedness, contrasting Daniel’s moral transcendence of modern cosmopolitanism with Gwendolen’s relatively flat character arc. Her physical pursuits, including horseback riding and archery, provide a fleeting sense of autonomy but these classist activities ultimately reinforce her entrapment within rigid gender roles. The Brackenshaw Archery Meeting, while ostensibly a test of skill, functions as a microcosm of societal power structures, diminishing women’s autonomy and positioning them as commodities within the marriage market.

Eliot further complicates the narrative by linking gender oppression with imperial expansion, portraying Gwendolen as both a beneficiary and a victim of empire, while subtly alluding to the pernicious role of sports in exporting an increasingly rigid and racialized construct of British identity. The corruption of this local meeting, from an opportunity for women to perform athletically into a spectacle, also challenges the notion that domestic life was immune to the influence of British atrocities abroad.

**Thursday, June 19, 2025**

 **Panel Five A: Morning Poetry.**

**Chair: Adam Winkel.**

***“Some Cardinal Points: A Reading of Poems on the St. Louis Cardinals”***

Joseph Stanton, University of Hawaii at Manoa - jstanton@hawaii.edu

I am proposing a presentation for the Sport Literature Association Conference in 2025 that would be a reading of a selection of my poems on the St. Louis Cardinals from the 1920s to the present, thus I would be looking, in brief ways, at 100 years of Redbird ups and downs. Before each poem I would make comments on the poem and its backstory. I would prefer for my presentation to be included as a regular panel presentation. My reading and commentary would, of course, be fitted within the 20-minute time limit. Evidence of my success as a baseball poet can be found in the large number of such poems I have placed in journals—Elysian Fields Quarterly, Aethlon, Sport Literate, Spitball, Fan, Vice-Versa, Cortland Review, New York Quarterly, etc.—as well as in my book Cardinal Points: Poems on St. Louis Cardinals Baseball, which was published in 2002 by McFarland and Company. Sequences of my poems inspired by baseball art have been included as chapters in my 2016 collection, Things Seen, and my 2019 collection, Moving Pictures. My baseball poems have also been featured in anthologies such as Line Drives: 100 Contemporary Baseball Poems (edited by Tim Wiles and Brooke Horvath in 2001), Heart of the Order: Baseball Poems (edited by Gabriel Fried in 2014), The Aethlon Sport Literature Anthology (edited by Joyce Duncan in 2013), Horsehide, Pigskin, Oval Tracks, and Apple Pie: Essays on Sports and American Culture (edited by James Vlasich in 2006), and Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture, 2019 and 2021 (edited by William Simons in 2022).

**Panel Five: Fiction 2. Baseball Stories.**

**Chair: Scott Palmieri.**

***“Durham Buffaloes.”***
Robert Wallace, Independent Scholar - robertwallace531@gmail.com

Creative narratives have the ability to inform, and, in addition to entertaining readers, tell us about the world we live in. In the best of narratives, they, too, have the ability to change hearts, minds, and behaviors. Sport literature is no exception. Sport used as a vehicle to explore the human condition as a central theme, or tangentially, can, ultimately, not only aid in propelling a narrative forward, but can draw attention to our critical understanding of a major social issue. Sport narratives can not only inform us, but when done well can challenge assumptions.

In this panel I propose to read a portion of a novel-in-progress titled “Durham Buffaloes.” The novel’s protagonist is a woman who plays catcher for a local baseball team. She is the only female on the team for players past forty years of age. She is also a Mary Wollstonecraft scholar who has been working on a novel for several years about the feminist. She teaches literature at the local community college and coaches the women’s softball team.

***A Month of Game Days* (excerpt).**Scott D. Peterson, University of Missouri–St. Louis - sdpeterson1890@gmail.com

What if a father of three sons managed to live a 24/7 baseball existence as a coach and a player? What if his wife became as obsessed with running to fill her husband’s long absences and avoid dealing with their estranged son living nearby? Would this family life be sustainable even in a small New England town?

Through a series of short stories that shine various lights on the Mallett family and a novella that follows them during one baseball-filled day, A Month of Game Days is concerned with much more than sports as it shares the journeys of characters who are flawed, occasionally humorous, and sometimes travel into dark places while they engage in pastimes they love.

