

**The Newsroom's Toy Department:
The Different Images of Sports Journalists in Films**

By David Sobieraj

ABSTRACT

Sports are a major part of pop culture. Sports are not just games that athletes play; they are a way of life. The roles that sportswriters and broadcasters play in the movies are a microcosm of the roles they play in real life. Most movies that include sportswriters as characters portray them as a myriad of anonymous fictional journalists who act more like paparazzi than news reporters. These characters flash cameras and yell out questions to sports stars. When real-life journalists portray themselves in bit-part roles, they are sometimes portrayed as caricatures, mocking the role of sportscasting as well as themselves. In contrast, actors who portray real-life well-known journalists and actors who play fictional sports journalists in major roles in a film take on the role of sportscasters who believe their job is to inform the public about star athletes. Moreover, the manner in which women sportswriters are depicted in films reflects the manner in which they are viewed in the real world. In summary, the journalists that cover sports in movies portray the same roles that they take on in the real world. Some are just paparazzi, looking for the latest dirt on well-known athletes. Some don't take themselves seriously and see their job as more entertainment than hard news. Finally, some do see their role as investigative journalists who bring to light important information on the star athletes that they cover.

INTRODUCTION

The roles that sportswriters and broadcasters play in the movies are a microcosm of the roles they play in real life. It has been questioned whether sportswriters are journalists at all. Many have charged that they are more akin to paparazzi rather than serious reporters. The accusation is that they are the toy department¹ of the newsroom, whose primary function is entertainment, instead of reporting newsworthy facts. This charge is mirrored in the way sports media are portrayed in the movies. A myriad of anonymous fictional journalists, who represent the throng of staff sportscasters, exemplifies the toy-department image when they simply flash camera bulbs and badger lead sports characters with surface yes/no questions. When real-life journalists portray themselves in bit-part roles, they add to this image because they can become caricatures, mocking the role of sportscasting as well as themselves. In contrast, sportscasting is also viewed by some as authentic journalism, where the sports media has an obligation to investigate star athletes and report newsworthy information to the public. Actors who portray real-life sports journalists and also actors who play fictional sports journalists that have major roles in a film take on this investigative role. These opposing depictions of sportscasting, as entertainers vs. investigative reporters, can be seen in many sports films. Moreover, the manner in which women sportswriters have been depicted in films over time reflects the manner in which they have been viewed in the real world.

ANONYMOUS FICTIONAL SPORTS JOURNALISTS

The image of the sports journalist takes another hit from the myriad of anonymous fictional journalists who represent the throng of staff sportscasters. They strengthen the toy department image as they inanely flash camera bulbs and badger lead sports characters with surface yes/no questions. Instead of adhering to journalistic principles, they function more as *Entertainment Tonight* paparazzi. The two major roles these types of characters play are play-by-play announcers and postgame interviewers.

Play-by-play announcers and postgame interviewers are mocked in *The Sixth Man* by the way nameless bit part actors portray them. Their voices and appearance are annoyingly dorky. They constantly chow down on junk food. Their comments are both inane and clichéd. At the beginning of one game, an announcer ridiculously explains the importance of the contest: "Tonight is big, it's humongous, it's Marlon Brando"² and then at end of the game concludes idiotically, "Somebody slam the refrigerator door, the butter is melting."³ Clichés that many sportscasters use are thrown around constantly and satirized. The phrase "snapping a losing streak" is made fun of by the broadcaster actually snapping his pencil as he says it. Mocking how broadcasters try to build excitement while telling the audience the score for the nth time during a game, an announcer declares: "Eight seconds left in the game, Huskies 72 Bears 73, Bears up by one, that makes the Huskies down by one."⁴ They also freely add hackneyed idioms such as "it's like taking candy from a baby."

The sea of flashing camera bulbs evokes a paparazzi image of sportscasting in many films. Journalists are supposed to ask open-ended questions that require thoughtful answers and then follow up after hearing the interviewee's response. Instead, these

reporters primarily ask yes/no questions. In *Rocky II*, he's asked at least five times by anonymous reporters with cameras flashing, microphones in his bloody beaten-up face, "Did you think you had it won?"; "Is that the worst beating you ever took?;" "Rocky, do you think you have brain damage?"⁵ Their image is that of vultures swooping down for the kill. In *Rocky V*, they unprofessionally taunt another fighter with "Oh, when, when are you going to fight a real fight?" and "For your next fight, why don't you fight the redhead in the front row. I here she comes real cheap, huh?"⁶ In *Ali*, reporters surround the champ at all times, cameras flashing, microphones in his face trying to get a question in. They rush the ring at the end of every fight more like college fans at the end of an upset victory than professional journalists. They act like the paparazzi who dog celebrities like Britney Spears and Lindsay Lohan. In *The Express*, when Ernie Davis passes out on the field during an All Star practice, sports writers flood the field to photograph him as he lies dazed on the ground. Both the opening and closing scenes in *Cobb* reveal sportswriters as mean spirited gossips who drink at a bar and disparage Ty Cobb.

REAL-LIFE SPORTS JOURNALISTS AS THEMSELVES

Serious journalists have accused sportscasters of being the toy department of the newsroom. Sports are considered more entertainment than hard news, sportswriters more entertainers than reporters. In films, this accusation is evidenced by cameo roles performed by real-life sportscasters. They mock themselves, but by doing so, they mock their craft. Specifically, they make fun of the sportscaster's many roles: play-by-play, sideline reporting, sports desk anchors, and investigative reporting.

In *Basketball*, Al Michaels and Bob Costas are the play-by-play announcers. While calling the game, Michaels lusts after the cheerleaders as Bob Costas uses his nipples as a barometer for how exciting the game is. In the final scene of the movie *Bananas*, Howard Cosell satirizes play-by-play as he broadcasts live from the bedroom of the two main characters, Woody Allen (Fielding Melish) and Louise Lasser (Nancy), as if he were calling a boxing match,

You join us with the action just about to start, yes indeed, here comes the bride, she's got a lot of fans here. They're tense, but they swell to a tremendous cheer and I think it's apparent she's in very good physical condition. Here comes Melish. Listen to that crowd roar. He's wearing a green corduroy suit jogging and bobbing down the aisle, buttressed by his trainer. (Bell rings.) Action has started, they approach one another cautiously. Nothing unique about that now. Melish begins to make his moves and so does Nancy. The two are working together closely, the action growing more rigorous. It is swift, rhythmic, coordinated. What's that? A cut over Melish's right eye. The doctor comes in to examine the cut. No, it will not be stopped. It continues. I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, although you can see for yourselves, I've never seen action like this. That's it, it's over, it's all over, the marriage has been consummated.⁷

Clichéd phrases are the lampooning target in *The Waterboy* when during the final game of the year color commentator Dan Fouts uses the overused phrase “Last game of the year, Brent, you can't hold anything back now”⁸ over and over again until play-by-play man Brent Musberger loses his cool and stops him from saying it one last time.

