

An Orgy of a Masculine Scandal in Media: The 1954 Football World Cup

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Introduction

This article is a preliminary report of a research project: “Tabloidization in the Norwegian media: 1930s.-2003”. The article focuses on a mediated press scandal in the football World Cup in Switzerland in 1954. This is a story about the favourite national team of 1954, Hungary, who played against the national team of Brazil in the quarter final in Berne. The match developed into an “orgy of violence” both on and off stage.

The questions are as follows: How is the scandal mediated? How are the male agents presented? How are the national stereotypes mediated?

Mass communication has transformed sport from what Holt (1989) referred to as an “orally transmitted popular culture” to a mass culture with mass spectatorship. There is, of course, no one-way street from media to sport. Sport has also played its part in the transformation of media industries. Therefore, the point of departure of this project is on the relationship between sport and the media in an historical perspective.

Sport is seen to occupy a contradictory position of being placed low down in the professional ranks of journalism, especially in the medium of print. Sports journalists do not have a standing which corresponds to the size of the readership or of their pay packet. The cliché that sport is the “toy department of the media” - indicates that sport journalism is not taken seriously (Rowe, 1999).

Mediated versions of sport is today one of the key areas of culture which give us a sense of a lived history. Norwegian newspaper production did not give any priority to sport in 1954, although the press has mediated news from the football World Cup from its very start in Uruguay in 1930. Sporting events need to have a history and longevity to feel important (Boyle & Haynes, 2000). In this way, the football World Cup seems to be a good case.

Sport texts in 1954 might be characterized as a ghetto of male sports. Sports news was produced and structured on one page of a newspaper with a sports logo from 1920 onwards in the biggest Oslo papers. The content grew steadily, especially from the 1960s onwards.

The Sports Press in Norway in 1954

Three national papers are in focus here: the conservative subscription and morning paper *Aftenposten*, the biggest paper at that time, and two newspapers for sale to non-subscribers, the liberal *Dagbladet* and the conservative *Verdens Gang*. 1954 was before televised sport, before sport sold many copies of newspapers, and before football dominated sports pages. Only *Dagbladet* stated on the front page that their newspaper had sent a reporter to the World Cup, while *Aftenposten* referred to United Press (UP) and their own commentator in Oslo, and *Verdens Gang* only mediated the scandal once. Sport in the sports sections covered only one page every weekday, except for Monday, in which a double spread was presented. The second round of the football World Cup (from June 26th till July 5th) covered only 11% of the total stuff on the sports pages and 5% on the front pages of *Dagbladet* in 1954. The sport coverage was structured badly; only 30% of the coverage was on the sport pages, whereas 70% was on different other pages of this newspaper.

The analysis of the World Cup scandal is presented in a critical perspective.

Analysis: A Critical Perspective

The focus is on qualitative analysis. I have been inspired by Normann Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995a, b). He created a three-dimensional framework (text, discourse practice, socio-cultural practice) for analysis, in which he reflects on the relationship between texts, the discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and socio-cultural practice, in which ideologies and power relations are dealt with. The focus here is on the relationship between texts on the one hand and socio-cultural practice on the other. Texts about the scandal both on the sport pages and in the rest of the pages are linked to the following elements from society: gender representations and national stereotypes. Whereas Fairclough uses the concept of ideology, I use *asymmetrical power relations* concerning which nations are seen to have the definitional power to categorize others. What is in the text may be explicit or implicit. "Analysis of implicit content can provide valuable insights into what is taken as given, as common sense" (Fairclough, 1995, b: 6). That which is taken for granted in a culture contributes to "naturalize" practices of domination (Bourdieu, 1977). With this in mind, I will also search for the latent meaning production in the relevant texts. Thus, micro-texts of a sentence are here interpreted not only as "local" significance to the situation in which they occur, but possibly linked to latent macro-texts of dominating values in a culture.

Now, what is a sports scandal in the media?

A Mediated Sports Scandal

Media are key conduits in the communication of the meaning of a sports scandal (Rowe, 1997). They dominate sports news today. In 1954 they were, however, scarce.

The occurrence of a scandal involves transgression of certain values, norms or moral codes. Further, some non-participants disapprove of the actions, and some of them express their disapproval in public, and the disclosure of the condemnation of the actions may damage the reputation of the individuals responsible for them (Thompson, 1997). In this article, only the reputation of the best player, Puskas, is analyzed.