***“A Mound Over Hell.”***Gary Morgenstein, Independent Scholar. garymorgenstein9@aol.com

A reading from book one of my dystopian baseball trilogy (called "1984 Meets Shoeless Joe") which begins in 2098 after America has lost WW3 as baseball begins its final season ever at Amazon Stadium. At the end, the Boys and Girls of Summer save the world, SLA has favorably reviewed all three novels: *A Mound Over Hell, A Fastball for Freedom and A Dugout to Peace*. <https://sportliteratureassociation.wordpress.com/2021/11/02/a-mound-over-hell-book-1-of-the-dark-depths-series-by-sport-by-gary-morgenstein/>

***“Winter Ball.”***Bruce Pratt, University of Maine - obdriveway@aol.com

Story called "Winter Ball" forthcoming in Twin Bill.

**Panel Six: The Pedagogy of Sport Literature. Panel Chair: Preben Philipson**

***“Sins of Omission: Text Selection for Sport Literature Survey Courses.”***

David Kilpatrick, Mercy University - dkilpatrick@mercy.edu

Sport Literature was first offered at Mercy University in the spring 2013 semester, when it was offered as a special topics graduate course (ENGL 515). Offered as an undergraduate special topics course spring 2022 (ENGL 295), it earned its own course number and place in the catalog (ENGL 238), spring 2023, and is offered each spring. This talk will discuss the evolution of the course in terms of text selection. What obligations does such a course have in terms of coverage of genre and sport? Is there a canon of sport literature to consider when selecting primary texts? This talk will serve as confession of sins of omission, in hopes of opening discussion on what texts most deserve inclusion in such a course at the undergraduate level and graduate levels.

***“Opening the Field: Advocating for Public Domain and Creative Commons Practices in Sport Literature Pedagogy & Scholarship.”***

Jeremy Larance, West Liberty University - jlarance@westliberty.edu

# The teaching and scholarship of sport literature can be strengthened through greater use of public domain texts and Creative Commons-licensed materials, which expand access, reduce costs, and foster collaboration. Sport literature often blurs the lines between literature, journalism, and fan culture, making it particularly well-suited for open-access approaches that engage a wider audience both within and beyond academia. Openly licensed materials allow scholars, educators, and independent researchers—including fans and journalists—to participate more actively in discussions about sport narratives, ensuring that the field remains dynamic and relevant. Although many educators and researchers are increasingly taking advantage of these resources, organizations like the Sport Literature Association have yet to fully consider their potential for both classroom use and the broader dissemination of scholarship, including work published in Aethlon. This presentation will not only demonstrate practical strategies for integrating openly licensed materials into sport literature courses and scholarship, but will also advocate for SLA to take a more active role in incorporating Creative Commons practices into its publications. By embracing open licensing, SLA can expand its reach, increase engagement with scholars and the public, and further its mission to promote the study of sport literature in an accessible and sustainable way.

**Panel Seven A. Afternoon Poetry.**

**Chair: Adam Winkel.**

***“New Sport Related Poems.”***

Ron Smith, St. Christopher’s School. smithjron@aol.com  (Virtual Presentation)

Poems that cover as many sports as possible.

**Panel Seven: Allegories of Play and Resistance.**

**Chair: Bruce Pratt.**

# “Grappling with Desire: Wrestling with Polyamory in John Irving’s 158-Pound Marriage.” Angie Abdou, Athabasca University - aabdou@athabascau.ca

# First named in the 1990s, Polyamory (the practice of engaging in multiple romantic – and typically sexual – relationships with the consent of all people involved) has made fast leaps in popularity, to the extent that the traditional, mainstream Canadian news outlet MacLean’s Magazine published a 2024 article called “How Polyamory Became the New Normal.” Definitions differentiate Polyamory from “swinging,” an activity more commonly associated with the 1970s, claiming that swinging involves physical relationships between couples but no emotional intimacy. In that case, John Irving’s 158-Pound Marriage is decades ahead of its time. The 1974 novel chronicles what people today might call the “ethically non-monogamous” relationship of two couples: Severin Winter (a German wrestling coach) and his wife Edith (an aspiring writer) with the unnamed narrator (a college professor and published writer) and his Viennese wife Utch. The sexual relationship of this foursome is not, unfortunately for them, devoid of emotional intimacy. Rather the novel works – with its ever-shifting playing field of the broken-hearted – as a case study of methods and challenges of navigating a polyamorous relationship. In many ways, the take-away lessons of Irving’s novel predict the “polyamory rules” laid out in the plethora of guidebooks published since about 2017.

