What does it mean to psychoanalyse sport? Reflections from the field (Editorial)

BLACK, Jack <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1595-5083>, REYNOSO, Joseph S, BERNSTEIN, Ben, CUSHMAN, David, DABBOUS, Rayyan, DODD, Zane, GEAL, Robert, MEEUWSEN, Sandra, PANG, Bonnie, RIVERA, Miguel, SAMAI-MOSKOVICH, Shani, SCANLON, Patrick, SHAPIRO, Lee, THOMAS, Bradley A, THOMPSON, Stacy, TOCATLY, Karen, TUBER, Steve and WITTMANN, Klaudia

Cogent Social Sciences

ISSN: 2331-1886 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/oass20

What does it mean to psychoanalyse sport? Reflections from the field

Jack Black, Joseph S. Reynoso, Ben Bernstein, David Cushman, Rayyan Dabbous, Zane Dodd, Robert Geal, Sandra Meeuwsen, Bonnie Pang, Miguel Rivera, Shani Samai-Moskovich, Patrick Scanlon, Lee Shapiro, Bradley A. Thomas, Stacy Thompson, Karen Tocatly, Steve Tuber & Klaudia Wittmann

To cite this article: Jack Black, Joseph S. Reynoso, Ben Bernstein, David Cushman, Rayyan Dabbous, Zane Dodd, Robert Geal, Sandra Meeuwsen, Bonnie Pang, Miguel Rivera, Shani Samai-Moskovich, Patrick Scanlon, Lee Shapiro, Bradley A. Thomas, Stacy Thompson, Karen Tocatly, Steve Tuber & Klaudia Wittmann (2025) What does it mean to psychoanalyse sport? Reflections from the field, Cogent Social Sciences, 11:1, 2562379, DOI: 10.1080/23311886.2025.2562379

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2562379

Published online: 26 Sep 2025.

COGENT SOCIAL SCIENCES
2025, VOL. 11, NO. 1, 2562379
https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2562379

SPORT & DISCRIMINATION | EDITORIAL

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

What does it mean to psychoanalyse sport? Reflections from the field

Introduction: towards a psychoanalysis of sport

What does it mean to psychoanalyse sport? The question itself invites a confrontation with the strange, the opaque, and the frequently overlooked aspects of a cultural form that is typically read for its surface meanings: that is, its spectacles, performances, outcomes, and statistics. Yet, for the contributors gathered here—eighteen scholars working across and within the intersecting fields of psychoanalysis and sport—the meaning of psychoanalysing sport resides precisely in its refusal to accept these meanings, indeed, to take sport seriously not despite of its frivolity, spectacle, or absurdity, but because of it. Whether engaging with professional or amateur sport, watching televised sport, or attending the live event, when celebrating the triumph or consoling the calamity, to psychoanalyse sport requires us to trace how the sporting field acts as a staging ground for unconscious life.

The following collection of expert reflections each opens a space for which the study of sport can become a site not only for the *revelation* of unconscious material—desires, losses, disavowed aggressions, collective fantasies—but as a mechanism through which these unconscious processes are themselves shaped, formalised, and negotiated. This dual role, both revealing and producing unconscious life, is central to what it means to psychoanalyse sport. Before introducing each contribution, we identify seven key themes, which, together, offer unique and novel insights into how sport and psychoanalysis might mutually illuminate one another, and in the process, bring into view something more than what is said, seen, or scored.

Uncovering the unconscious

The first theme is perhaps the most foundational. To psychoanalyse sport is to treat it not as a transparent cultural form, but as a system of symbolic action underpinned by unconscious processes. Sport becomes, in this view, a privileged space where non-rational forces are legible, not only to the analyst, but, crucially, to the subject themselves (if only partially and ambivalently). Several contributors highlight how sport enacts rather than merely expresses unconscious dynamics: the drive to repeat, the compulsion to fail, the staging of aggression, and the management of unspoken or unspeakable tensions. Sport is rarely just 'about' competition or success, rather, it performs a set of psychic labours around the precariousness of identity, the impossibility of mastery, and the ambivalence of desire. These hidden meanings animate athletes as well as spectators, coaches, administrators, and the wider cultural imaginary that sport circulates within. Psychoanalysis, in this respect, reads sport symptomatically—not to 'decode' it, but to stay with the tensions it enacts.

Holding contradiction

If psychoanalysis teaches us to take contradiction seriously, sport offers a domain in which contradiction is not only present but constitutive. It is simultaneously high-stakes and trivial, governed by rules but saturated with unpredictability, a site of peak physical control and of bodily breakdown. The athlete is both master and servant of their body, while the fan is both distanced observer and emotionally over-invested participant. Victory requires loss, joy requires pain. Psychoanalytic approaches do not resolve these contradictions but rather dwell within them. As in the phenomenon of 'the twisties' in

gymnastics, where a gymnast suddenly loses their bodily orientation mid-air, we see a striking metaphor for the disintegration of conscious control under psychic strain. To psychoanalyse sport, then, is not to impose coherence but to work with what repeats, what refuses sense, and what breaks down. It is to recognise that contradiction is not failure, but structure.

Encountering the limits of the self

Psychoanalysing sport also means grappling with the human condition as one of lack, limitation, and incompleteness. This is played out vividly in sport, where the pursuit of mastery is haunted by its impossibility. Athletes push their bodies to the point of collapse, return compulsively to the scene of prior failure, or strive toward an ideal self that remains just out of reach. In effect, castration, inadequacy, and the impossibility of total control over the body or the environment are not marginal to sport, they are its very conditions. As several contributors argue, sport allows for the symbolic transformation of these limitations: sometimes into something glorious, sometimes into something unbearable, but always into something that *matters*.

Cultural fantasies and social symptomatology

Sport is personal but also profoundly cultural. A psychoanalytic perspective allows us to see how sport acts as a kind of cultural framework, indeed, a stage upon which fantasies about nationhood, gender, race, and power are performed and disavowed. Several contributors draw attention to the ways in which sport functions as a space in which societal tensions are displaced, condensed, and acted out. Where sport can be a site of visibility and symbolic triumph, it is also one of psychic violence and cultural misrecognition. Psychoanalysis helps us to read these enactments both as sociological facts but also as psychic dramas with real consequences.

Intimacy, fandom, and the formation of self

Another core theme is that of attachment. Why do people care so much about sport? What is the nature of the bond between fan and team, athlete and idol, parent and child watching a match? Psychoanalysis reveals how these bonds are not merely forms of entertainment or distraction but are interwoven with identity formation, family dynamics, and emotional regulation. Fandom, in particular, is cast as a transgenerational ritual. It is through sport that some people find a language for closeness, for expressing feelings otherwise disallowed by norms of masculinity or social distance, where the stadium or the sofa become a space of emotional intensity, often exceeding what is possible in other areas of life. This, psychoanalysis reminds us, is not trivial, but formative.

An alternative to sport psychology

The psychoanalytic approach outlined here contrasts sharply with traditional sport psychology, which often emphasises performance optimisation, rational goal-setting, and cognitive control. Psychoanalysis brings a radically different set of assumptions. Where unconscious processes, which are not always amenable to one's control, play a decisive role, performance is never purely rational. Rather than treating poor performance as a problem to be fixed, psychoanalysis asks what it reveals. In contrast to valorising discipline, it asks what that discipline defends against. In doing so, we resist the fantasy of the fully knowable, fully optimised subject, instead opening a space for more compassionate, complex, and ethically attentive engagements with sporting life.

A critical epistemology, or, re-thinking sport

Finally, to psychoanalyse sport is not merely to apply psychoanalytic theory to a new domain, but to enact an epistemological critique of sport itself, as well as the disciplines that surround it. Psychoanalysis reveals the myths and metaphysical assumptions that underpin sport: fantasies of fairness, narratives of

meritocracy, ideals of purity and transcendence. While it urges us to look askew at the rationalist assumptions of sport science, the moralism of sport ethics, and the teleology of athletic development, it also asks us to consider how sport emerged historically as a space for the regulation of affect, the disciplining of the body, and the reproduction of normative ideals. In light of this, it gives us the tools to understand sport, and, more importantly, to imagine it otherwise.

In the responses that follow, each respondent serves to answer the question: *What does it mean to psychoanalyse sport?* Their responses are not bound by a single methodology, framework, or tradition, nor do they attempt to provide a unified theory. Rather, they open a set of provocations—sometimes speculative, sometimes grounded in clinical, cultural, or textual analysis—that each provide their own perspective on the psychic life of sport. Taken together, these reflections deepen our understanding of sport as a site of physical action and entertainment, as well as a complex and affectively charged field through which unconscious desires, anxieties, and identifications are lived and worked through. They demonstrate that psychoanalysis has something distinctive to say about sport. In turn, sport can offer psychoanalysis new materials, affects, and intensities through which to rethink its own assumptions. The contributions that follow are reprinted in full. They do not so much answer the question once and for all, but, on the contrary, keep it alive in all its difficulty, complexity, and fascination. We encourage any reader to answer and do the same.

