If sport provides a powerful lens through which social norms are produced, reproduced, and challenged, sports media compose key mechanisms through which these meanings are built and communicated. As studies of sports media gain momentum in the humanities and social sciences, this field-define series will feature humanistic research that explores and critiques sports media’s significance, uses, and power. Studies in Sports Media will bridge the gap between media studies and sports studies by paying attention to sport’s history, politics and particularities while probing the industrial, political, commercial, and aesthetic contexts that shape media’s production, circulation, and consumption. Books in the series will make important scholarly interventions while exhibiting the clarity, accessibility, and liveliness that nonacademic audiences expect.

Humanistic approaches to sports media analyze media industry, text, and public engagement in historic context. From “traditional” broadcast outlets to “new” media applications, sports media represent a rare site of broad public struggle over questions of community and identity. From the constant churn of SportsCenter to smartphone apps and talk radio, to team logo-wear as haute couture, fantasy gaming, and league appeals to corporate citizenship, sports media are an increasingly inescapable part of everyday life. The series’ editors encourage submissions that present humanistic approaches to the study of sports media as provocative and significant interventions by which to consider historic and contemporary questions of community, identity, “interactivity” and engagement, industry, text and context.

Single-authored monographs and edited collections will be considered for inclusion in the series.

Please direct all questions and submissions to:
Daniel Nasset, Senior Acquisitions Editor, dnasset@illinois.edu
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Six Minutes in Berlin
Broadcast Spectacle and Rowing Gold at the Nazi Olympics

MICHAEL J. SOCLOLOW

“This is one of the greatest sports stories ever told. . . . Bravo!”—Alex Beam, Boston Globe columnist

“Sports, Nazism, and the glory days of radio come together seamlessly in Michael Socolow’s gripping account of the hottest ticket at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, the Olympic Regatta. Offering expert play-by-play and vivid color commentary, Socolow provides a fascinating look at an epochal moment in sports and media history. Six Minutes in Berlin is a crystal-clear window into the birth of global journalism and trans-national fandom, shadowed throughout by the specter of a more ominous competition on the horizon.”—Thomas Doherty, Brandeis University

The Berlin Olympics, August 14, 1936. German rowers, dominant at the Games, line up against America’s top eight-oared crew. Hundreds of millions of listeners worldwide wait by their radios. Leni Riefenstahl prepares her camerahmen. Grantland Rice looks past the 75,000 spectators crowding the riverbank. Above it all, the Nazi leadership, flush with the propaganda triumph the Olympics have given their New Germany, await a crowning victory they can broadcast to the world.

The Berlin Games matched cutting-edge communication technology with compelling sports narrative to draw the blueprint for all future sports broadcasting. A global audience—the largest cohort of humanity ever assembled—enjoyed the spectacle via radio. This still-novel medium offered a “liveness,” a thrilling immediacy no other technology had ever matched. Michael J. Socolow’s account moves from the era’s technological innovations to the human drama of how the race changed the lives of nine young men. As he shows, the origins of global sports broadcasting can be found in this single, forgotten contest. In those origins we see the ways the presentation, consumption, and uses of sport changed forever.

“Socolow . . . is well placed to set that Olympic final in the context of a Nazi propaganda machine that found its fullest expression at those Games. . . . The author’s finer brushstrokes . . . paint glimmers of the horrors to come, but also the manifold personalities comprising that uniquely American crew, and the sheer competitive thrill of the final itself, whose wake can still gently lift the world 80 years on.”—Booklist