# The Sport Literature catch? Irving walks readers through the rewards and pitfalls of so-called ethical non-monogamy entirely through the metaphor of wrestling. The character sketches of each participant are labeled a “scouting reports.” The wrestling mat is called “the world’s biggest bed.” During sex scenes, we hear about bridging and leverages and gaining position. When a wrestler fails at a match, it’s often because he failed to “get up for it” or never “rose to the occasion” (all sexual innuendo deliberate and repeated). Ultimately, the players at non-monogamy all get injured. Wrestling is sex; Sex is wrestling. Early in the novel, the writer-narrator tells us it’s impossible to talk about sex directly. So, Irving talks about sex through wrestling (and sometimes wrestling through sex). This paper will demonstrate the way Irving uses wrestling allegory to arrive at sexual truths so popularly discussed in more recent nonfiction like Esther Parel’s 2006 Mating in Captivity and her 2018 The State of the Affair: Rethinking Infidelity as well as the multitude of polyamory guides on the market in 2024. Ultimately, I will argue that the key to understanding Irving’s depiction of sex, wrestling, and life is the difference between play and sport. His depiction of love and relationships always falls firmly, like wrestling, in the sport camp.

***“From Slap Shots to Moon Shots: What Happened When I Wrote a Study of Hockey and Imagination.”***Jamie Dopp, University of Victoria - jdopp@uvic.ca  (Virtual Presentation)

# Recently I published a monograph called Hockey on the Moon: Imagination and Canada’s Game with Athabasca UP. The book uses imagination as a unifying theme to offer in-depth analyses of important literary texts about hockey, beginning with Ralph Connors’ 1902 novel Glengarry School Days and ending with Richard Wagamese’s 2013 novel Indian Horse. The title of the book comes from my memory of the backyard rink I made each winter as a boy. While I built and maintained my rink, I often fantasized that its ice was the surface of the moon. This fantasy, it seems to me, hints at the powerful (and often surprising) connections between hockey and imagination—connections that are the primary focus of the now rather substantial body of imaginative literature in Canada about hockey. An unexpected thing happened when I wrote my study: I discovered that a number of the literary texts themselves linked hockey and the moon. The link between the moon and hockey was most powerful in Roch Carrier’s “The Hockey Sweater,” Paul Quarrington’s King Leary, and Richard Wagamese’s Indian Horse—and the moon images in (or associated with) each of these texts spoke directly to the imaginative possibilities in hockey. In this paper, then, I’d like to explore briefly the unexpected moon images I discovered as a way to set out the basic argument of my study of hockey and imagination.

***“Resistance Is Football: An Examination of Imagined Sites of Struggle and Defiance in Football Fiction.”***Lee McGowan, The University of the Sunshine Coast -- lmcgowa1@usc.edu.au  (Virtual Presentation)

From English working-class realism (Grey, 1922; Peace 2006, 2013) to US-based queer romance (Wilsner 2023), football fiction has and continues to push against dominant and entitled cultures and challenge entrenched notions around, for example, class, power, gender, and sexuality. Yet, the form’s capacity for examination and enactment of resistance has undergone very little scrutiny. The Irvine Welsh novel ‘Dead Men’s Trousers’ (2018) depicts a Scottish Cup Final, when fans of the second iteration of Scottish establishment club, The Rangers, enter the field of play. The work highlights myriad ways the author leverages layers of political, religious, social, economic, and geographical conflict from the perspectives of a group of working-class football fans. These same characters feature in other Welsh novels (1993, 2002) that have been positioned as a response to the work of middle-class writers, such as Nick Hornby (1992) and Simon Kuper (1997-1998) (Redhead 2004; McGowan, 2019), credited with the late twentieth century cultural elevation of football and its writing (Hill, 2006). Within the context of football fiction, this paper examines the pitch invasion in ‘Dead Men’s Trousers’ and its evocation of countercultural fan attitudes.