Cameo roles by real-life sportscasters also satirize sideline reporters like ESPN's Erin Andrews and FOX's Chris Meyers. Sideline reports are given before, during, and post game. During the bowl game in *The Waterboy*, Lynn Swann takes up the sideline reporting duties and interviews Bobby Boucher's girlfriend, who has taken over the duties of waterboy so he can play in the game. Mid-game interviews are generally done with coaches who explain what adjustments may be necessary for the rest of the game or

simply to find out the coach's take on the game so far. Just the fact that Swann interviews a person who has absolutely no expertise in either of those areas makes the whole interview ridiculous.

LYNN: I'm with Vicky Valencourt, who's taking over Bobby's water duties for this important game...well, let me ask you this, what is your prediction for the rest of this ballgame?

VICKY: The mud dogs are going to win 30-27.

LYNN: That's very interesting. How did you come up with that guess?

VICKY: Guess? That ain't no guess. That's what it's going to be!"

LYNN: Ok, ok. That's fine.

BRENT: Whoa, be careful down there, Swanny!⁹

In *Basketball*, Tim McCarver is a sideline reporter who pretends to be seriously interviewing Joe Cooper, the captain of the Beers team, after the devastating loss of the championship game. He accosts Cooper with "I know this is a dark time for you, but I'd like to get your thoughts on what happened today" and after getting his answer he sheepishly proclaims to the camera "It certainly does seem to be raining shit on Joe Cooper right now."¹⁰ Howard Cosell also ridicules the post-game interviewing process when he questions Nancy and Fielding in *Bananas* after their love match is completed,

HOWARD: Nancy and Fielding Melish are in the most real sense now man and wife and if it's humanly possible, I'm going to break through these fans to talk to the two. Excuse me, excuse me. Nancy, I know that this is very personal, but was it everything you expected?

NANCY: Well Howard, it all went by so fast, I just had no idea that it would be so quick. Really, I was expecting a longer bout.

HOWARD: No difficulties of any kind?

NANCY: Well, as you know, I'm extraordinarily ticklish, so I had kind of a little rough time there, I couldn't stop laughing. You know, I really thought it could get in my way, but I really trained well for this and I think it helped me because there was really no time I didn't feel in complete control.

HOWARD: How about you, Fielding, I was concerned about that cut, I thought they may stop the action, did you have that feeling?

FIELDING: Yes I was Howard, I thought I would have to finish it up quick because I thought the referee might come in and stop it. I was leading at that point, and I was just hoping that would let me go all the way and they did.

HOWARD: No disappointments at all?

NANCY: Well, I had heard that he had been in great, great shape, and I felt that he wasn't, and that he could use a bit of seasoning. You know, timing was sort of off, but I think he'll be fine. I mean he's not the worst I've had, but not the best.

HOWARD: Are you offended by what Nancy just said Fielding?

FIELDING: No I'm not offended, but I don't agree with it. I was in great shape, I thought I had her in real trouble with the right hand early, I was in good form and my breathing was very good. I've been training really hard for this and I just gave it 100 percent.

HOWARD: When do you anticipate your next bout?

FIELDING: I think we could do this again late spring.¹¹

Sports desk anchors are the target of derision when Dan Patrick and Kenny Mayne play themselves as ESPN *SportsCenter* anchors in *Baseketball*. Patrick and Mayne mock ESPN's Bracketology as they break down the *Baseketball* playoff picture for the audience,

So if the Beers beat Detroit and Denver beats Atlanta in the American southwestern division east northern, then Milwaukee goes to the Denslow Cup unless Baltimore can upset Buffalo and Charlotte ties then Oakland would play L.A. and Pittsburgh in a blind choice round robin and if no clear winner emerges from all this, a two-man sack race will be held on consecutive Sundays until a champion is crowned.¹²

Sports shows such as ESPN's *Outside the Lines* and the recent *30 for 30* documentary series on the same network, strive to be investigative reporting mediums in the mold of CBS's *60 Minutes* and ABC's *20-20*. Sports investigative reporting is mocked in *Bananas* when Howard Cosell does a cameo broadcasting live from site of a political leader's assassination. Cosell was the king of getting to the heart of a serious sports story and providing witty commentary. He interviews the soon-to-be-dead El Presidente in his usual hardnosed manner, but the parody lampoons sports reporting.

It's over, it's over for El Presidente. This reporter is going to get to him if he can, through this mob for one last word before he expires. As you can see, this crowd is not to be trifled with. They're in a frenzy. They're trying to get over to El Presidente even as I'm trying to do now. Would you people let me through, this is American television, American television. Please, let me through. We're getting through now. Here we are, here we are. Sir, you've been shot, when did you know it was all over? Well, of course, you're upset and that's understandable under the circumstances. I guess now you'll have to announce your retirement.¹³

BIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAYALS OF REAL-LIFE SPORTS JOURNALISTS

In contrast to these parodies, sportscasting is also depicted in some films as legitimate journalism, where the sports media function is to inform the public about newsworthy stories relating to star athletes. In these movies, actors are given key roles to play real-life journalists. The journalists struggle with maintaining their independence while covering athletes over time. In *Ali*, Jon Voight portrays Howard Cosell over the course of years, but remains unbiased in his coverage. On the other hand, Robert Wuhl's portrayal of Al Stump in *Cobb* demonstrates how difficult it is to stay independent when the coverage is an intensely personal one. Generally, biographical portrayals of real-life journalists tend to present a positive image of sportscasting.

In *Ali*, Jon Voight plays Howard Cosell, the epitome of a serious investigative journalist. The film delves into the relationship between journalists and the sports stars they cover over a long length of time. The interdependent relationship is exposed in the film.

MUHAMMAD: I'm the best thing ever happened to you Cosell, without me, you would be a tall white man with a microphone in his mouth.
HOWARD: And without me, you'd be a mouth.¹⁴

Journalists are supposed to remain independent, but Ali and Cosell clearly develop a relationship. Initially, the relationship is adversarial, as seen by the volley of words between the two when Ali is angry that Cosell has called him Cassius instead of Muhammad Ali.

MUHAMMAD: You sure make a lot of mistakes for a so-called educated man. You really went to law school?

HOWARD: Yes, Muhammad, and to think I gave up a lucrative practice for the likes of you.¹⁵

As Cosell continues to cover him over his career, the two become friends. Befriending the athlete you're reporting on calls into question whether you can relate the facts without bias. The banter between the two becomes increasingly teasing in tone as their relationship progresses.