Scandals fascinate and produce texts of messy affairs. The Olympic athlete was in 1954, to a great extent, a panoply of idealizations. Before the football match in Berne, this could, to a certain degree, also include the Olympic gold medal winners in Helsinki in 1952, the national team of Hungary. Sport, as a key domain of popular culture, is according to David Rowe required to perform the uncertain shuffle between ethical seriousness and naïve faith (Rowe, 1997).

Masculinities

Analysing masculinities with a focus on media sport is relatively new. Male competitiveness, toughness, and desire to control are all values instilled in the military, competitive sports, and organisational life. These are taken as indicative of natural male aggressiveness in contrast to the classical female sensitivity. The idea that man is biologically predisposed to fight as a survival mechanism is recreated and reconstructed in different ways in every generation in the tabloid media circulation. The popularisation of the Darwinian-inspired instinct theory has contributed to this. I read Robert Bly's "Iron John" from 1990 as an example of this. Ideal characteristics of a dominating masculinity in the western world are supposed to be as follows:

. . . potent, penetrating, outward thrusting, initiating, forging ahead into virgin territory, opening the way, sword-like, able to cut, able to clear or differentiate, goal-oriented, to the point, focused, directive, effective, aimed, hitting the mark, strong, erect.
(Haddon, 1988)

Such an ideal I have ironically named "carpe phallum" (Lippe, 1997). I interpret this as the hegemonic mediated masculinity of athletes as winners in Norwegian newspapers.

In the World Cup context of 1954, the agents who are described as goal-oriented, focussed, directive, effective, strong and hitting the mark are, of course, possible winners.

Masculinities are tied to the classical role of the breadwinner in the industrial societies of the 1950s. The private and the public arenas were sharply divided, and gender segrega-

tion in these arenas was understood as “natural” practices. The dominating masculinities of the 1950s are here categorized as *industrial masculinity*. To do the accepted gender acts of the time, a man as a breadwinner of a family who did sport in his leisure, seemed to have the correct point of departure.

National Stereotypes

Mediated sport reconstructs stereotypes of gender, race and nationalities (O’Donnel, 1993; Rowe 2003; Helland, 2003, Fekke, 2003 and Lippe, 2003). Walter Lippmann is supposed to have introduced the concept of a stereotype within the social sciences with his book *Public Opinion* of 1922 (Hinton, 2000). According to Lippmann, our actions are not based on direct knowledge of the “real world”, because it seems to be too complex for us. Therefore we construct simplified pictures:

In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture had already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked by our culture (Lippmann, 1922: 81).

Lippmann argues that these simplifications are false, because we do not get sufficient knowledge of our culture. They are also rigid and difficult to change:

But modern life is hurried and multifarious, above all physical distance separates men who often are in vital contact with each other... There is neither time nor opportunity for intimate acquaintance. Instead we notice a trait which marks a well known type, and fill in the rest of the picture by means of the stereotypes we carry in our heads (Lippmann, 1922: 89).

Hugh O’Donnel (1994) divides his study on football stereotypes into the north (Scandinavia), the centre (Germans, the British, the French) and the south (the South Americans and the Africans). The Scandinavians are described as people with coolness and clinical rationality. In a study of media construction through the European handball championship in 1998 in the press of five European countries, the Hungarian *Nemzeti Sport* mediated the Norwegian female players who won the match as “iceberg” (Lippe, 2002). Germans are, according to O’Donnel, mentally controlled, disciplined, effective, reliable and hard working, whereas the Latin Americans are magical, creative, irrational, undisciplined, reckless, with a temperament supercharged with emotions and completely irresponsible.

O’Donnel (1994) argues that the centre has created these stereotypes. An important point of departure is the simplification of the collective working morale in a nation, as the centre defines it: “...all stereotypes share: their overt or covert mythologizing of collective fitness of work” (*Ibid*: 356). For Stuart Hall, identities (here: national identities) are constructed within a discourse produced in specific historical and institutional sites (1997).

These identities, Hall argues, are constructed within a discourse through relationships to the “Other;”, that is, the identity is juxtaposed to the “Other” in relation to what it *lacks*, to what it is not.

Norway did not take part in the sport event of 1954. However, the nation, present or absent, is still crucial to the experience of the World Cup (Rowe, 2003). The focus is here on the gendered coupling of the national stereotypes as they are mediated in the World Cup of 1954.

The story is an example of the slow-time of sports in the 1950s. In this way the story-telling might resemble that of a chapter in a traditional novel: the facts were slowly unravelled.