What does it mean to psychoanalyse sport?

Someone in my sports-centric group chat posts a photo of a chocolate Labrador surrounded by smiling, attractive women. The dog is Win, a mascot recently purchased by Arsenal Football Club and the women are the recently crowned Arsenal Women's soccer team.

'Win looks absolutely miserable', says Pedro, a fan of Arsenal rival, Manchester United.

'Leave Win out of this!', responds Julian, a die-hard Arsenal supporter, 'Attack me but not the dog!'

'Mikel has really ruined him', I add, referring to Mikel Arteta, the polarizing manager of Arsenal's men's team who has repeatedly paraded the dog for the media.

'Phase 7?', Pedro adds, a mocking reference to Arteta's multi-phase plan for Arsenal success, which has yet to come to fruition.

'Hey Peet? Shut up', Julian retorts, using an affectionate version of Pedro's anglicized name. Pedro 'hearts' the comment.

In sports fandom, we create a version of what Freud called 'Tummelplatz', sometimes translated to playground. A Tummelplatz is a dynamic space—mental, cultural, or philosophical—where exploration thrives, identities and discourses flow freely, and conflicting ideas are invited to interact without constraint. In the example of the chat transcript above, it is a place where ostensibly forbidden primitive pleasures can be permitted.

Is the chat transcript above an example of mundane banter? Looking through a psychoanalytic lens, we can view it as anything but. Through aggression ('shut up'), zealotry ('attack me'), and eroticism (the pet name, the 'heart'-ing), the people in the chat engage with each other in ways that are cathartic, satisfying, connective, and, I would argue, healing. Outside of the psychic space created by sports fandom, these individuals would be unlikely to tell someone to 'shut up', to lay down their lives for a cause, or to engage in homoerotic flirtation. Yet these impulses, to some degree, exist in every individual, largely relegated to the unconscious.

Psychoanalyzing sport, then, is the practice of taking the seemingly humdrum—some dudes talking about their favourite soccer teams—and attempting to understand and illuminate the unconscious processes underneath the surface. And then what? What does one do with the product of such analysis? What's the point? Surely not feed it back to the group chat's protagonists. It would be like pausing a children's game of cops and robbers to explain that they are acting out primordial fantasies, not just chasing each other with fake guns. At best it would come across to the players as indecipherable nonsense and at worst, it would ruin their game by destroying the playing field.

Instead, perhaps the analysis becomes, itself, another Tummelplatz, a space for analysts to play with the idea that aggression and love are intertwined and that the boundaries between competition, identification, and desire are more porous than they appear. In this way, psychoanalyzing sport isn't about

diagnosing pathology or demystifying joy—it's about recognizing sport as a living, breathing text of the unconscious, constantly rewritten by those who engage with it. The analyst becomes less a referee and more a participant-observer, curious about what emerges when rules are bent, when meaning leaks out the sides of jokes, jabs, and jubilant cries. Sport, like the psyche, thrives on contradiction. And to psychoanalyze it is to honour its messiness—to see in the trivial the traces of the sacred.

Ben Bernstein, Clinical Psychologist, Silver Hill Hospital, Connecticut, U.S.A.

I am continually frustrated by sport. Not only by my own lack of ability, but also by that of my preferred team. I could say that I 'chose' this team… but I didn't. In so many ways, my team was chosen for me. What's more, whether participating in sport, or supporting one's favourite team or player, this frustration doesn't pass with time or fade with perspective. Instead, it lingers, embedded in every missed chance and near miss, where it is not merely the sting of failure that persists, but something stranger: the haunting regularity of disappointment, and, perhaps, worse, the occasional, fleeting success that promises more than it delivers. These rare victories, far from bringing relief, only sharpen the edge of expectation, renewing a hope that is always, inevitably, betrayed. And yet I return, again and again… not just in spite of the failure, but in spite of the infrequent success.

It is for this reason that to psychoanalyse sport is to take seriously the idea that sport is not just something we *do* or *watch* but something that *does something to us*. It means drawing on the theories and concepts of psychoanalysis to explore the deeper, often non-rational, forces that structure our intense attachments to sport (Black & Reynoso, 2024a, 2024b, 2025). These attachments frequently exceed explanation by way of conscious motivations, such as, pleasure, fitness, or entertainment. Instead, they suggest a field where unconscious desires, unresolved tensions, and shared fantasies are constantly being enacted, negotiated, and sometimes disavowed (Black et al., 2024). In this sense, psychoanalysing sport is not about pathologizing athletes or fans, nor about enhancing performance, instead, it is about interrogating *how* and *why* sport becomes such a powerful and enduring part of human subjectivity and social life.

This requires, in one respect, a treatment of sport that does not simply view it as a mere escape from the 'real world'. On the contrary, if we understand the Real in Lacanian terms as that which resists symbolisation, that which ruptures the smooth surface of everyday life (1991/2007; Lacan, 1973/2004), then, in sport, we see this in the various moments of failure, loss, repetition, and contradiction that are routinely enacted. We see it in the irrational intensity of fandom, in the tears shed after defeat, in the curious frustration and despair (*jouissance*) found not in winning, but in the struggle and loss itself. These moments cannot be adequately understood through frameworks that prioritise rational choice, conscious motivation, or utilitarian value. Sport, from a psychoanalytic perspective, stages the drama of human desire in its most condensed and often confusing forms.

For me, one of the key contributions psychoanalysis offers to the study of sport is its insistence on taking failure and contradiction seriously. Unlike approaches that seek resolution or coherence, psychoanalysis explores the pleasure we take in what doesn't work, in what repeats, in what breaks down. It suggests that we are not just driven by the pursuit of goals, but by something more troubling and difficult to articulate: a something structured by lack (Lacan, 1973/2004). In sport, this lack manifests as the enjoyment of pushing limits, of confronting one's own inadequacy, of striving endlessly for a perfection that is always just out of reach. In this way, sport becomes a privileged site for encountering the basic structures of subjectivity.

That said, applying psychoanalysis to sport is not without its difficulties. There is a real danger of reducing psychoanalysis to a set of neat concepts, or conflating it with sport psychology, which focuses largely on performance and conscious thought. Similarly, there's a risk of treating sport as a case study through which psychoanalytic theory is simply applied, rather than allowing sport to challenge and develop the theory itself. A productive psychoanalytic reading of sport must resist these temptations. It must engage with sport as a complex, contradictory, and culturally saturated field that both expresses and contests unconscious dynamics.

Such an approach also requires that we take sport seriously—not in the sense of overvaluing its societal impact, but in acknowledging the weight it carries in people's lives. Sport is not trivial, even if it

appears so. It is where identities are formed and undone, where bodies are disciplined and damaged, where social antagonisms are rehearsed and repressed. Psychoanalysis offers a language for making sense of this seriousness, and for understanding how it coexists with absurdity, fantasy, and failure. To psychoanalyse sport, then, is to think through these contradictions as well as recognise the pleasures, fears, and fantasies they sustain.

Jack Black, Associate Professor of Culture, Media and Sport, School of Sport and Physical Activity, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, U.K.

I inherited an interest in sports through my father. He grew up playing and watching sports, and by the time I was born he was very invested in the teams he rooted for. He passed this down to me. Some of my earliest memories are going to American football games with him and feeling connected to 60,000 people all screaming together. Being a sports fan was a significant part of my personal identity and my connection with my father. As my relationship to sports fandom evolved and changed over time, it also created tension and changes in my relationship with my father.

I start with this brief personal vignette because I think it helps illuminate what it means to psychoanalyse sport. Sports contains a rich tapestry of potential meanings, individually and within the historical-cultural world. I believe psychoanalysis can help illuminate these potential meanings. Sports are watched by billions of people throughout the world (Sports for business, 2024). Billions of dollars are spent on in-person tickets, advertising, television, streaming sites, phone apps, and merchandise. Sports as an industry is valued at over 2-trillion dollars (Anani, 2024), with sports ownership becoming part of global companies and wealthy individuals' repertoires. It is a major economic, political, and cultural touchpoint, and has considerable influence in individual psyches, interpersonal relationships, and larger structural forces. It cannot be ignored as simply a game or a hobby.

I believe that as a cultural site of meaning-making, sports can impact our minds, bodies, and relationships. Sports fandom often comes into existence through family. Histories of rooting for a particular team are frequently passed down through generations. Families create rituals based on watching their favourite team or going to professional or collegiate team's home games. Sports fandom can be a way to try to minimize or avoid tensions or disagreements in families. They may also allow for closeness between family members that otherwise is impossible. Sports likely holds unique and complicated sites of familial interpersonal, intrapsychic, and relational dynamics that otherwise are avoided or dissociated away.