MUHAMMAD: One thousand dollars to the man that brings me Howard Cosell's toupee dead or alive.

HOWARD: Don't bother me. I'm a world-famous sportscaster and you're an ex-champion with diminished skills. I can't be seen with you. How's it going champ? Good to see you.¹⁶

So does the film say that Cosell's independence is compromised by his relationship with the star he has covered for years? Cosell clearly has feelings for the fighter as his star dims.

HOWARD: Muhammad I'd do anything for you, you know that, but I've got bosses who only give a damn about Nielsen ratings.¹⁷

However, Cosell maintains his independence in spite of their relationship when he questions Ali about the upcoming fight with George Foreman.

HOWARD: Muhammad, I'm sorry, I have to ask are you really fast enough anymore to beat George Foreman? If he gets you against the ropes he can knock you out with either hand, many people believe you're not the man you used to be 10 years ago.¹⁸

Overall, the film concludes that good investigative sports journalists are able to maintain their independence.

In *Cobb*, Robert Wuhl plays Al Stump, a sportswriter who was selected by Ty Cobb to write his biography toward the end of his life. In contrast to Cosell, Stump did not remain unbiased throughout this intensely personal, one-on-one process. Cobb puts Stump's independence to the test each and every day.

TY: Look at me closely Al. Lie after lie has been told about me. My entire life I've been misunderstood. You are the very fortunate young sportswriter who has been chosen to tell the true story.

AL: Great, what's the true story?

TY: That's why you're here, see there's two kinds of writers in this life: there's the kind that spin endless yarns about tiny little subjects. That's you. And then there's the kind with one big subject that consumes them forever, that could be you because I am that subject.¹⁹

Cobb further points out:

TY: Shut up, Stump, we both know I'm your meal ticket.

AL: I beg your pardon?

TY: We need each other.²⁰

As time goes on, Cobb becomes attached to Stump, saying, "I think you're the best friend I ever had." But Stump decides to write two books: the one Cobb wants him to write and the real truth behind Cobb's life. At the close of the movie, Stump decides to only publish the autobiographical book that paints Cobb in a positive light. His decision shows that his independence has been affected and because of his relationship he does not want to tarnish Cobb's image as the greatest baseball player of all time.

I published a lie. I put the truth in a closet...I embraced him and I hated him. But finally I didn't lie so the children of America would have heroes or some such hogwash. Finally I lied for myself. I needed him to be a hero. It is my weakness.²¹

Although the film leaves the viewer believing that Stump's independence has irrevocably been tainted, the real Al Stump actually published a second book 30 years later that told the true story.

FICTIONAL SPORTS JOURNALISTS WITH MAJOR ROLES

While sports journalists are represented in a positive light when actors portray real-life investigative sports writers, another way they are presented as legitimate news reporters is when actors play fictional sports journalists who provide an important role in the screenplay. The same independence question arises in these portrayals: can they remain unbiased when covering the same athlete for a long period of time?

In *The Natural*, Max Mercy, a sportswriter, sees himself as the only one who is willing to investigate the facts surrounding Roy Hobbs, a star baseball player, who seemingly came out of nowhere. He becomes so obsessed with exposing what he believes must be sinister circumstances that he loses his ability to distinguish between newsworthy facts and sensational irrelevant half-truths. Max Mercy becomes the personification of seedy yellow journalism. He's convinced that Roy Hobbs, a 30-something baseball player, is not what he seems and makes it his personal mission to bring him down. One of his first conversations with Hobbs is almost threatening in tone.

MAX: Well, I want to ask you something. Do I look familiar to you?

ROY: You, no.

MAX: Because you sure as hell look familiar to me. Where are you from Hobbs?

ROY: Nowhere special.

MAX: Wait, wait, you ever play in the Cardinal organization?

ROY: NO! (runs away)

MAX: Well it will come to me in a minute. I've got a terrific memory. See you around, Hobbs.²²

While journalists should have a healthy skepticism that feeds their desire to get to the facts, Mercy's desire to prove that something is wrong will not allow him to fairly look at all sides of the story. He just can't seem to accept this phenom is the real thing.

Anything he wants to hit he hits. I've never seen anything like it
It's incredible. Anything he wants to do he does. I mean how can
somebody play that well that came from nowhere?²³

Max becomes completely obsessed with what he sees as his role of protectorate of the game. In fact, he is so obsessed that he loses his professionalism.

ROY: Still dogging me, huh Max?

MAX: Yup, end of the road Hobbs.

ROY: Want to hear what I think our chances are?

MAX: So you read my mind? (laughs)

ROY: That takes all of three seconds.

MAX: They come and they go, Hobbs, they come and they go. I'm going to tell you something, I'm going to be around here a lot longer than you or anyone else around here. I'm here to protect this game.

ROY: Whose game?

MAX: I do it by making or breaking the likes of you.

ROY: Did you ever play ball Max?

MAX: No never have, but I make it a little more fun to watch, you see, and after today, whether you're a goat or hero, you're going to make me a great story. Okay, see you around.²⁴

The image of the investigative sportswriter in *The Natural* is extremely negative.

Max Mercy is the opposite of professional, probing into aspects of the star's personal life that should have remained private. He becomes obsessed with bringing Hobbs down, even if he needs to twist the story unethically.

A positive image of the investigative sports reporter appears in *Damn Yankees*.

Gloria Thorpe is the beat reporter of the Washington Senators who appears in about five scenes in the movie. She asks important open-ended questions. Like Max Mercy, she

pursues the story relentlessly, but generally in a professional, ethical manner. When she flies to Missouri to research Joe Hardy's family, she comes back and questions Benny, the Senators' manager.

GLORIA: Benny, have you ever hear of a ballplayer named Shifty McCoy?

BENNY: Shifty McCoy? Isn't he the kid that took a bribe in the Mexican League about four years ago?"

GLORIA: Oh.

BENNY: Yeah, yeah, threw a game and they caught him at it.

GLORIA: What happened to him?

BENNY: Oh, he took it on the lamb, never been heard of since as far as I know.

GLORIA: Did you know him?

BENNY: No, I just saw his picture in the paper.²⁵

Thorpe then phones her newspaper to get even more facts.

Shifty McCoy! Of course I'm sure. Get all the stuff on him and hold everything, I'll be right over.²⁶

Gloria Thorpe is as relentless as Max Mercy, but she projects a positive image of the investigative sports journalist. She seeks the facts surrounding a star athlete without bias and without any personal motive.