The Context of the Battle of Berne in 1954

The FIFA World Cup in 1954, staged in Switzerland at the foot of the Alps, featured a higher number of nations than ever before. Also teams from Asia (Japan and Korea) and Africa (Egypt) gave the event a global dimension. Sixteen teams took part in the finals, three more than in Brazil four years earlier. South America was represented by Uruguay, Brazil and Mexico; the Asian qualifier was Korea, and Europe included Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, England, France, Hungary, Italy, Scotland, Turkey, West Germany and Yugoslavia. Hungary was the incontestable favourite with a team including Ferenc Puskas, Jozsef Bozsik and Sandor Kocsis. The national team was the Olympic gold medal winners two years before, and unbeaten since May 1950 (31 games: 27 wins and 4 draws). In 1953, the team beat England 6-3 at Wembley. From the outset of this world cup of 1954, the “magical Magyars” showed their class by thrashing Korea 9-0 in Zurich on June, 17th and an admittedly under-strength German side 8-3 in Basel on June 20th.

The Orgy of Violence and the Mediation of the Scandal

First, the texts of the scandal are presented, and then the focus is on the stereotypes of the Hungarians and the Brazilians. This story is from the quarter-finals between Hungary and Brazil in Bern on June, 27th. This was a match that the English referee, Arthur Ellis, would remember all his life. Here Hungary beat Brazil 4-2 in a high tension match that ended in the dressing rooms when players, managers and the two delegates came to blast (www.fifaworldcup.../1954). The match had gotten underway in a driving rain, which itself did not help cool frayed tempers. The match statistics are as follows: 42 free-kicks, 2 penalties, 4 cautions and 3 dismissals. One of the headlines of *Aftenposten* on June 28th is as follows:

Hungary overpowered Brazil in a hard and dramatic fight

The news from the match starts as follows:

Hungary beat Brazil without Puskas with 4-2 in a raving clash in the quarter-final Sunday and 55,000 spectators on the terraces. Hungary was leading 2-0 when Brazil finally scored their first on a penalty. From then on the match grew more violent... In the 73rd minute, the Hungarian half Bozsaik and Brazil's Nilton Santos were sent out when they started to fight regularly. Some minutes earlier Hildegkut (Hungary) was hurt and was lying down on the ground at the same time as Santos started faking injury, and several South American journalists and photographers flocked together on the field, and the police had to clear the field to continue the game... The Brazilian coach, Alfredo Moreiro, was very discontent after the match and claimed that his team ought to have won. "(Good) luck and doubtful decisions on behalf of the referee were the reasons why they did not beat the Olympia Winners", says he and the Brazilian captain Bauer agrees: "We played well and ought to have won."

The *Aftenposten*, June 29th under the heading of "World Cup football is strong meat":

Nobody is able to defend the great football artist Puskas when he attacks with a bottle in his hand, even if he is ever so bitter about the ugly play of the Brazilians, the decisions of the referees – or what else it could be... The sources concerning whether he was an attacker or a defender when he hit the Brazilian player are unclear. His behaviour and his weapon are, however, unworthy of a sportsman at his level of performance.

The *Aftenposten* referred to the Swedish Dagens Nyheter to dig further into this fight:

A Hungarian player is supposed to have started the tough fight. This initiated the rough match and the series of tacklings, clots of spit in the faces of the opponents and other senseless actions between sportsmen. The fact that the Brazilians grew ten times worse than the Hungarians when they were invited to such a fight, is another matter. This is in accordance with most of the sources.

The following day, *Aftenposten* could announce that the worst part of the fight took place in the locker room after the match. To avoid more brutal practices in the cup, 200 policemen with guns were going to watch the following match between Hungary and Uruguay in the semifinal. At the moment when the match is finished, 70 men will encircle the locker room and 15 men will help the referee, if needed.

On July, 1st, *Aftenposten* produced these headlines:

New reports – new information. Puskas innocent?

Further, in the text:

Now, we hear that Puskas was not involved at all. We will never know. Somebody's word against somebody else's. There was no light on in the locker room during the

fight. The Hungarian leader, Szebes, indicated how difficult it is to find the truth of the intermezzo: First one destroyed the lamps with a knock out, and then they continued on the bodies in the room.

VG presented the scandal on the first page on June, 28th. The focus was on Puskas. He did not take part in the match, because of an injury. He is, however, mediated as a fighter in the locker room:

He attacked the dark-headed Brazilians with an empty bottle. One of them fell down on the floor, and another got a cut over the eye before the police intervened and stopped the temperamental soccer player.

The text on Puskas was never denied in *VG* in contrast to *Dagbladet*. The latter paper stated clearly that the football hero was innocent.