Sports also offers a unique and important space to think psychoanalytically about socio-cultural--political dynamics. Difference, power, othering, race, and gender can be extracted through sports events and discourse. Masculinity is a theme that is often part of the landscape of sports and sports fandom. CIS-men frequently form relationships that exist primarily through the landscape of sports. It can allow a particular type of emotional and physical connection for CIS-men can be unavailable due traditional ideas of masculinity. Sports creates a distinctive space for understanding how masculinity functions and influences individuals and relationships.

Identity and race are also a potent site of unfolding meaning in sports. In the United States, professional sports can hold aspects of white supremacist culture and systemic racism. This comes from the bleak history of segregation in sports, but also from fan behaviour (Reynoso, 2021) and media consumption (Cushman, 2024). Sport has held the possibilities of upward mobility (Abrams, 2016), while also attacking minorities for not confirming to White norms. It has been a site of protest, including a history of athletes' protesting abuse, often impacting their career (Zirin, 2021). Aspects of power, Whiteness, and other socio-cultural dynamics often become projected in sports and sports fandom (Colás, 2016a), both challenging and recreating oppressive structures (Colás, 2016b).

I believe that psychoanalysis is an extremely human venture. It invites us to take seriously each of our distinctive lives and struggles and the possibility that our actions are driven by an unconscious process. Sports holds a simple premise of competition, athletic accomplishment, and ambition. This premise allows everyone involved—the athlete, the watcher, the commentator—to project aspects of everyday life onto it. Through this, one can explore ideas and experiences and extend outwards into larger unconscious dynamics. This includes sites of transformation, beauty, breakdown, and other avenues for exploration (Cushman, 2024). There is already innovating scholarship on sports and psychoanalysis, led by Black and Reynoso (2024a), which highlights the potential and value of applied psychoanalysis. The launch of the *Sports and Psychoanalysis* journal will engender and sustain this growing scholarship.

David Cushman, Psyd: Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Oakland, CA, U.S.A.; Associate Professor in the PsyD department at the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA, U.S.A.

Psychoanalysing sport provides a rare window into a world where truth is still in action. While athletes do partake in the circus of social media and public relations and are part of an increasingly commodifiable entertainment industry, where cameramen beat coaches to the locker rooms, there is a threshold of reality beyond which none of them could ever consider crossing. A mix of time- and space- constraints as well as the trade-off between individual and collective desires make it hard for athletes to consciously sabotage *the game that must happen*. This unthwarted determinism makes studying the unconscious highly relevant. An athlete's creativity or next move, when pressured and left little leeway for manipulation, might be a very clear expression of the unconscious. I say *might be* because psychoanalysis is always a matter of inferences more or less probable, depending on the facts on the ground and the rational explanation we fit them in.

Psychoanalysing sport helps us sharpen our inference skills. When I explain to my students the difference between (conscious) egoism—'I meant to do it'—and (unconscious) narcissism—'I didn't mean to do it'—I turn to sport to help them understand that not all observably identical behaviours are equal. Imagine Cristiano Ronaldo spotted his Portuguese teammate wide open but unwisely proceeded to try his own luck at goal. If the coach were to take him aside and confront him, how can he tell if his superstar player had behaved consciously or unconsciously selfish? The question matters because each type of selfishness justifies a different antidote or course of action. If Ronaldo had made a calculated decision, the coach would have to sort out his player's priorities. If Ronaldo had not thought too much before acting, the coach would have to either trust his player's gut instinct or discipline it.

How will the coach infer what is going on in Ronaldo's mind? What if Ronaldo lies to him? How am I even portraying athletes as our culture's truth-keepers when footballers notoriously *simulate* being fouled? The good thing about psychoanalysis is that it does not take what people say or do for granted. Unlike other social sciences that make observable behaviour king, psychoanalysis does not let facts speak for themselves. *Only the unconscious speaks*. Everything else is symptom we can assess, label, and change our mind about when more facts emerge.

If Ronaldo's coach were Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis would listen patiently to his nagging, test him with interpretations, propel him to lie long enough until inconsistencies emerge and bring him to understand what really occurred to his mind when his teammate urged him to pass the ball. The truth is always around the corner in psychoanalysis: seeking it is a delicate long-term project, but it is not a futile endeavour precisely because we have an unconscious rigid enough to withstand the whims of calculated decision-making and the excesses of relativistic explanations. Psychoanalysing sport means pausing momentarily superficial inquiries—which have their merit since humans often do behave superficially—in order to get to the roots of wicked problems. Psychoanalysing sport means understanding the rules that make the game eternally tempting rather than the spectacle of objects and people who make it worthwhile but short-lived.

Rayyan Dabbous, PhD candidate, Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada.

Psychoanalytic conceptualizations and interventions have much to offer the field of applied sport psychology. An important example is the meta-capacity of 'self-awareness', which is often a focus of performance interventions. All of the 'mental skills' and techniques one could develop to improve performance are unhelpful, if someone is not aware of their self-representations, current state, demands of the situational context, and intersections which lead to an ideal performance state. Sport psychology has been primarily influenced by cognitive and behavioural models, which have resulted in the perspective that self-awareness is sufficiently addressed by making a conscious decision to focus on it. There is some recognition that psychological influences can be operating implicitly, such as in 'mindsets', but the assumption is that they are easily brought into consciousness and shifted. Psychoanalysis has the potential to offer a recognition that our awareness can be restricted by defences, and that we are conflicted about being aware of ourselves. Additionally, the unconscious belief structures in mindsets may not be remediated by bringing awareness to them through psychoeducation, because they serve defensive processes and are not easily relinquished. For example, growth versus fixed, or threat versus challenge

mindsets can be grounded in trauma, and to assume a different mindset can have reverberating consequences. Those consequences not only exist in the present, but in how one understands the self and others from the past and the interpretation of memories.

Similarly, all psychological capacities needed for athletic performance are fuelled by a motivational profile. The intensity and duration of motivation to be the world's best at any craft is, by its nature, extreme. In my work with athletes, they are often able to describe some elements of their motivations and drives, yet they often report uncertainty about the depths of what truly drives them to such great lengths or why attaining some goals does not bring satisfaction. Psychoanalysis has much to offer regarding what drives athletes, in addition to conflicts between drives, which is not sufficiently discussed in sport psychology.

It is common in sport psychology for representational aspects of an athletic self to be discussed in the language of ego orientation, or the concerns of identify foreclosure, but what interests me most are the experiential state shifts in athletic performance that are rarely mentalized. These effects of athletic participation are less about a conceptual or autobiographical self but are more non-verbal and experiential. This aspect of the self-experience through sport consistently comes into the consulting room, not only with elite level athletes, but virtually all of my patients. Whether one considers being an athlete to be a significant aspect of the representational self, or not, the effects of athletic movement have effects on the experiential self. In ways that are both facilitative and defensive, athletic movements over periods of time can generate altered states of mind and body. Without an awareness of why they may engage in a physical activity, many people are creating shifts in their self-states. The majority of my patients with extensive trauma histories have relationships to athletic and physical movement that they have not yet mentalized, and the exploration often leads to significant insights about their self and emotional regulation.

Finally, rather than only considering what psychoanalysis might offer sport psychology, I think there is a fruitful bidirectional relationship. At its core, applied sports psychology for high performance is about the exploration and identification of an ideal high-performance state, and may require reverse engineering a path to achieve this state. While the idea of 'performance' is not the language that is likely to be found in psychoanalytic circles, the attempt to cultivate ideal states of mind for the analysand and analyst has been a question of technique addressed by the likes of Freud, Ferenzci, Winnicott, Bion, and many others. Few theorists and authors have attempted to integrate performance psychology and psychoanalytic informed therapy to discuss how the emotional pressure of a session impacts the minds of both client and therapist, and how we can utilize skills to shift states of mind in more facilitative ways. There is much more to be gleaned from this potential dialogue.

Zane Dodd, Director of Clinical Services, The Chrysalis Center; Director of Performance, Chrysalis Elevate: Performance Psychology, Southlake, Texas, U.S.A.

Psychoanalysis can help explain the complex and contradictory ways that sport relates to enjoyment. All sportspeople and fans recognise some of this contradictory complexity, albeit predominantly unconsciously. That is, sport's mythologies celebrate the training as well as the performance; the journey as well as the destination; the loneliness as well as the solidarity; the failure as well as the victory; ultimately, the pain as well as the pleasure. A commonsensical approach might expect the first of each of these ostensible binary oppositions to be the unfortunate consequences of the failure to achieve the second, or at least the price to be paid for an eventual achievement. But every sportsperson/fan knows that the enjoyment derived from sport isn't this binary—it isn't a case of 99% painful perspiration followed by 1% pleasurable triumph. Granted, to some extent, there is both an institutional impetus from within sports' governing bodies and rules, and a psychic impetus identified by Freud as the 'pleasure principle', which attempts to regulate these ostensible binary oppositions into clearly designated and discrete categories. Victory and defeat can be reduced to mathematical data, and sportspeople/fans can experience a homeostatic limit to pleasure by balancing out victory and defeat into something like 'mid-table obscurity' or 'yo-yoing' between leagues.