In *Sixth Man*, a female sportswriter named R.C. St. John provides another example of the stereotypical investigative reporter who would, as her editor says, "sell her own mother for a good story."²⁷ She believes the amazing success of the local basketball team is fishy and pursues a basketball player named Kenny Tyler to get to the bottom of the story. While covering the team and focusing on Tyler in particular, she becomes romantically involved with him. She also figures out by watching game film that Tyler's dead brother is helping the team win. She then writes "the story of the year."²⁸ Her independence then becomes compromised, not because she has an emotional attachment to Tyler and the team, but because she doesn't want to be that stereotypical

reporter who would do anything to get a story. The film questions whether to be a good investigative journalist you need to put the story before any other ethical issues.

THE WOMAN SPORTS JOURNALIST AS A SOB SISTER

Damn Yankees and the *Sixth Man* bring to light an ongoing issue for female journalists. The issue is how females in the profession can integrate the necessary aggressive investigative behavior with their innate more compassionate nature. Joe Saltzman, director of *Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture* at USC, says, "The female journalist faces an ongoing dilemma: How to incorporate the masculine traits of journalism essential for success – being aggressive, self-reliant, curious, tough, ambitious, cynical, cocky, unsympathetic – while still being the woman society would like her to be – compassionate, caring, loving, maternal, sympathetic. Female reporters and editors in fiction have fought to overcome this central contradiction throughout the 20th century and are still fighting the battle today."²⁹ Female journalists are sometimes referred to as "sob sisters" because women are generally asked to cover emotional aspects of stories, such as interviewing the girlfriend or wife of the main subject of an important news event. R.C. St. John and Gloria Thorpe can be evaluated as female sportswriters to see if they fit this mold.

St. John is a perfect example of a female journalist who tries her best to fit into the aggressive, unsympathetic male sports journalist mold, but succumbs to the compassionate female side of a sob sister. Her editor tells a group of important journalists, "Gentlemen, keep an eye on this girl because she has the drive. You know, I think she would sell her own mother for a good story."³⁰ Notice that the editor uses "gentlemen" to address what in his

mind are the real writers and also notice that he refers to St. John as a “girl,” not as a journalist and not even as the young woman that she is. This girl is the journalist that figures out that the ghost of Tyler’s brother is helping the team win as she watches game films, noticing that no one touched a ball that ended up being scored. She writes a Pulitzer prize-worthy story. But that’s when she morphs into a stereotypical sob sister because she can’t bring herself to report the hard facts, and instead chooses not to expose the team and hurt the fans.

MIKULSKI: So what do you got for me? Are you ready to win that Pulitzer?
ST. JOHN: No, not just yet.³¹

She then walks away, rips up her “story of the year,” and dumps it into a nearby trash can. Her caring, sympathetic sob sister side completely takes over her ambitious, unsympathetic male journalist side. She demotes herself by simply covering the positive emotional aspects of a team that wins in spite of the tragic loss of their star player, Kenny Tyler.

Gloria Thorpe in *Damn Yankees* maintains her “male” reporter traits and does not give way to “sob sister” behavior anywhere in the film. She is curious how Joe Hardy could come out of nowhere and be this amazing. She is aggressive and ambitious in her relentless pursuit of who Joe Hardy really is. She is self-reliant when she gets on a plane to Hannibal, Missouri, to follow a lead. She is cynical and cocky when she deals with the manager of the team.

BENNY: We didn’t invite the press this morning, Gloria.
GLORIA: Aww, Benny, you’re very foolish to have this prejudice against me just because I’m a woman. My paper gives you as much space as the others do.”
BENNY: I only wondered why you got here so early.
GLORIA: I came down to see the naked men.³²

She is tough and unsympathetic when she presses Applegate, Joe Hardy’s agent, who is really the devil, for information about Joe.

GLORIA: I've just come back from a trip to Hannibal Missouri.

MR. APPLGATE: Well did you stop to say hello to the boys at the Bugle?

GLORIA: There is no Bugle Mr. Applejuice.

MR. APPLGATE: You know my name?

GLORIA: Yes I do, but I don't know Joe Hardy's name. One thing I do know is his name is not Joe Hardy.

MR. APPLGATE: Well if you're referring to the rumor that he's indeed Shifty McCoy, I deny it emphatically.

GLORIA: Well who is Shifty McCoy? (gets closer to Applegate)

MR. APPLGATE: Alright, alright. Well if you haven't heard it, I haven't said it. What's your big problem anyhow? Why do you say he's not Joe Hardy?

GLORIA: Nobody in Hannibal has ever seen or heard of Joe Hardy. His birth is not registered there. He's a faker. Where did he come from?

MR. APPLGATE: Don't be so nosy. Go home. Get children.³³

This last scene shows that she doesn't back down even from an "in your face" egotistical person who is treating her as a sob sister. Thorpe does use her womanly powers of seduction to entice Applegate to spill information, but this display only strengthens her portrayal as a journalist who will stop at nothing to get the story.

SPORTS JOURNALISM AS PART OF POP CULTURE

Sports are a major part of pop culture. Sports are not just games that athletes play; they are a way of life. According to Street and Smith's Sports Business Journal, sports take in \$213 billion a year in the U.S. alone, "making it larger than the U.S. auto industry, seven times the size of the movie industry, and bigger than the annual gross domestic products of 195 nations of the world including Greece, Portugal and Denmark."³⁴ A University of Virginia study found that sports "help provide the development of the American national identity" along with shaping "industrialization, urbanization, race and racism."³⁵ Neil Henry, a Berkeley professor who was called on to add sports journalism

classes to its Journalism school curriculum, says “the gargantuan growth of the ESPN networks over the past quarter century...is just one indicator of the economic and cultural might of sports in American society.”³⁶

Prominent journalism schools generally treat sportswriting as a sideline elective, reflecting its status as that of “the old-fashioned notion of sports as the ‘toy department’ of the American newsroom... taking a backseat to specialized subjects such as political, business and international reporting. Those subjects...are viewed as more serious and journalistically purposeful.”³⁷ Sports journalism is actually a microcosm of “the most challenging issues confronting American society, from race relations and gender equity laws to priorities of education and local governance and politics.”³⁸

The Express reflected race issues. In the film, Dan Boyles of the *Chicago Sun* questions Jim Brown about his success as a running back for Syracuse University. His line of questioning causes Brown to vent his racial frustrations with the sport he loves to play.

DAN: I'm guessing you're pretty happy with the way things turned out.

JIM: I could be happier. You left something out.

DAN: Are you talking about the Heisman Trophy, Jim?

JIM: I didn't win that, actually no Negro has ever won it.

DAN s: And you're saying you should have?

JIM: Now if I said that the papers tomorrow would tell the story of the angry Negro who doesn't know his place, I know my place gentlemen; it just may not be where you like it.³⁹

In another scene, the sports journalist's interview with both the coach and running back, Ernie Davis, reflects the strain in race relations as the civil rights movement escalates.