Dagbladet produced these two headings on June, 29th - "Soccer ball – the root of evil" and "No limits on WC scandals". The text of the orgy is as follows:

The World Cup tournament degenerates across all limits. The scandal-match Hungary Brazil will certainly create great consequences... When empty bottles, stone throwing, fist fighting, clots of spits, scorning, police clubbing and vandalism are the context of a football match, the best thing to do is to stop the whole cup.

This mediation is interpreted to be the most clear cut and negative of all the texts.

Aftenposten reported on June 29th that FIFA leaders have strongly reprimanded both teams.

National Male Stereotypes

The following stereotypes were produced in the cup of men, and this is from the long introduction in *Aftenposten*, June 28th:

The (Hungarian) team showed fabulous football discipline, and every time the attack started to break down it looked as if new power was driven into the defence. In the end of the first round Brazil was clearly best, but all their finishes were knocked down by the Hungarian machine defence.

Another text from this newspaper on June 29th reads as follows: "World Cup football is strong meat" (headline) and "When temper decides" (subtitle). Parts of the comments from "Lkn" in *Aftenposten* the same day are as follows:

The quarter-finals of the World Cup are finished. They included the dramatic elements one could expect. Sometimes the games are quite tough among players in the Norwegian cups as well with blood from the "cold north". Hence, one might wonder

how the situation might develop when southerners' blood is up and totally lose control over a temper that might initiate several revolutions during a peaceful Norwegian (4 years) period of parliament.... On the other hand, we are aware that Hungarians are more refined than the primitive and hot-blooded Brazilians. Hence, the offence of the Hungarians turned to be sly as a fox – but all the same most effective.

According to the same paper on the same day the Brazilians are “ten times worse than the Hungarians when they are invited to fight.”

These texts will be analysed in the following.

An Analysis and Discussion of the Scandal and Their Men

This first analysis is from elements of the first dimensional framework on the texts of sport with the point of departure of Thompson's criteria of a scandal and the way in which the agents are mediated.

There have been scandals and exciting competitions in elite sports from day one. According to the characteristics of this article, that of 1954 was surely one of them. “When empty bottles, stone throwing, fist fighting, clots of spits, scoring, police clubbing and vandalism are the context of a football match, the best thing is to stop the whole cup”. The breaking of the rules and the fighting both on stage and off stage transgressed the norms and moral codes of the World Cup. In contrast to the media of today, the readers of 1954 did not know – with a few exceptions - what the different players actually did in the orgy of violence. In this way, the above-mentioned quotation is a symbol of the collective presentation of the battle. There was, of course, no TV zooming in on the individual bodies of players, neither on nor off stage. Further, few or perhaps no journalist were socialized to focus on scandals. Most elite footballers lived a life like the rest of the population. They were not celebrities like the film stars of that time.

Further, non-participants, FIFA leaders, strongly reprimanded both teams. The last characteristic of a scandal, the damage of the reputation of the player, Puskas, is debatable. The texts of *Aftenposten* question whether he actually took part in the fight at all. He was injured and did not play, but what about the fight in the locker room? The paper quoted the Hungarian leader, Szebes, who indicated that the truth of the story would probably never come out. There seemed to be many allegations and no proof. As such, the mediation of this article can be called a narrative without an ending. *Verdens Gang* reported only once, and stated that Puskas was one of the fighters in the locker room, whereas *Dagbladet* reported that he was innocent. The texts are contradictory. It seems that the scandal concerning the “magic” Puskas, simply died unresolved. In a later article I will further examine this problem, and analyse whether it was a cover up for the national icon of Hungary.

Masculinities and National Stereotypes

This analysis is tied to the third dimension of a critical discourse of Fairclough - the socio-cultural practice. A point of departure for a reflection on both ways of doing gender as a man and as a national stereotype is that of a mythologizing of collective fitness of work (discussed above) in an international perspective. Men's work at the assembly line may be a symbol of the industrial society of 1954, and the simplifications of the collective morale of work in a nation may be a symbol of a national stereotype. The picture of these wet, muddy and fighting bodies could symbolize a brutal type of masculinity, further, marginal youngsters. These are interpreted as hegemonic only in some subcultures of young men, in contrast to the ideal of a sportsman, with a beautiful body who follows the rules of sport.

The Brazilian and the Hungarian teams in the quarter final may symbolize a marginal type of masculinity in the field of sport. To break the rules so dramatically is interpreted as a departure from accepted practices of sportsmen in the World Cup. Traditional and racist characteristics are reconstructed in the texts, which I will analyze in a context of asymmetrical power relations concerning which countries seem to have the definitional power to categorize others. In other words, who are the real "we's" and who are "the others"? The Brazilians are "dark-headed", further, they "totally lose control", because they are "hot-blooded" and "ten times worse than the Hungarians".

