

FROM SPECTACLE TO RESPONSIBILITY: DIGITAL SPORT, POLARIZATION AND THE ETHICS OF MEDIATED BELIEF

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Abstract: This article examines the digital transformation of sport as a movement from aesthetic spectacle toward a broader horizon of meaning, belief, identity, polarization and ethical responsibility. While sport has traditionally been understood through competition and performance, digital media increasingly transform sporting events into spectacles that are repeatedly visualized, circulated, interpreted and emotionally invested across networked platforms. In a polarized public sphere, digitally mediated sport can function as a significant site of emotional investment, symbolic belonging and collective imagination. Spectatorship is therefore no longer a passive reception of events but an active process through which communities interpret performances, construct identities and circulate competing narratives.

Keywords: *Datafication, Digital Sport, Ethical Responsibility, Mediated Belief, Platformization, Polarization, Spectacle.*

1. Introduction

In the early twenty-first century, the question of how meaning is formed, shared and sustained has become important in

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philosophical and cultural inquiry. Digital infrastructures have transformed the ways in which people encounter events, construct identities and participate in their cultural experiences. Among apparently secular and recreational practices, sport offers a particularly revealing field for examining these transformations. It combines embodied performance with emotion, collective memory, symbolic identification and sophisticated forms of digital mediation. Sport has conventionally been understood through competition, rules, scores, rankings, records and winning. Yet such categories do not fully explain why spectators are moved by performances over which they have no direct influence. Aesthetic studies have therefore examined sport as a distinctive form of human action and experience. Corder identifies an aesthetic dimension in sport beyond its competitive structure (1-5), while Kobiela emphasizes dynamism, balance, fluidity and psychophysical unity (75-84). Mumford similarly argues that the experience of watching sport cannot be reduced to competition alone (ix-x). Lacerda and Mumford connect sport and art through qualities such as intelligence, style, creativity and novelty (182-193), while Edgar interprets sport as a hermeneutic and meaning-making activity involving struggle, judgment, emotion and the possibility of failure (1-9).

The contemporary transformation of sport, however, lies not simply in the increasing availability of sporting events through media but in the emergence of a new ecology of mediated spectatorship. A sporting performance is selected, framed, replayed, slowed down, quantified, commented upon, edited, shared and incorporated into narratives that extend far beyond the original event. The spectator therefore encounters not only the sporting performance but also an expanding network of representations surrounding it. This transformation gives particular importance to the concept of spectacle. In a digital environment, spectacle is not merely an impressive visual event. It is a performance whose visibility is technologically extended through repetition, framing, circulation, commentary and audience participation. A goal, sprint, save, dunk or fall may become culturally significant because it is repeatedly shown, discussed, measured, edited and remembered. The sporting event

consequently acquires a mediated afterlife.

The central argument of this article is that digital sport can be understood through a fourfold movement: spectacle, mediated belief, polarization and responsibility. Digital mediation first transforms athletic performance into a spectacle of sustained visibility. Spectacle then becomes a vehicle of symbolic investment, through which athletes, teams and performances can acquire meanings that exceed their immediate competitive function. In a polarized public sphere, these meanings can strengthen solidarity but can also intensify antagonism. The ethical question therefore arises from the ways in which spectators, athletes, media institutions and technological platforms participate in producing and circulating these meanings. The movement from spectacle to responsibility is thus not a sequence imposed upon sport from outside. It emerges from the internal development of digital spectatorship itself. What begins with looking develops into interpreting; interpretation can produce identification and symbolic attachment; attachment can become polarized; and polarization makes ethical responsibility unavoidable.

2. Digital Media and the Transformation of Spectatorship

The digital transformation of sport is first visible in the changing conditions of spectatorship. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (2000) argue that digital media re-present earlier media forms through the logic of immediacy and hypermediacy (19-21, 31-35). This concept applies particularly well to contemporary sport. A football match viewed on a mobile phone may combine television commentary, filmic replays, statistical overlays, alternative camera angles, social feedback and real-time interaction. Sport is therefore experienced through layers of mediation rather than through a single live image. The theory of convergence culture further describes this transformation. Henry Jenkins (2006) refers to media convergence as the flow of content across different media platforms (1-5). Sporting events are now simultaneously broadcast and streamed, broken into short videos, accompanied by athlete profiles, discussion forums, fantasy interfaces, blogs, memes and fan commentary. Viewers form interpretations from

fragments distributed across different platforms rather than from a single broadcaster's narrative. The athletic moment thus acquires a second life through commentary, repetition, meme creation and fan editing. Andrew C. Billings and Marie Hardin (2014) note that new media technologies have become central to the sports media landscape and that the distinctions among producers, consumers, athletes and fans have increasingly blurred (1-7). This blurring is significant because spectators participate in the production of meaning. They are not merely viewers but also distributors, commentators, editors and curators. A memorable sporting moment is therefore shaped not only by what occurs on the field but also by how extensively it is circulated and interpreted.