ROGER: Roger Page, Channel Nine, they're calling this game the North against the South in light of what's going on in this country; do you feel added pressure to represent change?

BEN: We don't concern ourselves with politics, we're just here to play a great football game and take home a championship.

ERNIE: To be honest Mr. Page, when I'm out there I only think about winning the game, but that doesn't mean I don't know the color of my own skin.⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

The image of sports journalist in movies varies from the positive image of the investigative reporter reporting newsworthy stories to the negative stereotype of the ruthless, unethical egocentric journalist that will stop at nothing to bring down a star athlete. These opposing representations are not unique to sportscasting. Joe Salzman, an expert in the image of the journalist in pop culture, writes, "Sports reporters and writers aren't much different from their city room counterparts, although their venue makes them unique. There are syndicated sports columnists who will do anything to get an exclusive, including using blackmail and payoffs. But the majority of sportswriters depicted in film and on television simply go out and do their job. Some are heroic in that they ferret out corruption in sports, risking public animosity. Most often they are used as realistic dressing for biographies of sports personalities, both in the movies and on television."⁴¹

The throng of paparazzi-like journalists who flash cameras and badger sports stars with surface yes/no questions are negative stereotypes of aggression and lack of sympathy. These characters are present in most sports films, but are most evident in the Rocky films. Real-life sportswriters who play bit roles become caricatures of themselves, cynical and cocky to an inane comical extreme. Al Michaels and Bob Costas in Basketball and Howard Cosell in Bananas seemingly denigrate their chosen profession by mocking its credibility as real news reporting. In contrast, when actors take on the roles

of real-life investigative male reporters, as Jon Voight did when portraying Howard Cosell in *Ali*, their characterizations are generally based on what's been termed the "Clark Kent" traits. Clark Kent journalists are "aggressive, self-reliant, curious, tough, [and] ambitious," without being "cynical, cocky, unsympathetic."⁴² Robert Wuhl's portrayal of Al Stump in *Cobb* also fit this mold. Finally, some movies include fictional sportswriter characters who play main roles in the films. The images represented by these characters are diverse. Some, like Max Mercy in *The Natural* and to a somewhat lesser degree R.C. St. John in *Sixth Man*, depict the stereotypical egomaniacal journalist who puts their view of the story above reporting the facts. Others, like Gloria Thorpe in *Damn Yankees*, follow the Clark Kent mold of aggressively seeking out the facts and then reporting them without bias.

Sports journalism is not just covering sports stars for the entertainment of the fan. Good sports journalists report newsworthy facts on star athletes. A Berkeley grad student debunked sportswriting's image as a less significant role in the profession. "(Sports) gives you everything you need to become a journalist. Spot news, deadline news, features, interviewing, ethical dilemmas — it's all there. If you can cover sports, you can cover anything."⁴³

¹ Henry, Neil. 2005. "Keeping Score: Sportswriting and Journalism Education at Berkeley."
<http://www.spj.org/rrr.asp?ref=18&t=students> *ibid.*

² *Sixth Man*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Rocky II*

⁶ *Rocky V*

⁷ *Bananas*

⁸ *The Waterboy*

⁹ *Opicit.*

¹⁰ *Baseketball*

¹¹ *Bananas*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Bananas*

¹⁴ *Ali*

¹⁵ *Opicit.*

¹⁶ *Opicit.*

¹⁷ *Opicit.*

¹⁸ *Opicit.*

¹⁹ *Cobb*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *The Natural*

²³ *Opicit.*

²⁴ *Opicit.*

²⁵ *Damn Yankees*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Sixth Man*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Joe Saltzman, "Sob Sisters: The Image of the Female Journalist in Pop Culture," *Image of the Journalist in Pop Culture*, 1, 2003, <http://www.ijpc.org/sobsmaster.htm>.

³⁰ *Sixth Man*

³¹ *Opicit.*

³² *Damn Yankees*

³³ *Opicit.*

³⁴ Neil, Henry. 2005. "Keeping Score: Sportswriting and Journalism Education at Berkeley."

<http://www.spj.org/rrr.asp?ref=18&t=students>

³⁵ The Yellow Pages-Popular Culture, "Sports," 2004, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~YP/yppop.html>.

³⁶ Neil, Henry. 2005. "Keeping Score: Sportswriting and Journalism Education at Berkeley."

<http://www.spj.org/rrr.asp?ref=18&t=students>

³⁷ *Opicit.*

³⁸ *Opicit.*

³⁹ *The Express*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Joe, Saltzman "Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film," 2002,

<http://www.ijpc.org/ijpcintro.pdf>.

⁴² Saltzman, Joe "Sob Sisters: The Image of the Female Journalist in Pop Culture," *Image of the Journalist in Pop Culture*, 1, 2003, <http://www.ijpc.org/sobsmaster.htm>.

⁴³ *Opicit.*

Bibliography

Henry, Neil. 2005. "Keeping Score: Sportswriting and Journalism Education at Berkeley." <http://www.spj.org/rrr.asp?ref=18&t=students> *ibid*.

Joe Saltzman, "Sob Sisters: The Image of the Female Journalist in Pop Culture," *Image of the Journalist in Pop Culture*, 1, 2003, <http://www.ijpc.org/sobsmaster.htm>.

Joe Saltzman, "Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film," 2002, <http://www.ijpc.org/ijpcintro.pdf>.

The Yellow Pages-Popular Culture, "Sports," 2004, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~YP/yppop.html>.

Ali

Bananas

Baseketball

Cobb

The Crowd Roars

Damn Yankees

Eight Men Out

The Express

Legend of Bagger Vance

The Longest Yard

Madison Square Garden

The Natural

The Odd Couple

Play It to the Bone

Rocky

Rocky II

Rocky III

Rocky IV

Rocky V

Rocky Balboa

A Tall Story

There's Something about a Soldier

The Sixth Man

The Waterboy

Appendix A

Filmography

Baseketball, 1998. Universal Pictures. Produced by David Zucker, Robert LoCash and Gil Netter. Directed by David Zucker. Written by David Zucker. Lewis Friedman, Jeff Wright and Robert LoCash.

Summary: "Two losers from Milwaukee, Coop & Remer, invent a new game playing basketball, using baseball rules. When the game becomes a huge success, they, along with a billionaire's help, form the Professional Baseketball League where everyone gets the same pay and no team can change cities. Coop & Remer's team, the Milwaukee Beers is the only team standing in the way of major rule changes that the owner of the Dallas Felons wants to institute." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Joe Cooper (Trey Parker), Doug Remer (Matt Stone), Real-life sports journalists Bob Costas, Al Michaels, Dan Patrick, Kenny Mayne, Tim McCarver, Jim Lampley, and Pat O'Brien.