Norway did not, as stated before, qualify for the World Cup. The nation, however, absent or present, is crucial to the experience of the cup (p. 4):

Sometimes the games are quite tough among players in the Norwegian cups as well with blood from the "cold north". Hence, one might wonder how the situation might develop when southerners' blood is up and totally lose control over a temper that might initiate several revolutions during a peaceful Norwegian (4 years) period of parliament.

This was the conservative and biggest paper of Norway in 1954. Here Norway is interpreted as the ideal democratic state with peaceful parliamentary periods, whereas "the others", the Brazilians with "southerner's blood" are losing control. As a consequence, they might start a revolution. This seems at first as a creative piece of production. In the context of what is *absent* in the text (Norway) and world politics of 1954, however, it is not so. This was the decade of McCarthy in the U.S. The Republican Senator Joseph Raymond McCarthy, was the leader of the board of inquiry which administered the hearings about communist membership and practices in the administration apparatus of the U.S. These inquiries took place from 1953 till 1954. On June, 3rd - only thirteen days before the games of the world cup started - *Verdens Gang* produced an article about McCarthy's "communist inquiries". The hunt for communists was also categorized as "McCarthyism". Many conservative newspapers in Norway did not, on the whole, mediate this as a communist hunt, but more of a necessity in order for the "free west" to keep the hegemony over the Soviet Union. The Norwegian Lund Commission also indicates that there was a communist hunt in Norway, which lasted long beyond the 1950s.

The opponents of the Southerners, the Hungarians, are depicted as “more refined than the primitive and hot-blooded Brazilians”. The further south on the map, the less working morale; the more primitive in the eyes of the Northerners and the Centre. According to O’Donnel, as previously mentioned, the centre (Germans, the British and the French) have the definitional power of the concept of a stereotype. Because Norwegians are interpreted to share the idea of a hardworking people who are able to control their temper, the stereotypes of absent Norwegians and those of the centre have several similar characteristics.

Because the Hungarians are situated in the centre, although from East Europe, and therefore not quite “one of us”, the stereotypes of this team included more positive characteristics than the “dark-headed” Brazilians, such as “fabulous discipline, machine defence, more refined”. The refinement of the north is, however, a twisted matter in this context. This characteristic needs sportsmen who are sly as foxes, which has a negative connotation. This is because these men took part in a fight not according to the rules of football. In this way, they did not manage to cool their temper. This is supposed to be the opposite characteristics of a white gentleman from the bourgeois in the western world.

The relations of power of these texts are interpreted as asymmetrical. The centre of gravity of these stereotypes can be seen to lie in the Centre, who sets the stage and tend to define what characteristics count. Thus, this core collectively defines their relationship with the North, on the one hand, and much more importantly, with the South, on the other. O’Donnel adds as follows:

This is the discursive nexus through which these sporting stereotypes interpenetrate in a network of greatly amplified meanings, together forming a macro-discourse whose referential framework is political and economic. This macro-discourse operates at a higher level still than the sporting stereotypes and behavioural models, and links these ideologically to notions of development and underdevelopment and centrality and peripherality on a European and even a global scale (O’Donnel, 1994: 356) .

With this in mind, the Brazilian team was depicted as ten times worse than the Hungarians. This is seen as a taken for granted “background knowledge”. This “naturalized arbitrariness”, as Bourdieu would call it, tends to create “the dark-headed other” as less civilized than the core and the north. The Brazilians were mediated as the leaders of a possible degeneration of the football cup. The texts do not, however, clarify which team was the most brutal. Thus, the entire narrative can be interpreted as a story without an ending. Literally this is the case, because I am going to dig further and examine this match in the near future.

Final Comments

The brutal fight of 1954 enabled a mobilization of “the monstrous-masculine”¹ as a type of a industrial masculinity. The texts were not gendered, because in the sports ghetto of

men of the time, this was taken for granted. The scandal could probably not have happened in the cups of today, because of the financial consequences for all the players involved, as well as for the clubs and the national teams. To be out of the World Cup or other important football cups is a serious matter. England was after Heysel stadium in Brussels in 1985 out of the European Cup. Besides, the TV coverage would probably have made the audience and sponsors furious with such behaviour. This also adds to a possible economic catastrophe.

Note

1 I am inspired here by B. Creed's "monstrous-feminine" in Rowe, D., 1997. (See the reference list).

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