Sporting enjoyment fundamentally goes beyond the pleasure principle, though, in two main ways. The first is the fetish: if the ostensible binary opposition victory/loss involves a painful metaphor for the castration of the divided subject, then this binary also involves the illusion of non-castration in the plenitude of victory (Geal, 2024). But the fetish, of course, doesn't really make the divided subject whole. It

is, rather, a means to facilitate the perverse enjoyment of castration, to turn unpleasure into a pleasure which does not heal but instead enjoys the disavowal of castration that leaves the wound merely sutured over and therefore partly visible. So, attempting to overcome the castration inherent to divided subjectivity, the sportsperson/fan perversely enjoys both the fetishistic triumph over that castration *and* the coterminous 'memorial' to that castration.

This points to the second component of excessive sporting enjoyment, which we can identify with Lacanian *jouissance*. The subject's attempts to fill in the void of symbolic castration go beyond both the pleasure principle and signification, producing an unsymbolisable excess where pleasure is not the homeostasis of 'no-score-draws' but the bewildering dialectic of painful pleasure. This is partly a scenario where enjoyment can only be achieved through loss, like the fan of a team narrowly winning a cup final who bites their nails as the clock slowly winds down. But it is also a scenario where the fan of the losing team experiences a desolation predicated on the vanishing possibility of triumph. Pleasure and pain are not binary oppositions but dialectically entangled. Losing is therefore not a feature in sport merely to facilitate winning. A comparison with mythic narrative forms in literature and film is illustrative, because a fictional villain loses so that the hero can win, and affective identification is typically (ambiguous exceptions notwithstanding) aligned with one side of the victory/loss binary only. Affective identification in sport is much more widely distributed. Losing is itself part of sport's *jouissance*-facilitating architecture.

Sport's *jouissance* is also facilitated by its undetermined outcomes. Contests have favourites and outsiders, of course, but outcomes are not as predetermined as those of film or literary genres. Fiction also has structures which oscillate between loss and triumph, castration and fetish etc., but sport is more undetermined. Granted, a spectator watching a film they haven't seen before might not know the precise outcome and be uncertain whether temporary experiences of *fort*-like loss might be compensated in *da*-like resolution. But a film's hero has a fundamentally more predetermined relationship to victory/loss than participants in sport. Sport is therefore closer to the unpredictability of real-life examples of *jouissance*, like falling in love than something like a film romantic comedy, even though that film genre seems to be a more explicit attempt to symbolise this aspect of subjectivity.

Castration produces a hole, then, and the subject, like many sports, tries to put something in that hole. But sport demonstrates that *jouissance* is as much about missing, and hitting the post, as it is about scoring.

Robert Geal, Senior Lecturer in Media, Film and Television Studies, University of Wolverhampton, U.K.

Psychoanalysis—be it Freudian or Lacanian—aims to uncover and revitalize the hidden, oppressed thrives of human beings, in sport: fans, athletes, players, coaches and executives. What will be discovered if we apply a psychoanalytic approach to sport science in general, and more in particular to sport philosophy and ethics, as they are defining the distinctive qualities and specific morality, determining sport as a social practice?

The French philosopher of science Gaston Bachelard, deeply inspired by Freud and Jung, states that for science to be accepted as the validated path towards knowledge and truth, those involved should let go of their original fascinations, and even their entanglement to the topics of research they are dedicated to (Bachelard, 1971, 23–106). Sport science is usually practiced by absolute 'believers', like supporters, former athletes and coaches. Apart from their independence, the scientific regime they now represent might be considered as a way to domesticate this intriguing and ambiguous thing called sport. As a result of this, a no-go area emerged for those who represent the dominant discourse in sport science, an unaccepted alley for the leading body of knowledge. A typically psychoanalytical qualification will say that, although this area is declared to be inappropriate, it is still immanent to sport science, and as such: decisive. Bachelard addresses this archaeological pathway as the 'psychoanalysis of reason' (Bachelard, 1971, 163).

Psychoanalyzing sport should include this epistemological turn. For instance, the ruling tradition in sport ethics holds a view of humanity in which the logic of reason is central, despite the so-called 'gratuitous logic' defining both sport's 'ludic nature' (Suits, 1978), and its undisputed, much appraised, 'ethical core' (McNamee, 2008). The dominant discourse in sport ethics states that humans are rationally acting beings who are amenable to reason in adjusting their behaviour. In improving integrity, formulating powerful rules, codes, and norms, 'offenders' will adjust their behaviour and all distortions—such as

violence, abuse and the use of doping—will disappear. From a psychoanalytic point of view, this form of ethics will not improve sport integrity, as it does not take into account the unconscious structures ruling sport, and the fragility of the human condition. In promising sport to guide their affiliates towards health, self-truth and moral development, we cannot ignore the transformative approach psychoanalysis offers (Meeuwsen, 2024).

This epistemological turn will be complementary to psychoanalyzing those embodying the very practice. A Lacanian understanding stresses the importance of language; the words and narratives we use refer to what we consider to be real and valuable. Yet they also show what is lacking and forbidden. Following this line of reasoning, the current discourse sport scientists, sport philosophers and sport ethicists produce, still hold the remains of qualities, values and concepts that were excluded and forgotten at the start. Modern sport, as the competitive and virtuous bodily practice it is agreed to be, was created at the end of the nineteenth century. Modern sport's distinguishing key concepts were developed by the young aristocrats around Pièrre de Coubertin, enchanted by this new magic spectacle (Coubertin, 1967; MacAloon, 2008). Conceptualizing what sport should be, do, or bring about, may be regarded as a pre-scientific stage dominated by desires, myths and rites, anticipating the birth of sport science as a positivist body-of-knowledge during the 1950s and '60s. What richness lies embedded in this primordial '*archè*' and how might we apply these concepts, insights, and thrives into current questions and issues about sport?

Sandra Meeuwsen, Visiting Scholar in Sport Philosophy, Paris Institute of Health and Sport Sciences, Paris City University, France

As both a researcher in sociocultural studies of sport and a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, I am interested in the intersection of the body in sport and psychoanalysis. Sport, as an academic discipline and practice, is like a dream that condenses, displaces and represents cultural anxieties and wishes (Freud, 1900/1953). It allows access to unconscious contents, such as, desires, aggression and narcissism—topics that are difficult to acknowledge directly, but which are disguised and staged like theatre on the sporting field.

The study of the body has long been central in sociocultural studies of sport, yet little has been explored through a psychoanalytic lens. According to Lemma (2010), the way the psychoanalytic body is experienced and thought about depends fundamentally on how the body was treated by caregivers early in life. The body is thus a site where repressed psychic contents are symbolised and sometimes where the drama or trauma of the unconscious is reenacted. Borrowing from Van der Kolk (2014), I am interested in exploring, both in my research and psychotherapy practice, 'how the body keeps the scores (in sport)'—that is, beneath the surface of symptoms and functionality, how unspoken and repeated stories, shaped by psychoanalytic structures, speak through the body in sporting contexts.

In the current intellectual landscape of the United Kingdom (U.K.), the examination of race often revolves around a Black-White binary that excludes the Chinese from critical analysis. Situated at the margins, with a diasporic research agenda focused on the sporting body of Chinese individuals and communities, my work offers space for creative exploration of cohesion, identity and belongingness in sport—spaces where migrant bodies are often unseen, idealized, or pathologized. This positioning mirrors that of psychoanalysis, which—whether as therapeutic method, theoretical tradition, or cultural discourse—occupies a deliberately marginal space in relation to the mainstream, enabling a critical stance on dominant narratives within scientific and psychological disciplines that prioritise objectivity, normalisation, and functional adaptation (Bos et al., 2005).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, communities function as environments in which immigrants feel embraced and can play within potential spaces (Winnicott, 1971) to express their desire for inclusion in a new country and creatively work through their losses (Akhtar, 1999; Cheng, 2001). My research on Chinese migrants, and their sporting practices, reveals how children and parents find refuge in community-organized football events, which offer reparation for loss national pride and emotional refuelling amidst the pain of separation from their 'motherland' (Pang, 2023).

The border in the lives of diasporic communities serves as a psychic symbol encompassing transitions, boundaries and attachments. An individual's process of attachment to an adopted country may evoke different outcomes (Bowlby, 1969). For example, insecure attachments could manifest as a regressive

wish to return to the home country, or a form of 'magic identification' (Jacobson, 1954) with the new country, accompanied by a renunciation of the original cultural upbringing.

The ongoing negotiation of proximity and distance between immigrants' country of origin and new homes has implications for emotional investments in local sporting practices and fandom (such as, cricket, rugby, and football in the UK). These can create a sense of imaginary community where fragmented identities are united and worked through (Kristeva, 1991). Encouraging forms of civic engagement—such as, nationalism through sport—among immigrants becomes a kind of psychic battlefield, charged with racial and cultural tensions that unsettle the fantasy of a unified, coherent self. Migrant sporting bodies thus become bearers of psychic history, repressed affect and symbolic negotiation between home and host countries, as well as national/ethnic/racial identities.

