

The Making of Project II

By: Brendan Montgomery

My idea for this project stemmed from the piece I decided to repurpose, which was an essay for a class titled Political Science 386: Sports, Politics, & Society. The prompt was to analyze the idea of sports being modern and pre-modern, so I decided to use football and baseball as the basis for the essay. It turned into sort of a comparative analysis paper and I was eager to work with it again because I enjoy writing about sports.

Initially, I proposed the idea of working with the broader components of the two sports, but I quickly realized I needed a much more focused argument. I ended up narrowing it down to football and baseball at the University of Michigan, which not only gave me a more pointed argument, but I think it made my piece feel more authentic coming from me, a student at the university. I faced a variety of obstacles along the way, but the biggest was finding information once I took this step and narrowed my focus.

The issue I ran into was that there wasn't much of an argument at face value, because football is simply more popular and prominent throughout history in the eyes of the public and even people affiliated with Michigan. I felt the same way until I stumbled upon information that showed baseball's prominence before football became a sport here. This information really became my breakthrough and helped to guide my paper. I suddenly had the goal to assess how baseball went from being the number one sport here to a sport that is hardly discussed and I had the means to accomplish it.

At this point, I shifted my focus towards my audience and my medium. Throughout the project I planned to use Grantland as the location for publishing my piece. While the odds of it actually being published there are incredibly slim, I wanted to make it look as though it were a Grantland piece down to the smallest detail. I formatted my essay to look as authentic as possible with red hyperlinks, the closest font I could find, and picture of myself at the bottom of the page. This process was tedious and lead to all sorts of mayhem, but with numerous articles at my disposal to model my piece after, I am finally satisfied with how it looks.

Overall, I think my story came together, but I think it could work a little better. I wish I had more time to dig further into some research or to have been able to set up interviews, but I am still satisfied with my work.

The following pages walk through each of the steps I took in developing this project from start to finish. It begins with my initial proposal and culminates with a copy of my final draft. Welcome to my journey!

Proposal

Project 2 Proposal

The original paper was an academic essay for a class I took during the Winter 2013 semester called Political Science 386: Sports, Politics, & Society. The prompt for the paper was to analyze the idea of sports being modern and pre-modern, so I decided to use football and baseball to create a comparative analysis paper. I decided to argue that while most people think of baseball as being pre-modern and football being modern, both sports have major components that fit into the opposite category.

For this project, I want to keep the comparative analysis between baseball and football, but I want to see if the pre-modernity of baseball and the modernity of football have impacted their respective popularities as a result of our society becoming increasingly modern. Baseball has affectionately been known as America's pastime, but many argue that football has taken over in popularity. I want to see if this is actually the case and if there are reasons that support this.

Some questions I have are: Is football the most popular sport? What components of football make it so popular? Is baseball declining in popularity? If so, why? Are these results the same throughout the rest of the world, or just the United States? I will need to research various indicators of popularity for each sport such as television ratings, attendance at games, and revenue. Ideally, I will also be able to find information from surveys that show why people choose to watch certain sports.

My audience will be people who are sports fans and the members of our class. I feel this way because sports fans would be the most interested in this piece and I anticipate the members of our class reading it as well. The consideration I will need to make is whether or not I will include more technical aspects about these sports because of the fact that I am assuming that the majority of my audience will be knowledgeable about sports already.

I would publish this piece in the sports section of a newspaper, or in a sports magazine. This would allow me to reach my target audience in the most effective way because the person reading it would more than likely be a sports fan if they are reading the newspaper or magazine. However, it is possible that I would publish it electronically on a sports website because of the same reasons.

The entirety of my source paper and my plans for this project will be in the form of expository nonfiction. As a result, the conventions I need to focus on will be real people, places, and events. This will suit my subject of sports well because I want this piece to be fact-based and informative.

This project is particularly exciting for me because I am an avid baseball and football fan in my spare time. The source paper was one of the most enjoyable papers I've had to write and I am excited about expanding upon my initial argument. I am also compelled by the fact that I will have to use this project for project three. While I was growing up I always wanted to host a sports radio talk show, so I was thinking I could transform this project into a podcast for project three. I know that this topic will keep me interested throughout the semester, so it seems like a perfect scenario for me.

existing research out there

how to narrow seed?

i.e. perhaps to U-M students as material

name specific
Good to have particular model

great subject material

or a piece on sports in The New Yorker magazine for example. How is that written differently than newspaper piece?

ESPN round the Horn?
WCBN student sports show?

What makes a sports newspaper article different than an arts/entertainment piece or a "world news" section piece?

Annotated Bibliography

Brendan Montgomery

T Hetzel

8 October 2014

Annotated Bibliography

Barra, Allen. "Sorry, NFL: Baseball Is Still America's Pastime." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic

Media Company, 30 Oct. 2013. Web. 7 Oct. 2014.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/10/sorry-nfl-baseball-is-still-americas-pastime/280985/?single_page=true>.

This article acknowledges football's strong following and popularity, while showing that there are misconceptions about baseball's current state. It exposes flaws in arguments that baseball that state that baseball is no longer America's pastime. I plan to use this article as supporting evidence against those misconceptions.