Cobb, 1994. Warner Bros. Produced by Arnon Milchan. Directed by Ron Shelton. Screenplay by Ron Shelton

Summary: "Al Stump is a famous sports-writer chosen by Ty Cobb to co-write his official, authorized 'autobiography' before his death. Cobb, widely feared and despised, feels misunderstood and wants to set the record straight about 'the greatest ball-player ever,' in his words. However, when Stump spends time with Cobb, interviewing him and beginning to write, he realizes that the general public opinion is largely correct. In Stump's presence, Cobb is angry, violent, racist, misogynistic, and incorrigibly abusive to everyone around him. Torn between printing the truth by plumbing the depths of Cobb's dark soul and grim childhood, and succumbing to Cobb's pressure for a whitewash of his character and a simple baseball tale of his greatness, Stump writes two different books. One book is for Cobb, the other for the public." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Ty Cobb (Tommy Lee Jones), Al Stump (Robert Wuhl) and real-life journalists Allan Malamud, Bill Caplan, Jeff Fellenzer, and Doug Krikorian.

The Sixth Man, 1997. Touchstone Pictures. Produced by David Hoberman. Directed by Randall Miller. Written by Christopher Reed and Cynthia Carle.

Summary: "Antoine and Kenny Tyler are NCAA college basketball players, and Antoine is the star. Suddenly Antoine dies of heart attack and Kenny has to fill his shoes as leader of team. Some time later, Antoine returns as a ghost and helps Kenny in game and in life, but Kenny changes in the process and doesn't quite like it." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Kenny Tyler (Marlon Wayans), Antoine Tyler (Kadeem Hardison), Reporter #1 (Jody Savin), Reporter #2 (Dave Young), real-life journalists Dick Vitale, Billy Packer, and Brad Nessler.

Rocky, 1976. Produced by Robert Chartoff and Irwin Winkler. Directed by John G. Avildsen. Written by Sylvester Stallone.

Summary: Rocky Balboa is a struggling boxer trying to make the big time. Working in a meat factory in Philadelphia for a pittance, he also earns extra cash as a debt collector. When heavyweight champion Apollo Creed visits Philadelphia, his managers want to set up an exhibition match between Creed and a struggling boxer, touting the fight as a chance for a "nobody" to become a "somebody." The match is supposed to be easily won by Creed, but someone forgot to tell Rocky, who sees this as his only shot at the big time." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Rocky (Sylvester Stallone), Adrian (Talia Shire), fight announcer (Stu Nahan), fight commentator (Bill Baldwin), TV interviewer (Larry Carroll) and TV commentator (Diana Lewis).

Rocky II, 1979. Produced by Robert Chartoff and Irwin Winkler. Written and directed by Sylvester Stallone.

Summary: "After his fight with Apollo Creed, Rocky decides to live a peaceful life with his wife Adrian. Unfortunately, he soon runs out of money, so he is forced to accept Creed's offer for a rematch." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Rocky (Sylvester Stallone), Adrian (Talia Shire), announcer (Stu Nahan), commentator (Bill Baldwin), and Brent Musberger as himself.

Rocky III, 1982. Produced by Robert Chartoff and Irwin Winkler. Written and directed by Sylvester Stallone.

Summary: "Boxer Rocky Balboa enjoys the wealth he has as world champion. He only fights against easy opponents. Then he is challenged by the arrogant Clubber Lang. Rocky accepts the challenge to prove once more that there is only one world champion. But Lang wins and becomes the new champion. Nobody believes in Rocky anymore, except one man: former world-champion Apollo Creed. And Creed tries to stimulate his fighting spirit and get Rocky back in top form." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Rocky (Sylvester Stallone), Adrian (Talia Shire), sportscaster (Jim Hill), commentators (Bill Baldwin and Stu Nahan) and wrestling commentators (Jim Healy and Dennis James).

Rocky IV, 1985. Produced by Irwin Winkler and Robert Chartoff. Written and directed by Sylvester Stallone.

Summary: "Rocky Balboa, heavyweight champion of the world, is the trainer for Apollo Creed in an exhibition match against Ivan Drago, a 'superman' boxer from the Soviet Union. When Apollo is killed in the ring by the brutal Drago, Balboa blames himself and promises to avenge his friend's death in the ring." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Rocky (Sylvester Stallone), Adrian (Talia Shire), announcer (Stu Nahan), American Commentator #1 (Barry Tompkins), Real-life journalists Warner Wolf, and Interviewer (Dean Hammond).

Rocky V, 1990. United Artists. Produced by Irwin Winkler and Robert Chartoff. Directed by John G. Avildsen. Written by Sylvester Stallone.

Summary: "Rocky Balboa is forced to retire after having permanent damage inflicted on him in the ring by the Russian boxer Ivan Drago. Returning home after the Drago bout, Balboa discovers that the fortune that he had acquired as heavyweight champ has been stolen and lost on the stock market by his accountant. His boxing days over, Rocky begins to coach an up-and-coming fighter named Tommy Gunn. Rocky cannot compete, however, with the high salaries and glittering prizes being offered to Gunn by other managers in town." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Rocky (Sylvester Stallone), Adrian (Talia Shore), real-life fight commentators Al Bernstein and Stu Nahan, real-life radio host Brian Phelps as reporter.

Rocky Balboa, 2006. Produced by Robert Chartoff and Irwin Winkler Written and directed by Sylvester Stallone.

Summary: "When he loses a highly publicized virtual boxing match to ex-champ Rocky Balboa, reigning heavyweight titleholder Mason Dixon retaliates by challenging the Italian Stallion to a nationally televised, 10-round exhibition bout. To the surprise of his son and friends, Rocky agrees to come out of retirement and face an opponent who's faster, stronger and thirty years his junior. With the odds stacked firmly against him, Rocky takes on Dixon in what will become the greatest fight in boxing history, a hard-hitting, action-packed battle of the ages." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Rocky (Sylvester Stallone), ESPN commentators (Woody Paige, Skip Bayless, Jay Crawford, Brian Kenny, Dana Jacobson, Charles Johnson), HBO commentators (Jim Lampley, Larry Merchant, Max Kellerman), Bert Sugar and Bernard Fernandez.

Damn Yankees, 1958. Warner Bros. Produced and directed by George Abbott and Stanley Donen. Based upon the play "Damn Yankees".

Summary: "Film adaptation of the George Abbott Broadway musical about a Washington Senators fan who makes a pact with the Devil to help his baseball team win the league pennant." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Joe Hardy (Tab Hunter), Reporter Gloria Thorpe (Rae Allen), Reporters (Joseph Mell, Jeffrey Sayre, Frank J. Scannell).