Psychoanalytic theory can also be integrated with autoethnographic practice in sport, allowing researchers to engage reflexively with their own psychic investments in the research context (Garratt, 2015; Pang, 2023). This approach moves beyond the mind/body binary and explores participant's transference and researcher's counter-transference. It involves close reading on contradictions, omissions and disavowals within the researcher's' own narrative in order to better understand the relational dynamics and the bodily and affective responses that emerge between the researcher and participants (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008).

Bonnie Pang, Associate Professor in Sport, Department for Health, University of Bath, U.K.; Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist Trainee, The Guild of Psychotherapists, U.K.

I don't speak or write about any specific professional athlete I work with. That said, frequently, my favourite question to ask in these cases is what the person likes about the sport they are involved in. It often yields important, and occasionally bewildering, responses. It's not easy to speak directly about what one desires or loves, especially if there's any doubt about this. By the very context of the situation, when I pose some version of this query to an elite athlete, or a child training to be one, it implicitly introduces uncertainty into the conversation. To reflect and then speak about what one likes about sport suggests a variety of viable answers. In other words, there are many aspects to like and potentially others that are less preferable. Like in sport, in a psychoanalytic treatment, one is less concerned with content than form. It's not that Manchester City have won six Premier League titles since Pep Guardiola's appointment, it's how they have that is enthralling.

While psychoanalysis and sport may seem like strange, or at least uncomfortable, bedfellows—which aren't?—they are also suitable ones. Though we can try, one cannot be subordinated to the other without a kind of crudeness that, at the least, results in boredom. I know this firsthand. My first forays into this field over a decade ago were to apply psychoanalytic principles to sport. Amongst the more cumbersome results was using Freudian and Kleinian ideas of oedipal triangulation to dissect fandom. Using developmental theory, the respective narcissism models of Kernberg and Kohut, and Jaques' ideas on death and midlife, to frame the preternatural retirement crisis of professional athletes was more promising. Though I cannot identify the exact moment my approach changed, I eventually started thinking psychoanalysis and sport together, using Grant Farred (in philosophy) and Dave Zirin (political and sports journalism) as representative of the only form suitable for the task.

Thinking psychoanalysis and sport together is an ideal that can only be aspired toward but failed at. The motivation to assess and possess the other asserts itself in any relation, including towards ourselves. We know, however, that no win is ever complete, every analysis leaves something unanalyzed, and there is no full ascertainment of self or other. Rather than lament this unfulfillment, a study of psychoanalysis and sport should embrace it, as both evade closure and summation. To approximate one of my favourite sport commentators, Ray Hudson, who has often expressed—each time with a new twist—the profound unknowability of football: 'They'll never will never solve this game. We think we know football; we don't know football. Nobody knows it'. For the unacquainted, it sounds better when he says it during a game in his Geordie accent.

As I have written elsewhere, if sport fandom expresses our unconscious investment in loss, the perpetuation of desire, and the push of the drive, then we cannot expect any different in our individual or collective efforts in this field than to fail better (à la Beckett). My hope for this journal, and for our

broader efforts to bring sport and psychoanalysis into dialogue, is not that they interrogate each other to produce answers, but that they generate more intractable questions.

Take ethics and sport. Reading even appealing approaches that unidirectionally use ethical frameworks to critique sport consumption and participation, one seems left with 'good' and 'bad' ways of engaging sport. Even when nuance is acknowledged through gradations or continua, the conclusions often reduce to a binary: either demand and enact reform or withdraw support and abandon the corrupt sporting entity. I have been on the side of calls for sporting reform along the lines of equity and inclusion. But my attempt to think psychoanalysis and sport together compels me to acknowledge that my/our devotion to sport is as much for its vices as it is for its virtues. Whether it's the athlete in my office whose profession undermines her other desires, the generously charitable team owned by a predatorially capitalist figure—and really, which isn't?—or my own cheering for a favourite athlete who makes deplorable remarks about the queer community, sport confronts us with the contradictions, conflicts, and unsavoury complexities of our humanness—precisely the terrain psychoanalysis seeks to reckon with.

Joseph S. Reynoso, Psychoanalytic Psychologist in private practice, New York City, U.S.A.

Sport and Psychoanalysis is a provocative title for an academic journal. 'And', the coordinating conjunction, confers no authority to that which is on either side. Psychoanalysis is a method of therapeutic treatment that has spawned theories brought to bear on literature, culture, philosophy, and film. Sport is a competitive activity, for our purposes, organized for some level of public consumption. It seems that the two fields, necessarily, then, would dictate 'sport' enter the series of psychoanalytic objects along with literature, film, and so forth. Sport, however, comes with its own set of cultural and philosophical assumptions. The relationship cannot be unidirectional. Even as one *psychoanalyzes* sport, the structure of sport and its culture return the gaze of the analyst.

The stakes of sport may appear, at times, to be comically low. In NBA basketball, win or lose, players leave the court wealthy. And anyone who has ever played in a weekend game at a local rec-centre understands the urgent impulse to win despite the fact that such an achievement is meaningless outside the amateur league. The investment of an athlete to success for its own sake is a point of entry to understanding what it might mean to psychoanalyze sport.

That said, the undertaking of psychoanalyzing sport ought to respond to the critique of sport as a handmaiden of capital. Organized sports are rife with advertisements and corporate partnerships. Sport is exactly the kind of mass cultural object of which the Frankfurt School was so suspicious. One might ask: is the viewing of sport a malicious distraction from politically liberatory or existentially enriching activity? Is it a modern manifestation of Juvenal's *panem et circenses*? In *Critical Models*, Adorno writes:

> Sport is ambiguous. On the one hand, it can have an anti-barbaric and anti-sadistic effect by means of *fair play*, a spirit of chivalry, and consideration for the weak. On the other hand, in many of its varieties and practices it can promote aggression, brutality, and sadism, above all in people who do not expose themselves to the exertion and discipline required by sports but instead merely watch: that is, those who regularly shout from the sidelines. (2005, 196–197)

Replying to Adorno's critique might be easier when considering the view of Jean Allouch. In *New Remarks on the Passage to the Act*, he examines the case of Thomas Diet, a free-ride skier. Allouch writes:

> [S]porting performance … casts a valuable light on the way in which thought or, rather, 'thinking' can only be absent when the act occurs. Thomas Diet was the world vice-champion of free-ride skiing: a discipline in which speed carries the beautiful name of 'fluidity'. His motto, 'To reflect is to capitulate', explains what he does at the moment that he launches himself and then accomplishes a descent during which he jumps down impressive rock faces, risking severe injury and, indeed, his life. To no longer think, to not think: this is a necessary condition in order for his descent to be successful. (2025, 1)

Through this example, Allouch seeks to interrogate the act in psychoanalysis as it relates to 'the psychiatric, the judicial, the political and, let us say, the sociocultural' (2019, 1). Following Allouch, to psychoanalyze sport means to confront the psychoanalytic act. There are all manner of psychic mechanisms within the routine unfolding of a sporting event. The most interesting to me, and the ones for which I find a psychoanalytic view most productive, are those that are antithetical to thought.

Part of the project of psychoanalyzing sport is the disentanglement of *acts* from the conventional wisdom that explains them, an incisive understanding of unconscious processes that culminate in the action of the athlete, and what relationship the culture of sport might have to other cultural formations. Some of us undertake this project like the rec league athlete, with no guarantee of meaningful success, but following the inexplicable impulse of doing something for its own sake.

Miguel Rivera, Tufts University, Medford, MA, U.S.A.

Sports expressions, such as, 'heart and soul player', 'mind over matter', or 'skin in the game' demonstrate the inherent connection between the body, mind, and the psychological aspects of physical activity, highlighting the role of sport in shaping the human psyche. Reflecting on the intriguing relationship between sport and psychoanalysis, I propose an approach that explores how sport can deepen our understanding of the human psyche. Rather than applying psychoanalytic concepts to sport, I ask: how can the interactions that emerge through sport enrich our psychoanalytic perspective? By this, I mean that engaging in sport not only reveals our unconscious but also contributes to its formation.

One key aspect of this exploration involves extending the concept of the 'self' into three relational pathways: in addition to 'I' and 'you' (the Other), there is the formation of 'we'—the plural form of being, an active experience of shared reality with another. These elements form a 'discourse frame' for both the self and social interaction (Emde, 1988).

The concept of the 'generalized other' (Mead, 2015) provides a framework for these ideas. It refers to the internalized attitudes of a social group or community that individuals use to shape their self. In team sports, each player's actions are shaped by assumptions about other players. The player assimilates the collective attitudes and expectations. His behaviour is influenced by defining himself in relation to each of the other players, with these attitudes affecting his sense of self and his responses.