Calcaterra, Craig. "Baseball is dying? Nonsense: The Case for Baseball's Vitality." *NBC*

Sports: Hardball Talk. N.p., n.d. Web. 7 Oct. 2014.

<<http://hardballtalk.nbcsports.com/2014/09/09/baseball-is-dying-nonsense-the-case-for-baseballs-vitality/>>.

This article is a detailed commentary on reasons that show that baseball is just as strong as ever. I plan to use this as one of my primary sources to discuss baseball's current state and to describe some of the different metrics that are used to gauge its popularity. I also plan to use this source to show that there are specific ways that each sport should be evaluated in order to accurately determine their respective popularities.

Curtis, Bryan. "The Dead Ball Century." *Grantland*. N.p., 7 Oct. 2014. Web. 7 Oct. 2014.

<<http://grantland.com/the-triangle/the-dead-ball-century-mlb-baseball-playoffs-john-thorn-mlb-historian-baseball-decline-articles/>>.

This article is an argument that while many critics think baseball is a dying sport, this has been an argument since the late 1800s. The article uses news articles from numerous decades to show that writers have always said that baseball is dying, which means it may not have any additional validity today in comparison to previous years. I plan to use this as supporting evidence for baseball's popularity remaining strong.

Glauber, Bob. "NFL's popularity is fine, but for how long? - Newsday." *Newsday*. N.p., 20 Sept. 2014. Web. 7 Oct. 2014.

<<http://www.newsday.com/sports/columnists/bob-glauber/nfl-s-popularity-is-fine-but-for-how-long-1.9366400>>.

This article details the obstacles and concerns that are in front of NFL commissioner Roger Goodell, which could impact football's popularity. With more players being diagnosed with concussions and having health problems in their retirement and youth participation rates declining, football's fan base could decline as well. I plan to use this article to discuss football's future and to show that it is likely going to face diminishing returns.

Verducci, Tom. "Tom Verducci: Baseball's State of the Union: Some ways to improve the game." *SI.com*. N.p., 10 June 2014. Web. 7 Oct. 2014.

<<http://www.si.com/mlb/2014/01/28/state-union-baseball>>.

This article discusses the idea that baseball is in fact doing well, but is currently at a crossroad. Bud Selig, the MLB commissioner is retiring, and baseball could experience significant changes to make the sport more modern and to attract the younger generations. I plan to use this article to discuss the future of baseball and how it is going to become more modern over time. I will also discuss how this will affect baseball's popularity.

Rough Draft

Title

In 1866 baseball became a sanctioned sport at the University of Michigan. That was thirteen years before the school would even begin competing in football. At that time, baseball was clearly enshrined as America's pastime, with football just starting to be played around the country. Nearly a century later, "The Greatest Game Ever Played" between the Baltimore Colts and the New York Giants had fans arguing that football had officially become more popular than baseball and this argument has not gone away. While the popularities of football and baseball have frequently been compared at the professional level for decades, there is simply no contest at the collegiate level. Football is simply the more popular sport at colleges around the United States. At the University of Michigan, this notion holds true, even with its storied baseball history.

In 2010, Michigan's baseball team had an average attendance of 1,278 people per game (Foley). Compare that to the mammoth crowds (100K+ people) that flock to Ann Arbor for each home game during the football season and it's easy to see this striking contrast, but why is this the case?

Comparatively, college football fans have the opportunity to watch NFL caliber players when they come to watch Michigan on Saturdays. There are currently 23 former Michigan football players who are currently playing in the NFL, while just *two* former Michigan players can be found on an MLB roster. At first glance, it may seem as though the best athletes come to Michigan to play football and not baseball, but that is not entirely the case. Generally, the best talent in baseball goes straight from high school to the minor leagues. In baseball there is no regulation against this, while football players are required to be out of high school for three years before they can enter the NFL Draft. As a result, most of the top football players choose to play college football and end up playing for schools like Michigan. This gives fans the opportunity to see the best of the best play in college, an obvious upside for college football.

When most people think of baseball they think of blue skies and sunny spring days, with smell of freshly cut grass in the air. Sadly, with the college baseball season beginning in February, it is not uncommon for northern schools like Michigan to still be dealing with snow, which leaves the exact opposite scenery for fans to sit through. While it is challenging for teams to even play in the frigid weather, it is even more challenging to draw a crowd.

Until 2013, college baseball typically went untelevised until the start of the College World Series. As of today, ESPN has begun covering the 64 contestants for the national championship in the "Road to Omaha". With the SEC Network launching as of August 2014, seventy-five regular season games will be televised as well. Despite the recent improvements to

Brendan Montgomery *is a contributor for Grantland.*

Final Draft



The TRIANGLE

The Other Sport: What happened to baseball at the University of Michigan?