Media-sport scholarship reinforces this cultural dimension. Raymond Boyle and Richard Haynes (2009) argue that sport, media and popular culture are closely interwoven and that media increasingly influence how people play, organize and perceive sport (3-4). David Rowe (2004) similarly describes sport, culture and media as an "unruly trinity," since sport functions as a significant cultural text shaped by visual representation, narration and political economy (2-5). Digital transformation is therefore not merely technical. It transforms the cultural conditions through which sport acquires meaning. The figure of the athlete has also changed. Garry Whannel (2002) argues that media sport is narrative and representational as well as performance-based and is constructed through recurring visual and moral narratives, including the construction of the sporting hero (1-3). In the digital era, athletes become highly visible images through video clips, branding posts, interviews and self-produced content. Their bodies are not represented solely as instruments of performance but also as sites of style, personality, aspiration and identity. Studies of athletes' social media use support this transformation. Hambrick et al. (2010) found that professional athletes actively interacted with followers through Twitter, while Ann Pegoraro (2010) observed that social media allowed athletes to communicate personal experiences and respond to questions from fans (501-514). The spectator consequently encounters the athlete beyond the sporting event

through training, candid moments, emotional disclosures and backstage representations. The athlete therefore becomes not merely someone who performs but someone around whom mediated meanings, loyalties and forms of symbolic identification can be organized.

Second-screen practices further restructure attention. Bridget Rubenking and Nicky Lewis (2016) found that moderate second-screen use can enhance enjoyment, although excessive distraction may weaken the experience (424-439). Glenn R. Cummins and Dustin Hahn (2022) similarly show that highlights influence attention by directing viewers toward particular exemplars and statistical information (22-46). Sport is therefore no longer presented through a single visual field. It is filtered through layers of image, text, reaction, statistics and commentary. A literature review of 2014-2023 identifies the growth of social media research in sport and highlights engagement, communication, branding and fan interactivity as important areas of development (Abeza, 251-266). The digital platform is therefore no longer an adjunct to sport but one of the principal spaces in which sport is experienced, interpreted and remembered. Immersive technologies reinforce this transformation. Glebova et al. (2023) argue that digital twin technology can produce hyper-realistic virtual versions of sporting venues and provide immersive, personalized and interactive experiences (1-11). Daehwan Kim and Yong Jae Ko (2019) found that virtual reality spectatorship contributes to flow through vividness, interactivity and telepresence, leading to greater user satisfaction (346-356). The aesthetic experience of sport is consequently designed through interfaces, customizable perspectives, data and artificial presence. These developments transform the meaning of spectatorship. The spectator is no longer merely the recipient of a spectacle but a participant in its construction. By selecting, sharing, commenting, editing, defending, criticizing and repeating particular representations, spectators contribute to determining which sporting moments become culturally significant. Digital spectatorship is therefore simultaneously an aesthetic, interpretive, participatory and increasingly ethical practice.

3. The Art of Sport, Platformization and Datafication

The digital transformation of sport can be understood more fully through the concepts of spectacle, platformization and datafication. Guy Debord's notion of spectacle describes a social order in which lived experience is increasingly mediated through representations (1-5). Douglas Kellner (2003) extends this perspective through the concept of media spectacle, in which contemporary culture is organized around attention, images, desires, and sensations (1-6). Applied to contemporary sport, these perspectives suggest that digital technology does not merely make competition more visible. It transforms competition into a circulating cultural object. A goal, sprint, dunk, knockout, or extraordinary save acquires significance not simply because it contributes to a result but because it can become a spectacle with a life beyond the event itself. The spectacular moment is repeated until it becomes part of collective memory.