The individual's behaviour is influenced not only by specific teammates but by the overall structure and cohesion of the team. This creates a collective 'other'—an organization of the group's attitudes—the generalized other, linked to the sense of 'we'. This internalized collective is essential for self-development. From this perspective, the process of subjectification includes not only the internalizations and projections of childhood attachment figures but also those of the collective group.

The dynamics of sports provide fertile ground for exploring the 'other' within the self (Black & Reynoso, 2024c), considering how the group's generalized other shapes the unconscious that constitutes the self. Interestingly, individual sports sometimes incorporate group elements, such as, relay races, doubles tennis, or pairs figure skating, where, despite being individual, a cooperative aspect remains. This unique blend of individual performance with collective components presents a fascinating opportunity for further investigation.

Group dynamics are explored through group psychoanalytic theories, which offer insight into the complex relationships within groups. Sports groups are distinct—they can form at any age, regardless of familial ties. They encompass elements of dependency, envy, partnership, and competition, with their own set of rules. The unique characteristics of sports groups, particularly related to shared goals like winning, synchronized movements, and deep communication under pressure, set them apart from other group structures. How do such strong bonds develop within a group? What can they teach us about the development of *fraternal psychic zones*? In my upcoming work (Samai-Moskovich, 2024), I introduce the concept of *fraternal psychic zones* among siblings, a concept that can also be applied to sports groups.

Some decisions in sports must be made quickly, yet they are complex (involving interpersonal relations, understanding of the field, and physical movements). One must assume the unconscious plays a significant role in these processes. These elements are not only shaped by the unconscious of participants but also contribute to its formation. The unconscious is actively involved in shaping how athletes experience themselves and relate to others in the sporting context, while also being moulded by the very nature of the sport.

There are many aspects to explore further in the intersection of psychoanalysis and sports. For example, examining the tension between the superego and the id: the superego's discipline and perseverance, and the id's primal drives and desires for immediate gratification. Another intriguing topic is the multiplicity of the psyche's manifestations, seemingly contradictory but easily fitting into the sporting context—the coexistence of emotional regulation with powerful emotional expression.

The prevalence of sport in our daily lives—whether through exercise, play, or watching games—presents a unique opportunity to explore the complex interplay of our psyche, revealing how sport not only reflects but also actively shapes our unconscious processes, influencing both our behaviour and our sense of self.

Shani Samai-Moskovich, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, Supervisor, and researcher; Adjunct Lecturer in Master's Programs in Drama Therapy and Social Work, and Advanced Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Studies, Tel Hai Academic College, Israel

To fans and players alike, sport is a terribly serious affair. And while what is at stake differs within a field of influence that spreads out from this or that team, quilted in the colour of their respective commitments, all participants—designated as coach, enthusiast, gambler, guard, shortstop, etc.—remain nonetheless *at play*. This sentiment so often spoken—*It's just a game*—is, from another vantage, equally valid, a snide conceit ignorant of the heroic effort and deftness of skill. The paradox here, one of several available irrespective of game specifics, makes of sport a very fine candidate for psychoanalysis. Both systems proceed accordingly, we might state, through a complex of rules and customs constituting the other in what appears to be the greatest of specificities. Even with such a personal tenor, one faces an opponent, ordered and teaming with an apparent wholeness that can render the fittest of limbs shaky and stiff. It is thus within the contest, those moments of direct contact and bodily mire coloured by mind, that a brave turn articulates not some invulnerable master, whose completeness is beyond reproach, but a set of holes and gaps—subject further to a ground replete with uneven patches of grass, dead spots of wood and dirt soiled divots—which lay bare inconsistency as a fundamental condition. In this way, sport represents a fairness that exceeds the judicial; it is more suitable and appropriate than legal; it is also then a *just* game.

With sport we have a series of circumstances quite like the labyrinthian trappings of the ordinary person: malaise and discontents; obsessions and hysterias—however limited their movements can seem near the drama of a championship series. What is distinct here is the manner in which its formal constraints stage—in the most explicit and precise terms—the very things of human culture to which psychoanalysis has been devoted. Sport makes interesting Freud's imperative 'to go there' as he suggests we do with 'whatever happens' in a psychoanalytic scene. Any questions of agency and authorization, those means of freedom within a world that functions ultimately according to *the way the ball bounces* persist despite the obsessive practicing, the monotonous drilling, the imaginal repetitions, the profuse aphorisms—with poetic efficiencies of phrasing and vocalizations to be maintained. Preparation is essential, but it assures nothing. We are thus bound both to the streaks of luck *and* to the moments of just missing it—through the pitch, the kick, the swing, the shot, the throw, the catch.

To these analogues of Little Hans' game *fort-Da*—however more shrewdly set and adorned with adult fair they appear—sport offers an arena of ritual no longer relegated to the trials of childhood. Admittedly, these are rites, infantile and juvenile, that no mortal can shake. Might the veracity of castration find within the unavoidable and thus righteous contamination, something glorious. Ahh *the glorious deed*—acephalic this sacrifice in the face of utility. The adjectival attribute recollects for us, etymology speaking, not simply swimming, but the backstroke, a strange kinesis whose volatility works only in concert with relaxation, if not the more absurd earthly pleasure—floating. How well does sport hinge on this balance, offering its members myriad chances at adjustment? Of course, floating is not only a thing of leisure, but can on occasion prevent death-by-drowning. The severity of circumstance is not surprising for psychoanalysis either; nor is death reserved for sinking ships or the rote progress of some natural expiration. Death is as immediate as it is impossible, and baring the theatre of war, who's more intimate with this immediacy than the analyst and athlete?

So, what does sport contribute to this project—lest it be yet another thing keenly set under the psychoanalytic gaze? With due difficulty we might consider it kin to the dream: Less object of deft readings, interventions, analogics, and more so marbled with topology, traversing the knots and rings that fasten the object of inquiry to a method that registers as incidental the exigent. The necessity of accident, the athleticism of it patterns, intends, and with sport this—that royal road—is diamond (… or mat, court, field, pitch, pool, rink, table, course, track).

Patrick Scanlon, Assistant Instructional Professor, University Writing Program, University of Florida, U.S.A.

I just watched my home team, the Knicks, blow a 17-point lead in the last two and a half minutes of the game, and I feel a deep sadness in my whole body. I watched in the same living room where I first watched the Knicks as a child, sitting on my father's lap. I live in the apartment I grew up in. My father is gone now. The feeling I have at this moment is profound loss… I imagine psychoanalysis might have something to say about this.

Sport is a manifestation of something essential. It gratifies an unconscious wish to participate in something larger than ourselves and to feel that our actions matter. It offers rule-based, co-created meaning, requiring shared participation, mutual understanding, and socially enforced standards. The rules and etiquette frustrate and constrain us, but they also guide us, giving us a structure by which achievement and value can be measured.

Sport is one of the few socially acceptable ways to express aggression—and to be rewarded for it. It creates a fair standard, so outcomes reflect merit, skill, and dedication. Winning becomes a form of ascension, like going to heaven without dying. Losing, at best, is purgatory. But there's still life after loss, and that's the beauty of sport—it becomes a shared, compelling fantasy (the original and longest running unscripted TV drama series).

In sport, we project all kinds of things onto our adversaries. Even if we respect them, we feel justified in wanting to defeat them, to prove our worth through the merit of competition. The humble athlete credits their victory to being blessed, to playing the game the right way, and often acknowledges those who helped make it possible. Yet sport also gives rise to villains. It has a moral dimension: winners aren't just better athletes—they were better people that day, according to an agreed-upon standard.

Winning can feel like vanquishing without bloodshed. When the victor aligns with virtue, winning affirms morality. But when the outcome reveals that nice guys finish last, it undermines it. Psychoanalysis attends to the anxieties that arise from suppressed aggression and explores how we sublimate those urges toward socially acceptable ends. Sport is sublimation.

Sport matters only because of the real possibility of defeat. Without that, it's meaningless. Its meaning is contrived, yes, but it feels like an expression of something deeply human. To collectively feel joy or sorrow, we must believe in the rules, accept the outcomes, and participate in the fantasy. The score doesn't exist in a material way—it's a symbol of something we've agreed to believe in and reinforce through shared commitment and investment.

Games are unscripted stories. Like life, they are finite, bounded, and full of consequence. After a sports contest, some feel good, others feel worse—but all involved owe something to the game. We are fearful beings, often at our best when at play.

Psychoanalysis, too, is a kind of sport. It's an effort to shift human experience from the fear and violence of war to the symbolic language of play. Though life can seem individualistic, it is a team sport. Psychoanalysis helps us examine the cost and benefits of finding socially acceptable ways to win—to gratify our desires, without destroying ourselves or others.

We all bring sport into therapy, because we experience life itself as a competitive, success-driven enterprise. We long for the elements that sport provides: fairness, structure, clarity, the safety of rules, the thrill of tolerable risk, and the presence of someone who will intervene when necessary to enforce what's right. We want a field to play on where effort matters, and where, win or lose, we're given a chance to show who we are.