**Panel Eight. Roundtable. Sharing Space with Lyle Olsen: The Early Years of the Sport Literature Association.**

**Chair: Jeffrey Segrave.**

Susan J. Bandy, Independent Scholar. susanjbandy@yahoo.com

Dick Crepeau, University of Central Florida. crepeau1@msn.com

Ron Smith, St. Christopher’s School. smithjron@aol.com (Virtual Presentation)

Don Johnson, East Tennessee State University (Emeritus). johnsond@mail.etsu.edu (Virtual Presentation)

Joyce Duncan, Sport Literature Association. joyced1001@cs.com

In the context of a rapidly changing discipline of physical education (sport studies/kinesiology), Lyle Olsen, a professor in the Department of Physical Education at San Diego State University (SDSU) , developed the academic study of sport literature and created the Sport Literature Association (SLA) in 1983. Several long-term members of SLA will speak of their experiences in SLA and their work with *Aethlon: The Journal of Sport Literature* to trace the early history of the association*.* Jeffrey O. Segrave, professor of health and human physiological sciences and the David H. Porter Endowed Chair at Skidmore College, will moderate the panel. Susan J. Bandy, a former professor at San Diego State University and Olsen’s colleague during the first years of SLA’s founding, will discuss the challenges of those years. Richard Crepeau, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Central Florida, was one of the most important scholars outside of SDSU to encourage and support Olsen’s efforts. With an expertise in American Sport History, he shared Olsen’s enthusiasm for sport literature and gave legitimacy to Olsen’s quest to bring respectability to sport literature in academic circles. Poets also contributed to this early development. For decades before becoming *Aethlon*’s Poetry Editor, former Poet Laureate of Virginia Ron Smith published poems in SLA’s journals *Arete* and *Aethlon* and continues to share his poetry during annual meetings. Don Johnson, also an accomplished poet and former professor of English at East Tennessee State University (ETSU), welcomed Olsen and the journal to ETSU and has been a member of SLA since its inception. For many years, Don was also Poetry Editor for *Aethlon* and when Olsen moved the journal to ETSU, he became the Editor, a position he held from 1988-2004. In 1993, SLA founder, Lyle Olsen, decided that Joyce Duncan, also a member of the English faculty of ETSU, should be the Managing Editor of the Association, and she has continued to do so.

**Poetry, Music, and Prose Open Mic**

**Friday, June 20, 2025**

**Panel Nine: Obsession and Fandom.**

**Chair: Cory Williard.**

***“Tennis in David Foster Wallace’s* Infinite Jest*.”***Jeffrey Segrave, Skidmore College - jsegrave@skidmore.edu

The purpose of this paper is to interrogate the use of tennis in David Foster Wallace’s gargantuan, mind-altering tragi-comic epic, Infinite Jest. Set in a cockeyed, dystopian near-future, *Infinite Jest* is a metafictional novel preoccupied with the insidious virality of popular entertainment, what Wallace deems as the primary cause of the “shift from a liberating to an isolating anxiety.” A profound and haunting study of the post-modern condition, *Infinite Jest* revolves around obsession, despair, and alienation. It is at heart a vast investigation into America as the land of addictions—to television, to drugs, to loneliness, to sport—tennis is a crucial dimension of the comic Weltschmerz that defines the novel, tennis as “hip ennui.”

**“Life as a Field of Unfulfilled Dreams: An Analysis of the Baseball References in Paul Auster’s *Baumgartner*.”**
Mizuki Nakamura, The University of Osaka - mizuki.nakamura.hmt@osaka-u.ac.jp