Brett Hutchins and David Rowe (2013) argue that digital media have moved sport beyond broadcast distribution into an abundance of networked content that is constantly remade, recoded and repackaged (18-21). Platformization therefore changes not only where sport is viewed but also what is likely to be viewed. What audiences encounter is increasingly shaped by the infrastructures through which content is selected and distributed. This is the crucial ethical dimension of platformization. Visibility is not neutral. When algorithms and platform structures select some performances for repeated circulation while leaving others relatively invisible, they participate in determining what communities remember and value. The spectacle is therefore not simply discovered; it is technologically organized. This process also transforms the temporal character of aesthetic experience. Earlier approaches to spectatorship often associated aesthetic appreciation with the live moment or with a limited number of highlights. In digital culture, sporting beauty is stored, repeated, edited and revisited. Gestures acquire an afterlife in iconic images and short videos. Since digitally networked media allow athletes and organizations to release their own representations, the sporting moment remains continually available for reimagining (Frandsen, 5-7). This

process is reinforced by fans who revisit and reshare spectacular moments and engage in interactive and second-screen practices that continue the aesthetic life of performance after the event itself (Glebova and Desbordes, 5-7).

Jason Holt (2020) argues that aesthetics in sport cannot be limited to bodily beauty but extends to performance, framework and meaning (1; 9-13). In digital sport, data overlays, biometric indicators, positional heat maps, expected-goals models and tracking systems make athletic performance legible as patterns. The spectator sees not only a pass, leap or sprint but also speed, distance, probability, fatigue, efficiency and tactics. This can enrich aesthetic experience by revealing structures that would otherwise remain invisible. At the same time, it raises the danger of reducing value to what can be measured. John Toner (2024), in examining wearable technology in elite sport, demonstrates that measurement systems do not merely represent performance but can also constitute embodiment by creating regimes of surveillance, discipline and behavioural control (1). The athlete's body consequently becomes simultaneously expressive and measurable. Here a fundamental tension emerges between aesthetic appreciation and technological evaluation. What can be measured can become privileged over what can only be experienced. The grace of a movement may be reduced to efficiency; courage may be translated into statistics; collective passion may become engagement metrics. Data can illuminate sport, but it can also narrow the horizon through which sport is valued. Ethical responsibility, therefore, requires not rejecting data but refusing the assumption that what is measurable exhausts what is meaningful.

Platformization also transforms the athlete into a continuous media presence. Whannel (2002) argues that sporting stars are constructed through recurring visual and moral narratives (1-4). Digital platforms intensify this process by presenting athletes simultaneously as performers, personalities, brands and symbols. Hambrick et al. (2010) and Pegoraro (2010) demonstrate how athletes use social media to interact with fans and construct public identities (Hambrick et al., 454-471; Pegoraro, 501-514). Consequently, the spectator encounters not

only the athlete's performance but also a broader identity narrative involving training, fashion, emotion, personal life, partnerships and social causes. The athlete can become a symbolic representative of a community, nation, generation or moral position. At this point, the aesthetic spectacle begins to acquire a deeper symbolic dimension: the athlete is no longer merely admired but interpreted, and performance becomes a carrier of values and identity. Jenkins's concept of convergence culture is again relevant because audiences participate in the production and transmission of meaning across media spaces (Jenkins, 1-5). Fan-made edits, memes, tactical analyses, reaction videos, tribute videos and slow-motion compilations all contribute to the afterlife of athletic performance. Rubenking and Lewis (2016) show the importance of second-screen viewing, while Cummins and Hahn (2022) demonstrate the significance of highlights in directing audience attention toward particular exemplars (22-46). The spectacle, therefore, is not simply what the platform shows. It emerges through the interaction of performance, technological selection, media framing and audience participation. Once performance is transformed in this way into a repeatedly circulating and symbolically charged object, the question of belief and collective identification becomes unavoidable.

4. Movement Spectacle to Mediated Belief

The movement from spectacle to mediated belief can be considered as the second stage of our research proposal. If spectacle explains how sporting performances become objects of sustained visibility, mediated belief explains how these visible performances become invested with symbolic meaning. The term "belief" is used here neither as a theological equivalent of religious faith nor as a claim that sport replaces religion. It refers more modestly to the capacity of cultural objects and practices to become objects of loyalty, trust, identification, memory, aspiration and collective imagination. The transformation of sport into spectacle has consequences that extend beyond aesthetics and media consumption. Once sporting performances are repeatedly circulated and interpreted, they can become symbols around which individuals and communities organize emotional

investment, identity, memory and belonging. Sport can consequently function as a form of secular belief – not because it replaces religion, but because apparently secular practices can carry ritual, symbolic and existential significance.