Sport allows us to express antagonism and aggression within boundaries. We grant one another the opportunity to strive, to earn the rewards of effort, and to be seen. Athletes are often more fluent in this symbolic language. They live in closer contact with these feelings, where the experience of striving, sacrificing, winning, and losing is vivid and embodied. For them, sport is not metaphor—it is method. Their whole selves can be expressed through immersive participation.

But this isn't just about athletes. What they bring to therapy is simply a more conscious version of what many carry unconsciously: a deep yearning for life to be fair, meaningful, governed by shared rules, and worthy of effort. A longing to win, perhaps—but above all, a hope that we get to play, and play well.

Lee Shapiro, Psychologist in private practice, NY, NY, U.S.A.

To psychoanalyze sports is not just about interpreting the inner world of athletes or the psychodynamics of a locker room. Nor is it just about offering sideline diagnoses of performance anxiety,

narcissism, and PTSD. Rather, to psychoanalyze sports—particularly within an American context—is to expose the unconscious life of a culture that has always depended on spectacle to mask its contradictions. To consider how athletic institutions reproduce racialized hierarchies through hegemonic reinforcement, while also serving as sites of both symbolic liberation and psychic injury. Ultimately, the psychoanalysis of sports examines how the field of play becomes one of loss, desire, and unacknowledged grief.

In 'The Racial Melancholia of Aspiring Black NFL Head Coaches', loss is situated within the ongoing denial of Black leadership in the NFL—a melancholic wound imbued with the institutional power, identity, and values of the league (Thomas, 2024). For Black men whose excellence on the field is being celebrated, the glass ceiling of head coaching reveals more than mere structural racism; it uncovers a psychic truth. Specifically, the Black body is glorified when it performs but is regarded with false attributional error when it aspires to think, strategize, or lead. Psychoanalyzing sports demands that we acknowledge their systemic exclusion as a site of racial mourning, where professional ambition is haunted by a quiet grief for denied recognition. The Black coach's longing becomes melancholic not because it is weak, but because it is disavowed. It is a mourning that fears public acknowledgment—a grief that is made private and pathologized, resembling the condition of Blackness in America.

Similarly, *Black Rage*, the work of two esteemed Black psychiatrists, William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs, insists that the psychological consequences of racism must be understood not only as internalized pathology but as adaptive responses to a society built on contradiction and suppression (Grier & Cobbs, 2000). In the realm of sports, this rage often gets displaced, commodified, or misread—as passion, aggression, or lack of discipline—rather than recognized as a response to historical and ongoing psychic injury. When the Black athlete lashes out, takes a knee, or dares to speak, it is rarely seen as speech. Instead, it is filtered through the white gaze as defiance, disrespect, or ungratefulness. Psychoanalyzing sports requires that we reject this lazy, unempathetic, and superficial reading and instead ask: What does the Black athlete carry on the field besides the ball? What unspoken memories, what generational traumas, what racial expectations are imbued with every yard gained or penalty flagged?

Sports then become an unintentional stage for America's racial psychodrama. It is a cauldron of spectacle, statistics, and competition, allowing us to examine the unconscious forces, historical traumas, and collective fantasies embedded within athletic performance and institutional structures. It is where the nation works out its contradictions in real time, on HD television, with billion-dollar contracts, and traumatized bodies and psyches. The crowd cheers for Black men who run, jump, and tackle, but quiets when they speak truth to power. Fans wear their jerseys but discard their politics. To psychoanalyze sports is to understand this split as a form of cultural dissociation: America wants the performance, not the three-dimensional person.

What remains unspoken in much of sports commentary is precisely what psychoanalysis seeks to name: the unconscious. The NFL, the NBA, the Olympics—all are structured by unconscious drives: the wish for domination, the disavowal of vulnerability, the fetishization of control. In this sense, sports are not just games; they are rituals of American masculinity and whiteness, where white men are venerated symbols of leadership and Black men are reduced to stereotypes about their athletic prowess.

To psychoanalyze sports is to perpetually ask, what desires are being staged, what losses are being denied, and whose rage must remain silent for the game to go on? It is to look at the scoreboard and still hear the echo of a question: What is the cost of this performance, and who is paying the price for it? Thus, to psychoanalyze sports is to read beyond the game: to uncover how the field becomes a battleground for racialized desire, repression, resistance, and unresolved grief.

Bradley A. Thomas, Clinical Psychologist in Private Practice, New York, U.S.A.

In a 2022 interview with Seth Meyers, Brett Goldstein (Roy Kent from the TV show *Ted Lasso*), commented on American football: 'It looks like everyone has worked out a lot, and good luck to them, but, like, *what* is the *sport*?' Goldstein's comment captures an essential characteristic of the relationship between people and sports. His failure to grasp the appeal of American football follows his avowed appreciation and understanding of English football (soccer). In short, he differentiates between sports, libidinally investing in some but not others. What interests me is that his exaggeration of that

differentiation highlights a contradiction at the heart of many people's attachment to a specific sport and their dismissal of others. There are two psychoanalytic concepts that potentially describe and clarify this contradiction: Octave Mannoni's concept of 'disavowal' and Jacques Lacan's notion of the '*objet petit a*'.

Octave Mannoni provides the canonical formula for disavowal in the title of his 1969 essay 'I know Well But all the Same…' (Mannoni, 2003, 68). In cases of disavowal, we might know well how things really are, but we will nevertheless continue to behave as if we do not. We disavow our better knowledge: we both know and don't know something at the same time. This disavowal operates in two modes. In one mode, it applies to our lack of comprehension of other people's libidinal investments in *their* sports. On Meyers's show, Goldstein lists off a series of reasons as to why American football fails to engage him, but he concludes the list with an acknowledgment of what he knows to be true: 'I'm sure something's going on I just… don't get it'. In other words, he knows that millions of people maintain a passionate attachment to American football, and he accepts and acknowledges that fact—'something's going on'—but he simultaneously disavows it. He will continue to behave as if American football is incomprehensible, as if affective investments in it are absurd.

Seth Meyers nicely illustrates the second mode in which disavowal functions in relation to sports. He responds to Goldstein, 'These are all very good arguments. It's very hard to defend'. He stops there, but the unsaid portion of his comment is probably, 'and yet, in spite of your better knowledge, I (people) love it'. Goldstein disavows the appeals of American football even as he acknowledges their presence ('something's going on'), whereas Meyers admits the sport's flaws as irrational and hard to justify ('it's hard to defend'), while disavowing them as grounds for refusing the sport his love. In sum, through disavowal we protect the games we are libidinally invested in and reject the ones we aren't by holding knowledge apart from understanding (or belief). We can understand the appeal of *our* sport without knowing why it appeals, just as we can know that a sport draws fans without being drawn in ourselves. Where we disavow knowledge, we understand but don't know. Where we disavow understanding, we know but don't understand.

Disavowal points us toward another facet of the complicated relation between desire and sports. This is Lacan's notion of the *objet petit a*, which he locates in the subject's relation to its object of desire. He encapsulates the subject's speech to the object in the phrase, 'I love in you something more than you' (Lacan, 1973/2004, 263). This formula concisely conveys the fan or player's libidinal attachment to a sport, especially where that attachment applies to only one. The *objet petit a*, at least partly fantasy-based, overlays and cathects the Symbolic order's significations, that is, normal reasons. Every player or fan of a particular sport can list off a checklist of reasons for their sport's felt supremacy that fall within the Symbolic order. For instance, one of the grounds for my commitment to soccer is that it's a game of mistakes as much as it's a game of brilliant play. In baseball, mistakes are designated errors and tallied, but such bookkeeping would make no sense in soccer, where mistakes are legion. But I can add this claim to a catalogue of others that constitute soccer for me, and I would still fail to define the inexplicable surplus and minimum difference that distinguishes it from all other sports. It is this contradictory excess that the concept of *objet petit a* designates.

Stacy Thompson, Professor of Critical Theory and Film Studies, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, U.S.A.

It has become a truism in our field, and an important one, that any therapy that utilizes transference and resistance is essentially psychoanalysis. To play with that truism for a moment, we can say that its truth lies in the fact that both transference and resistance involve the necessity of the existence of an unconscious that lies at the base of the two concepts. While we can all testify to the notion of a spectrum of affects and ideas from the most primitive enactments of unconscious needs and desires to the most rational, objective plans and behaviours, this spectrum—at best—only partially takes into account the multi-dimensional nature of human experience. As Winnicott so beautifully posited, there is a third aspect of experience, a place between the subjective and objective that involves transitional phenomena. These phenomena allow us the experience of knowing what we are thinking, feeling, and doing at any given moment may not be objectively measured nor subjectively known. The play of a young child can be immersed in fantasy yet never be a delusion or hallucination, for example. Their very capacity to

create this transitional space allows for the validation of what they have experienced with others and the opportunity to shift, highlight and rework what 'real life' doled out to them.