The Express, 2008. Universal Pictures. Produced by John Davis. Written by Charles Leavitt. Directed by Gary Fleder. Based on book by Robert Gallagher.

Summary: "This biopic focuses on the relationship of Ernie Davis (1939-1963), a gifted African-American athlete, and his coach Ben Schwartzwalder from 1958 to 1962 at Syracuse University. Schwartzwalder recruits Davis with the help of All-American running back, Jim Brown. The civil rights movement is gaining steam; Davis experiences prejudice on campus, in town, and on the field, sometimes from teammates. How he handles it and how he challenges Schwartzwalder to stand up for his players provide a counterpoint to several great seasons that lead first to a national championship and then to the Heisman Trophy." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Ernie Davis (Rob Brown), Ben Schwartzwalder (Dennis Quaid), Sports reporter (Sam Derence), Reporter #1 (Kevin Stark), Reporter #2 (Kurt Naebig), play-by-play announcer (Ed Smaron).

The Waterboy, 1998. Touchstone Pictures. Produced by Robert Simonds. Directed by Frank Coraci. Written by Tim Herlihy and Adam Sandler.

Summary: "Bobby Boucher is constantly tormented by the team he works for until he is fired by the coach. He then finds a new coach to work for. Here he finds a new talent, tackling people by pretending they're making fun of him. Soon, he becomes the best linebacker in college football, but he must keep it secret from his overprotective mother." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Bobby Boucher (Adam Sandler), Real-life sportscasters Lee Corso, Chris Fowler, Brent Musburger, Dan Patrick, and Lynn Swann.

Ali, 2001. Columbia Pictures. Produced by Howard Bingham and Graham King. Directed by Michael Mann. Written by Gregory Allen Howard. Screenplay by Stephen J. Rivele and Christopher Wilkinson.

Summary: "Muhammad Ali from 1964 to 1974, told in three braided threads. The boxer: from becoming champion to regaining the championship. Religion and politics: Cassius Clay becomes a Black Muslim, truncates a friendship with Malcolm X, perhaps is Elijah Muhammad's pawn, refuses induction into the US military, and faces a five-year prison sentence while his case goes to the Supreme Court. Family: he marries twice and by 1974 marriage two is strained, defends his white trainer, has a brother in BUNDINI Brown, and is wily with Howard Cosell. Throughout, Ali keeps his own counsel: in the ring, at the induction center when he won't step forward, and in friendship, love, and victory." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Cassius Clay (Will Smith), Howard Cosell (Jon Voight), Miami weigh-in reporter (Bill Plaschke), Miami weigh-in reporter (Steve Springer) and New York Reporter (Jim Gray).

The Natural, 1984. Tristar Pictures. Produced by Phillip Breen and Roger Towne. Based on novel by Bernard Malamud. Screenplay by Roger Towne and Phil Dusenberry.

Summary: "An unknown middle-aged batter named Roy Hobbs with a mysterious past appears out of nowhere to take a losing 1930s baseball team to the top of the league in this magical sports fantasy. With the aid of a bat cut from a lightning-struck tree, Hobbs lives the fame he should have had earlier when, as a rising pitcher, he is inexplicably shot by a young woman." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Roy Hobbs (Robert Redford) and Max Mercy (Robert Duvall).

Play It to the Bone, 2000. Touchstone Pictures. Produced by Stephen Chin. Written and directed by Ron Shelton.

Summary: "Two aging fighters in L.A., friends, get a call from a Vegas promoter because his undercard fighters for a Mike Tyson bout that night are suddenly unavailable. He wants them to box each other. They agree as long as the winner gets a shot at the middleweight title. They enlist Grace, Cesar's current and Vinnie's ex-girlfriend, to drive

them to Vegas. On the trip, we see flashbacks to their previous title shots, their competitive friendship, and Grace's motivational wiles. The fight itself is historic: ten rounds of savagery and courage.” (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Cesar Dominguez (Antonio Banderas), Vince Boudreau (Woody Harrelson), real-life sports journalists Jim Lampley, Al Bernstein (as sportswriter), Ringside Sportswriter (Bill Dwyer, Steve Springer, Rick Reilly, Bruce Trampler, Bert Sugar, Jason Levin, Royce Feour, Ron Borges, Michael Katz, Doug Krikorian, Randy Harvey, Timothy Smith, Michael Rosenthal, George Kimball, Bernard Fernandez, Timothy Dahlberg, Timothy Graham, Joe Hawk, and Chris Thorne.

Legend of Bagger Vance, 2000. Dreamworks Pictures. Produced by Robert Redford, Michael Nozik and Jake Eberts. Screenplay by Jeremy Leven. Based on novel by Steven Pressfield.

Summary: “A disillusioned war veteran, Captain Rannulph Junah, reluctantly agrees to play a game of golf. He finds the game futile until his caddy, Bagger Vance, teaches him the secret of the authentic golf stroke which turns out also to be the secret to mastering any challenge and finding meaning in life.” (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Bagger Vance (Will Smith) and Rannulph Junuh (Matt Damon).

There's Something about a Soldier, 1943. Columbia Pictures. Directed by Alfred E. Green. Written by Horace McCoy and Barry Trivers.

Summary:

Characters: Wally Williams (Tom Neal), Carol Harkness (Evelyn Keyes), Sports Writer (Ray Walker), Sports Writer (Jack Lee)

The Crowd Roars, 1938. Produced by Steve Zimbalist. Directed by Richard Thorpe. Screenplay by Thomas Lennon, George Bruce and George Oppenheimer.

Summary: “A young boxer gets caught between a no-good father and a crime boss when he starts dating the boss's daughter, although she doesn't know what daddy does for a living.” (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Killer McCoy (Robert Taylor), radio announcer (Mike Blair), reporter (Jack Egan), reporter (Jack Gardner), reporter (Sherry Hall), reporter (Douglas McPhail) and reporter (Charles Sherlock).

The Longest Yard, 2005. Produced by Jack Giarraputo and Heather Parry. Directed by Peter Segal. Screenplay by Sheldon Turner. Based on 1974 screenplay by Tracy Keenan Wynn.

Summary: “Paul "Wrecking" Crewe was a revered football superstar back in his day, but that time has since faded. But when a messy drunk driving incident lands him in jail, Paul finds he was specifically requested by Warden Hazen (James Cromwell), a duplicitous prison official well aware of Paul's athletic skills. Paul has been assigned the task of assembling a team of convicts, to square off in a big football game against the sadistic guards. With the help of fellow convict Caretaker and an old legend named Nate Scarborough to coach, Crewe is ready for what promises to be a very interesting game.