The notion of secular belief is used here in a limited and interpretive sense. It refers to the capacity of cultural practices to become objects of intense loyalty, identification, memory and collective imagination. Sport offers many of the conditions through which such symbolic investment develops: repeated rituals of viewing, recognizable symbols, collective celebrations, shared narratives, heroes, adversaries, commemorations and emotionally charged moments. Digital media intensify these processes because they make symbolic objects continuously available. An athlete’s image, a historic goal, a controversial decision or a team’s victory can be revisited long after the original event. Digital archives preserve memories, while social platforms enable communities to reactivate them. The past is therefore not simply remembered; it is repeatedly performed in the present through digital circulation. This repeated circulation contributes to the formation of mediated belief. Spectators may come to understand an athlete not only as a performer but as an embodiment of courage, discipline, national pride, resilience, justice or rebellion. Likewise, teams may become symbols of cities, regions, nations, generations or social communities. The sporting object consequently acquires a significance that exceeds its immediate competitive function. Such symbolic investment is not inherently problematic. Indeed, it is part of what makes sport culturally powerful. Shared enthusiasm can create community across social differences. A sporting event can produce moments in which individuals who otherwise have little in common experience joy, disappointment, hope or admiration together.

Yet the same symbolic intensity that produces belonging can also produce polarization. This is the point at which mediated belief becomes ethically ambivalent. A community that regards an athlete as a symbol of courage may interpret criticism of that athlete as an attack on its own identity. A team that represents regional or national belonging may become an object through which wider political or cultural conflicts are rehearsed. Digital

sport, therefore, provides a particularly visible example of how symbolic identification can move from solidarity toward antagonism. The difficulty arises when symbolic attachment becomes absolute. In a polarized public sphere, sporting identities can become extensions of wider political, cultural, regional, ethnic or ideological divisions. The same digital mechanisms that strengthen belonging can intensify antagonism. What one group celebrates as heroic may be interpreted by another as arrogant; what one community sees as justice may be interpreted by another as bias.

Digital platforms can intensify such divisions through selective circulation. Users tend to encounter and share representations that resonate with existing identities, while emotionally provocative content can attract greater attention. Consequently, a sporting controversy can quickly become detached from the event itself and incorporated into larger narratives of victimhood, injustice, superiority or exclusion. This process is particularly visible in the circulation of controversial decisions, rivalries, national competitions and highly personalized athlete narratives. A referee's decision may become evidence of institutional corruption; an athlete's gesture may be interpreted as political defiance; a victory may be represented as proof of collective superiority; and a defeat may be experienced as collective humiliation. The spectacle becomes a condensed arena in which broader social conflicts are emotionally rehearsed. The problem, therefore, is not emotional attachment itself. Emotional attachment is integral to sport. The ethical problem emerges when attachment becomes incapable of self-criticism. When spectators accept only information that confirms their identity, dismiss opposing interpretations, dehumanize rival groups or circulate manipulated material to defend their side, spectatorship moves from belonging toward polarization.

The ethics of mediated belief consequently requires a distinction between commitment and absolutization. One may passionately support a team or athlete without treating that support as a complete moral framework. One may celebrate victory without humiliating opponents. One may criticize an institution without reducing every member of that institution to

an enemy. Responsible mediated belief remains capable of self-correction because it recognizes that symbolic loyalty does not eliminate the dignity of those who belong to another community. Immersive technologies further complicate this question. Kim and Ko (2019) found that virtual-reality spectatorship enhances flow and satisfaction through vividness, interactivity and telepresence (346-356). Glebova et al. (2023) similarly demonstrate that digital twin technologies can provide immersive and customized sporting experiences (1-11). These technologies make spectatorship participatory and personalized. Yet personalization may also produce fragmentation. If every spectator receives a technologically optimized version of the event, there may be less shared experience and greater exposure to individually tailored narratives. The digital spectacle can therefore simultaneously unite spectators around common images and divide them into personalized interpretive worlds. This ambivalence is central to the argument. The ethical significance of spectacle therefore lies in its power to organize not only attention but also affect, identity and collective interpretation.