Paul Auster has been a lifelong baseball fan, and even in his swan song, Baumgartner (2023), he integrates the sport into the lives of two characters: Anna Baumgartner and Ed Papadopoulos. In the novel, while grieving the loss of his wife Anna in a water accident, the protagonist Seymour Baumgartner reads her writings, where she recalls how she once played baseball with boys until she was excluded from Little League at age eight. Ed, a former AAA pitcher, now works as a meter reader and meets Seymour on his first day. Both characters once dreamed of a baseball future, only to see those dreams shattered, Anna by gender barriers and Ed by not making the Major League. In this sense, baseball in Baumgartner is a symbol of unfulfilled dreams. However, Auster once wrote that “it [baseball] teaches you how to take the good with the bad” (Here and Now 166), and this philosophy echoes in the novel in that both Anna and Ed carve out meaningful lives beyond their early disappointments. In other words, their lives show that life’s potential flourishes not in victories alone but in persistence. Baseball, then, becomes more than a metaphor for lost opportunities. It represents the quiet triumph of those who, in Auster’s words, “[s]hrug off defeats, take victories in stride, without undue exaltation” (Here and Now 166).

***“‘Our Daily Goal’: The Football Crowd in the Literature of Franco’s Spain.”***
Adam Winkel, High Point University - awinkel@highpoint.edu

This paper is an examination of literary depictions of fans in novels, poems, short stories, and essays of the Franco period in Spain (1939-75). As Spain emerged from its violent civil war (1936-39) under a repressive dictatorship that tightly censored press and artistic expression, football and the football stadium became a sphere where fans were allowed an “escape valve.” Though still controlled by the dictatorship, the stadium was a space that fostered praise and protest. In the 1950s and 60s, Spain’s major football clubs built or expanded their stadiums to capacities of tens of thousands of spectators. This expansion, along with advances in television broadcasting, changed the nature of the football crowd and its cultures.

The literary world reacted to the expansion by expressing a mix of nostalgia for an earlier period, idealized as simpler and purer, and by attempting to turn the multitude of fans into a multitude of words. Authors transformed the crowd’s massive, collective modes of expression into the delicate, piercing expression of poetry and prose. Authors such as León Felipe, Ángel Zúñiga, Evaristo Acevedo, Camilo José Cela, and Francisco García Pavón attempted to capture the energy of the crowd in language that often surpasses the constraints of journalistic accounts of the matches and their action on the pitch. By turning an eye to the stands, these authors help their readers visualize the fan experience as the beautiful game was becoming the spectacle of contemporary soccer.

***“Danish Soccer Novels, 1967-2024: Preliminary Findings.”***

Preben Philipson, Espergærde Gymnasium - prephi65@gmail.com

The most frequently occurring genre in Danish and Nordic sport literature is the soccer novel. Despite its short history soccer novels have a wide range of themes and subgenres. Historically, soccer novels seem to have a focus on Danish soccer as an integrated part of a European context, as well as a more domestic focus on club, team and fan culture. 1979 was a defining year for the origin of Danish soccer novels. The novel The Soccer Angel by Hans-Jørgen Nielsen was published and became a very famous novel about the 1970’s left-wing political environment and a breakthrough for public acceptance of competitive sport among intellectuals. Whereas *The Soccer Angel* was a part of a domestic trail, *The 25th Hour* (1979, by Inge Eriksen and Per Høyer Hansen), marked the beginning of a sport literature with an emphasis on corruption and athlete pressure in the commercialized and professional soccer world. A trend which today includes themes like match fixing, doping, drugs and organized crime. Soccer in Denmark has traditionally been analyzed in a male context and most of the novels deal with masculinity and related expectations from the environment. Apart from soccer (star) players the protagonists dealing with these masculinity issues are journalists, fans and police detectives.

**Panel Ten: Creative Non-fiction.**

**Chair: Rebecca Wines.**

***“Baseball Eulogies: My Father, Uncle Monty and the Expos.”***

Fred Mason, University of New Brunswick. fmason@unb.ca

This piece looks at the life-long fandom of my father (from Montreal, originally an Expos fan), the influence of his Uncle Monty, the peak of the Expos in their strike season and subsequent loss. Written as a series of short vignettes, parts of the story will focus on the Montreal Royals when he was young, the family moving from Montreal to far-flung Newfoundland, my own unremarkable not-quite-Little League career, my father adopting the Toronto Blue Jays as his second team in time for their World Series wins, and how into his 80s, he could be found watching baseball on television. While I played all sort of sports that he was not interested in, baseball remained something that offered a connection to a man very much of his generation, who worked hard at his shift work job and rarely expressed emotion.