It's only the warden and the guards who have no idea who or what they're up against, with Paul the driving force behind the new team.” (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Paul Crewe (Adam Sandler), Caretaker (Chris Rock), Sports writer (Jay Glazer, Peter King, John McClain, Adam Schefter, Larry Weisman, Sam Farmer and Bryan Burwell), Real-life journalists Chris Berman, Jim Rome, Lauren Sanchez, and Dan Patrick as Officer Jack Pugh.

Eight Men Out, 1988. Orion Pictures. Produced by Barbara Boyle and Jeff Offsay. Directed by John Sayles.

Summary: “The great Chicago White Sox team of 1919 is the saddest team to ever win a pennant. The team is bitter at their penny pincher owner, Charles Comiskey, and at their own teammates. Gamblers take advantage of this opportunity to offer some players \$ to throw the series (Most of the players didn't get as much as promised.) But Buck Weaver and the great Shoeless Joe Jackson turn back at the last minute to try and play their best. The Sox actually almost come back from a 3-1 deficit. Two years later, the truth breaks and the Sox are sued on multiple accounts. They are found innocent by the jury but baseball commissioner Landis has other plans. The eight players are suspended for life, and Buck Weaver, for the rest of his life, tries to clear his name.” (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: George Weaver (John Cusack), Writer Bruce Schumaker, Real-life Reporters Ring Lardner (John Sayles), and Hugh Fullerton (Studs Terkel).

A Tall Story, 1960. Produced and directed by Joshua Logan. Written by Julius Epstein. Based on novel “The Homecoming Game” by Howard Nemerov.

Characters: Ray Blent (Anthony Perkins), Reporter Jenkins (Jim Stockton) and Game announcer Real-life journalist (Sam Balter).

Bananas, 1971. Produced by Jack Grossberg. Written and directed by Woody Allen.

Summary: “Fielding Mellish (a consumer products tester) becomes infatuated with Nancy (a political activist). He attends demonstrations and tries in other ways to convince her that he is worthy of her love, but Nancy wants someone with greater leadership potential. Fielding runs off to San Marcos where he joins the rebels and eventually becomes president of the country. While on a trip to the states, he meets Nancy again and she falls for him now that he is a political leader.” (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Fielding Mellish (Woody Allen), real-life journalist Howard Cosell, Roger Grimsby, and Don Dunphy.

Madison Square Garden, 1932. Produced by Charles R. Rogers. Directed by Harry Joe Brown.

Characters: Eddie Burke (Jack Oakie), Real-life journalists Damon Runyon, Grantland Rice, Jack Lait, Westbrook Pegler, Paul Gallico, and W.C. Robinson.

The Odd Couple, 1968. Produced by Howard W. Koch. Directed by Gene Saks. Screenplay by Neil Simon.

Summary: "Felix Ungar has just broken up with his wife. Despondent, he goes to kill himself but is saved by his friend Oscar Madison. With nowhere else to go, Felix is urged by Oscar to move in with him, at least for a while. The only problem is that Felix is neat, tidy, and neurotic, whereas Oscar is slovenly and casual." (Summary from IMDB)

Characters: Felix Ungar (Jack Lemmon), Real-life journalists sports announcer (Bill Baldwin), Heywood Hale Brown

Appendix B

Characters

Max Mercy, played by Robert Duvall, is a journalist in *The Natural* who delights in exposing the seedy aspects of baseball. He goes about his business like an investigative journalist, yet becomes obsessed with bringing down Roy Hobbs, a 36-year-old baseball player who comes out of nowhere to lead his team to the pennant. Mercy makes it his mission to snoop into Hobbs past in an attempt to find dirt that will break him. A typical day for Mercy revolves around him watching Hobbs practice until the bitter end. The only people in the entire stadium are Hobbs, Mercy, and the hurler pitching to Hobbs. At the beginning of the movie, Mercy notices something and sprints to the library where he frantically searches through old newspaper stories to find any information he can possibly find about Hobbs. He even puts out a questionnaire in 1,000 papers all over the West to find anyone who knows anything about Hobbs.

Al Stump, played by Robert Wuhl, is a journalist in *Cobb* handpicked by Ty Cobb to "tell the truth"; problem is, it's Cobb's truth and not the real truth. Throughout the movie, Stump writes two books, Cobb's book and the truth. At the end of the movie, he publishes Cobb's book because he needs Cobb to remain a hero. He proclaims it's his weakness. It becomes his weakness because throughout the movie, they develop a relationship.

Howard Cosell, played by Jon Voight, is a journalist in *Ali* who rises to prominence covering boxer Muhammad Ali. He first covers Ali when Ali is still fighting under his birth name, Cassius Clay. When Clay tells him never to call him his "slave name again," Cosell becomes the first reporter to apologize on air and call him by his new name. The movie revolves around the unusual friendship the two have. Although Ali is a braggart and regularly tried to wisecrack Cosell on the air, Cosell is a witty journalist who not only wouldn't stand for Ali's joking answers, but also balances Ali's ego with his dry humor. Cosell didn't back away from the racial issues of the time period, he attacks them full throttle proclaiming that he is "Just calling it like it is." Cosell even backed Ali after he was stripped of his title for refusing to fight in the military during the Vietnam War, which actually garnered him great resentment. He stood up for what he believed was right and was the first of any journalists to report the Supreme Court ruling in Ali's favor, which built his good will with the public.

R.C. St. John, played by Michael Michele, is a journalist in *The Sixth Man* who struggles with the balance of being the great Pulitzer-worthy journalist and the image of a “sob sister.” She uncovers what she calls the story of the year, but throws it away when her editor suggests she would sell her mother for a good story. She also becomes romantically involved with Kenny Tyler, who is the star of the basketball team she covers. She is the classic “sob sister,” starting out as a strong, independent woman, whom Kenny can’t even pick up at a bar, to a woman who cares more about her family and love than her job.

Gloria Thorpe, played by Rae Allen, is an investigative journalist in *Damn Yankees* who discovers there’s something not quite right with Joe Hardy. He has no past, he has no family and he has no one who knows anything about him. She travels to Hannibal, Missouri, where Hardy says he’s from, to see if she can find anything about him. She comes back knowing Hardy is not who he says he is because no one has ever heard of him. She is the classic journalist trying her best to gather the facts for the public as the story goes on.

Hugh Fullerton, played by real-life journalist Studs Terkel, is an investigative reporter in *Eight Men Out* who breaks the story about the Black Sox cheating scandal. Throughout the movie, he is seen keeping his own scorecard of which players aren’t trying their best. He ends up circling eight names on his scorecard who are involved in the scandal.