5. From Polarization to Responsibility

The preceding discussion demonstrates that the digital transformation of sport is not merely a technological development. It is a transformation in how people see, interpret, remember and value sporting performance. Digital technologies extend the aesthetic life of sport, but they also transform the conditions under which sport becomes meaningful. The movement from polarization to responsibility begins when mediated spectatorship is understood as participation rather than mere consumption. Once spectators recognize that digital visibility is produced through technological systems, institutional decisions and audience practices, the ethical question changes. It is no longer sufficient to ask what has been shown; one must also ask why it has been shown, how it has been framed, what it encourages audiences to feel and what forms of collective life it helps to construct. This movement from spectacle to responsibility begins with recognition. To recognize that a sporting image is mediated is to recognize that what one sees is never simply the

event itself. It is the result of selection, framing, editing, platform distribution and collective interpretation. Such recognition creates the possibility of critical spectatorship.

Responsibility, again, begins with attention. Spectators are responsible not because they control digital systems, but because they participate in them. Every act of sharing, commenting, liking, editing and repeating contributes to the visibility and circulation of particular representations. The question is consequently not only 'What am I watching'? but also 'What am I helping to make visible'? This responsibility extends to media institutions. Media organizations view the spectacle through camera angles, headlines, commentary, highlights, statistics and narrative framing. Their decisions influence what audiences perceive as heroic, scandalous, beautiful, unjust or significant. Ethical responsibility, therefore, requires sensitivity to the consequences of framing and repetition. Technological platforms also carry responsibility. Algorithmic systems determine patterns of visibility and attention. When emotionally provocative material receives greater circulation, polarization can be strengthened. When controversy generates engagement, the architecture of the platform may unintentionally reward antagonism. The ethical question is, therefore, not merely whether algorithms are accurate, but what kind of public culture their patterns of selection encourage. Athletes also participate in the construction of the digital spectacle. Their self-representations can humanize, inspire and create dialogue, but they can also intensify hostility. The athlete as digital persona has influence precisely because spectators attach symbolic meanings to the athlete. This influence carries responsibility.

Again, responsibility belongs to spectators themselves. The spectator is no longer merely a consumer. The spectator is a participant in the circulation of meaning. Responsible spectatorship requires the ability to enjoy without idolizing, criticize without dehumanizing, identify without excluding and share without surrendering judgment. Such responsibility is, indeed, important in polarized societies. Sport can provide one of the few remaining spaces in which large and diverse communities share experiences. It can therefore become a resource for civic

imagination. The common excitement surrounding a match can create moments of collective belonging that cross social boundaries. Yet this possibility depends upon resisting the transformation of every sporting difference into an existential conflict. The ethical task is, therefore, not to eliminate emotional investment but to cultivate reflective participation. The responsible spectator is not emotionally detached. Rather, the responsible spectator is capable of allowing emotion and judgment to coexist. Passion can remain intense without becoming absolutist; identification can remain meaningful without becoming exclusionary; and criticism can remain forceful without becoming dehumanizing. The concept of secular belief is useful here because it reveals why responsibility cannot be reduced to technical media literacy. When sport becomes an arena of symbolic investment, spectators are not merely processing information. They are participating in narratives of identity and belonging. Ethical responsibility therefore concerns the manner in which those narratives are affirmed, challenged and circulated. Digital sport presents a paradox. The technologies that make sport more accessible also make it more spectacular; the technologies that make spectatorship more participatory can also intensify polarization; the technologies that make performance more measurable can also narrow the meaning of achievement; and the technologies that connect communities can also divide them into antagonistic interpretive groups.

The appropriate response is not to reject digital mediation or to romanticize an earlier, supposedly pure form of spectatorship. Rather, the task is to cultivate responsible mediation. Responsible mediation means recognizing how technological systems shape perception, critically evaluating the narratives that circulate through them, resisting the automatic amplification of hostility and preserving the possibility of dialogue across differences. The significance of responsible mediation is therefore broader than sport. Digital sport makes visible a general condition of contemporary culture: human beings increasingly participate in realities that are technologically selected, affectively amplified, and socially circulated. The ethical challenge is consequently not simply to become better consumers

of media, but to become more responsible participants in the worlds that media help to construct. Sport thus becomes an illuminating case for a wider ethical challenge of contemporary digital culture. Human beings often encounter the world through mediated representations. What is visible competes with what is invisible; what is repeated competes with what is forgotten; and what generates attention can become more influential than what is genuinely important. In such a context, responsibility requires more than access to information. It requires judgment.