In 1866 baseball became a sanctioned sport at the University of Michigan. That was thirteen years before the school would even begin competing in football. At that time, baseball was clearly enshrined as America's pastime, with football just starting to be played around the country. Shortly after becoming a sanctioned sport, baseball transformed into the most important and influential extracurricular activity at Michigan. At the time it was adopted, the school's baseball field existed in the area that is now the [Chemistry Building and Dow Laboratory](#), making it one of the first times a school prioritized a sport so much that it gave up a prime location on its central campus. Richard Adler, a professor at UM-Dearborn and a member of the Society for American Baseball

Research writes, “By the dawn of the 20th century, [baseball] evolved into the most popular spring leisure event in which students participated. Crowds of 500 were not unusual at a time when enrollment at the university was approximately 2,500 students.”

Aside from being the most popular activity on campus, baseball also helped the university and its community to transcend a major barrier. In the 1880s, Weldy and Fleetwood Walker became the first African-Americans to play a varsity sport at Michigan, spurring a change that provided future students of all backgrounds more opportunities outside of the classroom. Fleetwood even went on to be credited as the first African-American to play in the major leagues. Did I mention Michigan’s baseball teams have historically been great too? As if the program’s legacy couldn’t get any stronger, Michigan has the fourth winningest program in the country. In spite of the success and influence baseball has had at the university and beyond, Michigan’s baseball team hardly receives attention today, while the football team receives frequent attention at the national level.

While the popularities of professional football and baseball have been routinely compared for decades, there is simply no contest at the collegiate level. Football is simply the more popular sport at colleges around the United States. At the University of Michigan, this notion holds true, despite its storied baseball history. In 2010, Michigan’s baseball team had an average attendance of 1,278 people per game. Compare that to the mammoth crowds of more than 100,000 that flock to Ann Arbor for each home game during the football season and it’s easy to see this striking contrast, but why is this the case?

1. The Northern Climate

When most people think of baseball they think of blue skies and sunny spring days, with smell of freshly cut grass in the air. Sadly, with the college baseball season beginning in February, it is not uncommon for northern schools like Michigan to still be dealing with snow, which leaves the exact opposite scenery for fans to sit through. While it is challenging for teams to even play in the frigid weather, it is even more challenging to draw a crowd. As a result, Michigan tends to play less home games and spends more time on the road at the beginning of the season, which is limiting for fans. Major League Baseball teams don’t even start their seasons until April and they spend March in warm areas of the country for spring training. Until colleges change the timing of their baseball seasons, it will remain difficult for Michigan to properly condition and to convince fans to come to games early in the season.

2. The Top Talent is Missing

Each Saturday during the fall, college football fans have the opportunity to watch NFL caliber players when they come to watch Michigan play. There are currently 23 former Michigan football players who are playing in the NFL, while just two former Michigan baseball players can be found on an MLB roster. At first glance, it may seem as though the best athletes come to Michigan to play football and not baseball, but that is not entirely the case. Generally, the best talent in baseball goes straight from high school to the minor leagues. In baseball there is no regulation against this, while football players are required to be out of high school for three years before they can enter the NFL Draft. As a result, most of the top football players choose to play college football and end up playing for schools like Michigan. This gives fans the opportunity to see the best of the best play in

college, an obvious upside for attending a Michigan football game on Saturday, rather than attending a baseball game in the spring.

3. Lack of Television Coverage

Until 2013, college baseball typically went untelevised until the start of the College World Series. As of today, ESPN now covers the 64 contestants for the national championship in the “[Road to Omaha](#)”. With the Big Ten Network launching a new setup as of March 2014, [240 baseball and softball games](#) will be televised as well. Sadly only two of Michigan’s regular season baseball games are included in this total. Despite the recent improvements to showcase live college baseball games throughout the season, college football has had regular season games televised by ESPN for thirty years. A large majority of college football’s popularity can be [attributed to its television coverage](#) throughout history and college baseball was simply never given the opportunity. This has effectively stunted the growth of college baseball and it may not recover.

4. NCAA Scholarship Rules

With baseball players having the option to go directly from high school to professional baseball, it seems as though there needs to be an incentive for players to choose to go to college instead. Unfortunately college baseball does not provide nearly as big of an incentive as college football does, as collegiate baseball teams are required to split [11.7 scholarships between everyone on the roster](#). Comparatively, college football teams receive 85 scholarships. Although college football teams have significantly larger rosters than their baseball counterparts, this is still very detrimental to college baseball. According to Peter Keating, [a writer for ESPN](#), if you compared the number of scholarships in each sport to the number of players in the starting lineup, college football teams have enough scholarships for 3.68 starting lineups. Baseball only has enough scholarships for 1.30 starting lineups, an obvious disadvantage that shows the lack of resources available for baseball players when the University of Michigan is the [most expensive state supported school](#) in the country.

Perhaps the NCAA will eventually address these issues so that college baseball can make improvements. It is only then that Michigan baseball will gain popularity, but even then it seems unlikely that it will ever return to the glory that it once had. Times have changed and football is Michigan’s sport now. Baseball is officially the other sport in Ann Arbor, but underneath the concrete and brick of the Chemistry building lies a deep-rooted, historic field where past students thrived and laid a foundation for the students of today.



BRENDAN MONTGOMERY is a contributing writer for Grantland.

ARCHIVE | [@BMontgomery_3](#)