***“The Harry Plan.”***

Rob Napolitano, Independent Scholar - robertnapolitano6@gmail.com

The Harry Plan details a training block in my story leading up to the 2024 Olympics after a six month's long debilitating case of Mononucleosis. It is a chapter of my working memoir detailing my resignation from Wall Street to return to professional track and field, qualifying for two World Championships and training for the Paris Olympics.

***“Graig Nettles and the End of the World.”***

Scott Palmieri, Johnson & Wales University - spalmieri@jwu.edu

"Graig Nettles and the End of the World" is a creative non-fiction piece that traces the author's love for fielding in baseball to his childhood sports hero, Graig Nettles, and how his early love for Nettles and baseball intersects with important moments of his family's history, including moments he does not recall. In his search for origins and early heroes, he asks, "Where are the places we've been but don't remember?"

**Saturday, June 21, 2025**

**Panel Eleven: Non-fiction and Manuals.**

**Chair: Fred Mason.**

**“Netflix’s *Quarterback* and Documentary as Athlete Brand Management.”**

Branden Buehler, Seton Hall University - Branden.Buehler@shu.edu

It has been remarked that we are currently in the midst of something of a “golden age” of sports documentary. Media outlets like ESPN and Netflix have heavily invested in both feature-length sports documentaries and episodic sports “docuseries,” and many of these documentaries, like ESPN’s The Last Dance and O.J.: Made in America, have attracted widespread cultural attention and/or critical acclaim.

A significant factor fueling the recent explosion in sports documentary production has been the interest of athletes in employing the documentary form to manage their celebrity brands. Indeed, one of the signature elements of this new wave of sports documentaries is that a large number of these works have been produced in close cooperation with the very same athletes who have served as the documentaries’ subjects. To that point, many athletes have even attached their own media production companies to these documentary projects. This paper uses the 2023 Netflix docuseries Quarterback – for which National Football League (NFL) star Patrick Mahomes served as both a subject and a co-producer – as a case study for examining the exact sort of brand management at work in these recent athlete-produced documentaries. Closely analyzing the series as a text, the paper suggests that athlete-produced documentaries work to construct and maintain positive brand images by hybridizing narrative elements of several existent sports media forms – drawing on, in particular, narrative logics not just from earlier sports documentaries but also from athlete biographies and narrative sports films.

**“*Born to Run 2*: Anthropology as Training and the Neocolonial Labor of Trail Running.”**

Brett Siegel, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs - bsiegel@uccs.edu

It would be difficult to overstate the impact that Christopher McDougall’s Born to Run (2009) had on the rising popularization and commercialization of ultra-running and trail-running subcultures (David & Lehecka, 2013). McDougall’s account of the Tarahumara, an ancient tribe of superior distance runners living in Mexico’s remote Copper Canyon, stoked the imaginations of white, Western readers who were inspired by this new running bible to challenge themselves through harrowing feats of endurance in harsh and unforgiving environments. Scholars have explored the neocolonial implications of the post-McDougall running milieu (Lisle, 2016) as well as the fetishization and exploitation of distance runners in the Global South (Daniel et al, 2020), but the author’s 2022 sequel has received less attention. Positioned as the “ultimate training guide,” Born to Run 2 takes the anthropological foundations of its predecessor and converts them into concrete strategies for readers to run like the Tarahumara. What originated as a testament to running free became a detailed set of tools and techniques to embody a more “natural” version of our ancestral running selves. Through textual analysis of the series and discourse analysis of its promotional materials, I argue that the sequel’s apparent celebration of a diverse running community united by their shared love of the sport ultimately marginalizes the very subjects that the first book sought to elevate, relegating the Tarahumara to a mythic past and reconstituting their primary value as that which they hold for Western, capitalist society.