6. Conclusion

Digital spectatorship transforms the ethical status of participation. Once sporting performances become spectacles, spectacles become carriers of symbolic meaning; once symbolic meanings become attached to identities, they can contribute to polarization; and once spectators participate in the circulation of these meanings, responsibility becomes unavoidable. Sport has conventionally been associated with competition, rules, performance and results. Yet contemporary spectatorship can no longer be explained through these categories alone. Replay technology, multiple camera perspectives, data visualization, social media, immersive interfaces and platform-based interaction have expanded sport beyond the parameters of live competition. Sport has always possessed an aesthetic dimension. Cordner, Kobiela, Mumford, Lacerda and Edgar, among others, demonstrate that beauty in sport can be found in movement, originality, grace, struggle and expressive coherence. In the digital age, however, these qualities acquire a new temporal and cultural existence. They are isolated, repeated, slowed down, edited, archived and redistributed through digital mediation. A pass, sprint, goal, or jump can acquire a visual afterlife that extends far beyond the moment of its occurrence. This extended afterlife is what makes sport a spectacle in the contemporary digital environment. The spectacle is not simply the spectacular action itself; it is the continuing circulation of that action through systems of representation. Digital technologies intensify this process by turning performance into content that can be endlessly revisited, interpreted and emotionally invested in.

Platformization, datafication and immersive mediation further demonstrate that sport increasingly functions as a site of meaning-making. Sporting events are extended through repetition, circulation and recontextualization across digital networks. Athletic performances become shared cultural references through which individuals and communities construct narratives of identity, belonging and collective memory. This symbolic dimension can be understood through the concept of mediated belief. Sport does not simply replace traditional religious forms, but it can provide rituals, symbols, heroes, narratives, communities and shared memories through which individuals orient themselves and experience belonging. When such symbolic investment enters a polarized digital environment, however, it can generate exclusion and antagonism as readily as solidarity. The same images that unite spectators can become weapons in conflicts over identity. The same platforms that enable participation can amplify hostility. Spectacle, therefore, has no predetermined ethical direction. It can generate solidarity or antagonism, dialogue or division, critical awareness or unreflective identification. Yet the movement should not be understood as a simple linear progression in which spectacle inevitably produces polarization and polarization inevitably produces responsibility. The relationship is recursive. Responsible spectatorship can alter what becomes spectacular; critical interpretation can interrupt the conversion of attachment into antagonism; and alternative forms of circulation can make neglected experiences visible. Responsibility therefore enters not only at the end of the process but at every stage of mediation.

Responsibility is not an external moral correction applied after the spectacle has already been produced. It is an immanent dimension of mediated spectatorship itself. Every act of selection, framing, circulation, identification and amplification participates in constructing the social meaning of sport. The ethical question consequently concerns not only the content of the spectacle but also the practices through which the spectacle is continuously reproduced. Responsibility, obviously, begins with an awareness that mediated visibility is constructed. What spectators see has been selected, framed, edited, measured and circulated.

Responsibility then extends to the ways in which spectators, athletes, media institutions and technological platforms participate in that circulation. Every act of amplification helps shape the common world of digital culture. Responsibility concerns the capacity of platforms, media institutions, athletes and audiences to recognize the consequences of amplification, exclusion, stereotyping and affective mobilization. Digital spectatorship is never entirely innocent: every act of sharing, commenting, framing and repeating participates in the construction of a common world.

The movement from spectacle to responsibility therefore represents a movement from consumption to participation, from participation to interpretation and from interpretation to ethical accountability. A responsible spectator is not one who watches without emotion but one who allows emotion to coexist with judgment. Such spectatorship can preserve the joy, beauty, drama and communal power of sport without allowing them to become instruments of dehumanization or polarization. The final remark, then, is not whether spectators should escape spectacle, but whether they can inhabit it critically. The digital spectator cannot return to a world in which sport is experienced without mediation. Nor would such a return necessarily be desirable. The more constructive possibility is to develop forms of spectatorship capable of holding together aesthetic enjoyment, symbolic attachment, critical judgment and ethical responsibility. Sport offers a particularly revealing example because it begins as an embodied contest but can become a spectacle, a symbol, a belief, an identity and finally a platform for ethical choice. The task of contemporary spectatorship is therefore not simply to look at the spectacle, but to recognize one's participation in making it meaningful. In this sense, the movement from spectacle to responsibility is ultimately a movement from being an audience to becoming an ethical participant.

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