***“Pollution, Commodification, and Climate Change; or, How to Love Fishing through the Anthropocene.”***

Cory Willard, Mount Royal University - cwillard@mtroyal.ca

10 years ago, in 2015, environmental philosopher Dale Jamieson and novelist Bonnie Nadzam created a collection of short stories titled Love in the Anthropocene that sought to foreground the necessity of love and personal connection in maintaining natural systems in what we now often refer to as the Anthropocene. The opening story of the collection, “Fly Fishing,” centres around a father and daughter fly fishing trip to a manufactured wilderness destination run by a company known as Wild Rivers, Inc. Taking place at a destination manufactured for the ideal fishing experience with none of the difficulty, Jamieson and Nadzam sever the connections to place and ecology often considered as hallmarks of fly fishing and fly fishing literature. Four years later, Matthew L. Miller, Director of Science Communications for the Nature Conservancy, published Fishing Through the Apocalypse: An Angler’s Adventures in the 21st Century, which highlights a sort of fishing that one might consider dystopian, focusing on invasive species, trash strewn watersheds, and extreme for-pay fishing opportunities. While in Love in the Anthropocene everything appears perfect, but is also “fake,” the book Fishing Through the Apocalypse provides a fascinating parallel where everything is messy, but in a way more “real.”

Focusing on an analysis of these two works, this presentation grapples with what fly fishing (and angling more broadly) have to say about commodification, pollution, and climate change, and considers how it is that we could slip into or avoid such a diminished, dystopian world.

**Panel Twelve: Challengers.**

**Chair: David Kilpatrick.**

***“An Unexpected De Amicis: Notes on* Amore e ginnastica *(1892) by E De Amicis.”***

Giuliana Pala, Università di Bologna - giulianapala1@gmail.com (Virtual Presentation)

This paper focuses on "Amore e Ginnastica" (1892), a short novel from the late literary production of Edmondo De Amicis (1846-1908). This work, first published in the journal “Nuova Antologia” and then celebrated in 1971 with the Einaudian reissue commissioned by Italo Calvino, represents not only a curious example of post-Risorgimento Italian sports writing, but also a narrative opportunity to show how the emergence of a sport culture and the birth of places dedicated to gymnastics contributed to the creation of new modern female models. In "Amore e ginnastica", De Amicis offers a vivid and accurate cross-section of the main ideological positions of the time, placing at the center of the novel the teacher Maria Pedani, a young gymnastics teacher with a Baumannian orientation who, between barbells and National Gymnastics Congresses, offers Italian literature an unexpected and revolutionary protagonist. Based on the recent studies by Luigi Cepparrone (2010), we intend to describe how "L'Altro De Amicis", through the use of sports rhetoric and the debates of the time, was able to challenge the fixity of traditional narratives and renegotiate the perception of the Italian female model.

***“Public Awareness and Filmmakers’ Responsibilities of Sexual Abuse in Sport: An Analysis of* Slalom *(2020) Reviews.”***

Siyao Lin, University of Toulouse - siyao.lin819@gmail.com (Virtual Presentation)

Feminist movements like #MeToo have raised public awareness of sexual abuse in sports and encouraged testimonies in various forms. This article focuses on cultural productions that denounce such violence in sports and examines how audiences receive these denunciations. Based on the film *Slalom* (2020) — an autofiction inspired by director Charlène Favier’s personal trauma —, it analyzes reviews published on the platforms Allociné and SensCritique. These critiques are mostly positive and acknowledge the responsibility of sports culture in systemic sexual abuse. However, negative reactions to the explicit depiction of forced encounters highlight the need for more sensitive and responsible portrayals of sexual violence in cultural productions.

***“Boxing Stories and American Pulp Magazines: The Case of* Fight Stories *Magazine.”***

Charlotte Estrade, Université Paris Nanterre. cestrade@parisnanterre.fr (Virtual Presentation)

Literary productions of the modernist era (1910-1930s) staging boxers are numerous and take various forms (music, poems, novels, essays, (auto)biographies) yet the most gripping is certainly the short story. Many were published in pulp magazines and this paper will focus on Fight Stories (subtitled “Fiction and Fact of the Prize-Ring”), which ran more than 100 issues from 1928 to 1952. This paper seeks to investigate the role and place of this magazine in the larger domain of sports and men’s magazines which also published boxing stories in the same period of time. Attention will also be paid to the inaugural illustrations of each story, as well as recurring names of authors such as Robert E. Howard or Arthur J. Burks. I will try to outline the common characteristics of such stories and their circulation, as well as the place of those stories in the wider corpus of some of their authors. The idea behind this study is to show how a lingering interest for sometimes stereotypical boxing stories could be maintained, and to show that the place of publication (in Fight Stories, Gangster Stories or in more mainstream publications such as Esquire and Collier’s) has a large impact on the perception of the “sweet science”, among afficionados and for other readers.

**Panel Thirteen: Women Athletes in Contemporary Sports Fiction. Chair: Matt Tettleton.**

***“Collectivity, Cannibalism, and Competition in the Animal Kingdom: An Ecofeminist Reading of* Headshot*, a Young Women’s Boxing Novel.”***

Aurora Blanchard, University of Missouri Saint-Louis - auroradblanchard@gmail.com

In Headshot, Rita Bullwinkel’s boxing novel, eight teenage girls compete for the title of “best in the nation” at the Women’s 18 and Under Daughters of America tournament in Reno, NV. Well-sponsored male athletes fighting in packed stadiums can feed off the energy from the crowd, but the girls at the dingy ring of the Daughters of America tournament must source their energy from elsewhere. Few fans sit in the crowd to cheer them on. The girls who fight well at the tournament transcend space and time, tapping into the raw power of nature, drawing from the elements found in their hometowns hundreds of miles away. As the story builds, and more women are defeated, the winner of each bout cannibalizes the energy and spirit of the boxer they just defeated. The collective energy of these young women is stored in the boxers of the final bout. This creates tension in the masculine construction of what it means to compete and win. From an ecofeminist perspective, the young women blend with nature and become part of the collective energy in the tournament. Headshot is a story about the power of nature, the women who draw upon it, and the thin veil that separates animals and humans. Just as wolf cubs tackle one another under a tree in the spirit of play, the young women at the Daughters of America tournament transcend their immediate urban surroundings to tap into embodied naturescapes, engaging in the natural art of sport and friendly competition.

***“‘The body on the page’: Reclaiming, Rewriting, and Rebuilding Sports Literature for Female Identified Athletes.”***

Hannah Anderson, University of Calgary - hannah.anderson@ucalgary.ca (Virtual Presentation)

\*Runner Up of the Sport Literature Association's 2025 Lyle Olsen Graduate Student Essay Contest.

The distinction between expectations and reality for athletes can be hard to recognize when predictable stories – even those with “very little connection to the truth of athletic lives” – are repeated and reaffirmed in literature and popular media, and even harder when expectations around sports literature as a genre are so engrained that these predictions are accepted as truth (Abdou 7). Though sports and sports literature operate as patriarchal systems built to exclude female identified and BIPOC athletes, “writing is an extension of the body” for athletes (Diaz xl). Writing with and through the body as female identified athletes reclaims and rebuilds sports as a physical and literary space. Despite damage inflicted by patriarchal narratives like The Legend of Jesse Smoke and the literary prevalence of the Lone Girl, literature about female identified athletes – especially literature emphasizing physicality, identity, community, and athletes writing their stories as embodied practice – rewrites misrepresentations of the female identified “body on the page” (Diaz xl). If sports are “a relationship of movement and space, momentum, timing, a defiance of the body’s socialized limitations,” sports stories for, by, and about female identified athletes must continue to defy limitations (Diaz xv). This paper examines the failures of damaging representation; the reclamation of athletic representations through texts like Bodies Built for Game, The Bone Cage, Postcolonial Love Poem, and Twenty Miles; and the possibilities of rebuilding sports literature by writing through the body.

***“‘Swindling Physics with My Swindled Physique’: The Hopeful and the Domestication of Female Masculinity.”***

Tommaso Villa, University of Lincoln - tvilla@lincoln.ac.uk

This essay will focus on the domestication of female masculinity in the skating novel *The Hopeful* (2015) by Tracy O’Neill. This paper will show that while protagonist Alivopro Doyle manifests traits typically associated with female masculinity, her athletic corporeality does not present a challenge to dominant gender norms. Tommaso will demonstrate that Ali’s wish to erase her femininity puts her in danger, while also evidencing that her self-harming obsession is caused by her hyper-professional single-mindedness.

**Closing Message**