For the purpose of this essay, the capacity to play is the cornerstone of a variety of adult experiences that extend this playfulness into a variety of transitional spaces that often make reality truer and more self-validating. Being a sports fan is a remarkably popular way for adults (and children of course) to extend their playfulness into the realm of make believe. When we scream at our television in dismay over a gaffe by one of our favourite teams, do we really believe the players can hear us? Of course not. Yet the intensity of our feelings, including the need to shut off the game if it's going poorly, speaks to a depth of feeling that may be more intense than almost any other. When we devoutly believe in God, for example, when we believe that wearing a kippah keeps us humble before him or her (or what, exactly, is God anyway?), or that wine is the blood of Christ, are we delusional or simply absorbed within the transitional space of religion just as much as we get absorbed with our favourite team? I (Steve) am reminded of the amazing experience I had in Nakashima, Japan, when I was overcome with emotion after entering a huge all-white room in which four gigantic Water Lilies by Monet adorned the four walls. How could one cry at seeing paint on a wall? Yet those colours sent me to a place that was not fully real and yet certainly not simply fantasy. Similarly, I (Karen) recall a childhood memory of clapping alongside an audience at the rousing conclusion of a philharmonic concert. I remember being swept up by the applause, the fervent emotion of the crowd—all in response to sounds produced by man-made instruments. Both the music itself and the shared response of the audience created an inarticulable experience that was somehow intensely personal while it was shared.

While we, as psychodynamic thinkers, spend more than ample time linking present behaviours to past and present unconscious processes, we often miss tapping into the transitional realm. Studying reactions to sport we believe provides an exceptionally fertile source of data from which to make sense of what is held onto by our patients. This includes understanding the core content of wishes and needs, and the core process whereby we can measure the quality and nature of defences employed by our patients that may disrupt or limit or enhance their capacity for play or playfulness. Sports, moreover, configure into and shape our relational lives. Our patients may experience sports as mutual fans with important others, as teammates, or, perhaps, as 'outsiders', witnessing others' involvement and devotion. In these and infinite other ways sports allow an opening for exploration of patients' modes of interaction, connection, and/or disconnection with other people that can be profoundly illuminating of their senses of identity and belonging. Asking patients about their attachment to sport, including their related identifications, may provide an arena for a far less conflictual or inhibited way to speak about their transitional life, a life that makes all the rest of living far more vibrant and pleasurable. It should never be avoided within the analytic hour, if at all possible, as it is a true window into our patient's fundamental ways of being.

Steve Tuber, Professor of Psychology and Program Director, Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology at City College, CUNY, NY, U.S.A.

Karen Tocatly, Postdoctoral Clinician in Private Practice, New York, NY, U.S.A.

When I think about the question, *What does it mean to psychoanalyse sport?*, my mind is taken to the birthplace of psychoanalysis: late 19th-century Paris, and unruly bodies exhibiting humanly unexplainable performances in the hospital beds of the Salpêtrière. Freud's fascination with Charcot's work on hysteria and questions of the psyche-soma led him to develop the theoretical and clinical framework we now call psychoanalysis. From these very early days, bodies and their performativities built the foundations on which Freud conceived the notion of the unconscious.

Central to a practice of psychoanalysis today is the idea that there exist a number of structural impasses within our human experience of inhabiting a body. And it is those impasses that determine our unconscious makeup, both individually and socially. The most fundamental of those impasses are sex and death, as well as the anxiety that arises in relation to them. Throughout history, humanity has found all sorts of subjective and collective methods to deal with these deadlocks. Hysteria is one of them, sport another. Much like the performances of the hysterics, sport stages scenarios where bodies express themselves on the border of what is considered humanly possible, the line between what can be grasped by consciousness and what cannot. In *A Contribution towards a Psychology of Sport,* Helene

Deutsch equated the sport arena with a displaced battlefield, a space for the encounter with our inherent fear of death and desire to kill (Deutsch, 1926). What makes this staging possible is the fact that sport is defined by sets of rules, which determine who (winner) murders who (loser), as well as how close one can come to killing oneself. Through a psychoanalytic lens, these ideas are somewhat logical. But cultural ideologies narrate stories of sport quite differently. Within those scripts, sport might be associated with the opposite of the hysterical body, with things like mastery and quantification. In fact, sport is assumed to rely on the calculability of bodies to explain, rationalise and perfect their materiality.

A discipline that is particularly interesting when it comes to perfection is women's gymnastics. One of the most admired athletes in the world is currently Simone Biles, the unbeatable American gymnast, who continuously breaks records, invents new skills and has reshaped an entire discipline through her supernatural performances. But what does it mean to be the image of perfection? There is a peculiar condition gymnasts encounter in their striving for perfection: the twisties. The condition is defined by the loss of control over one's body, the sudden absence of spatial awareness when spinning through the air. Because it occurs without warning, the twisties put the athlete at acute risk of fatal accidents. The condition made headlines when Simone Biles suffered it at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, with the consequence of her having to withdraw from two finals. At the time, media outlets highlighted how the twisties resulted from the extreme pressure that rests on elite athletes—certainly an important point. But there is also another curious insight that the story offered, which is that the fantasy of the masterful body in sport does not fully hold up, that we do not master bodies, but are mastered by them.

On the most fundamental level, we can never fully control our flesh. No matter how healthy, unhealthy, sensible or destructive we try to be when it comes to food or exercise, our bodies can and will do things which we cannot influence, and, importantly, things we do not understand. When gymnastics is taken to its most extreme, exercising the highest levels of control, this control metamorphoses into loss and absence. Control also means no control. And this is where, for me, there is an interesting crossover between the social scripts of gymnasts and hysterics, their exhibition, perception and function. Both show us how ideological structures play out through bodies in violent ways. But they also reveal where social control fails, where bodies resist, where there remain necessary gaps in our human experience. Psychoanalytically, it is precisely the recognition of and negotiation with these structural gaps that carries the potential to disrupt and transform the fantasies and substances our bodies are made of.

Klaudia Wittmann, choreographer and artist researcher, Centre for Dance Research Coventry University, U.K.

Conclusion: a game we cannot master

Across these responses, we see how sport becomes a privileged domain through which psychic life is not only expressed but shaped. Indeed, a site where drives are enacted, where contradictions play out, where subjects come into being in relation to others, and where social structures and cultural fantasies are invested with libidinal energy. From the compulsion to repeat and the staging of loss, from the frustrating pleasures of fandom to the disavowed racial and gendered dynamics of performance, sport is revealed to be saturated with unconscious meaning, positing a cultural formation in which desire, ambivalence, and identification are constantly at work. The playing field, the television screen, the crowd, and the changing room are all sites where psychic investments are negotiated and remade. To psychoanalyse sport, then, is not to decode it but to remain with its opacity, to treat its breakdowns and contradictions not as errors to be corrected but as insights into the unconscious conditions of social life.

To provide some sort of conclusion, we can consider that if sport is often taken as a mirror of society, psychoanalysis urges us to consider what kind of mirror it is. Ultimately, it asks us to confront the psychic economies that underpin both the joy and the cruelty of sport, as reflected in the impossible ideals, the melancholic attachments, and the collective identifications that bind us together and pull us apart. On this note, when taken together, the above contributions remind us that while psychoanalysing sport can help us to understand the significance of sport, it is also, by extension, a way of returning to fundamental questions about the human subject and society. If psychoanalysis teaches us that we are never fully transparent to ourselves, and if sport shows us that lack plays out in action, then bringing them into

dialogue offers a kind of clarity, not necessarily a solution. Equally, this clarity is not a resolution, but a sense of seeing more honestly what is at stake when we care so deeply, feel so strongly, and act so compulsively around that which we call a game.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Jack Black http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1595-5083

References

Abrams, J. (2016). *Boys among men*. Crown Archtype.
Adorno, T. W. (2005). *Critical models* (H. W. Pickford, Trans.). Columbia University Press.
Akhtar, S. (1999). *Immigration and identity: Turmoil, treatment, and transformation*. Jason Aronson.
Allouch, J. (2025). *New remarks on the passage to the act: Lacan and the Lacanians*. Routledge.
Anani, Z. (2024). The true size of the global sports industry Global Sports Insights. December 9, 2024. https://gis.sport/news/the-true-size-of-the-global-sports-industry/
Bachelard, G. (1971). *Épistémologie*. Presses Universitaires de France.
Black, J., & Reynoso, J. S. (2024a). *Sport and psychoanalysis: What Sport reveals about our unconscious desires, fantasies, and fears*. Lexington Books.
Black, J., & Reynoso, J. S. (2024b). Just a game? Sport and psychoanalytic theory. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, *29*(2), 145–159. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41282-024-00436-6
Black, J., & Reynoso, J. S. (2024c). Introduction: Sport: A psychoanalytic inquiry. In J. Black and J. S. Reynoso (Eds.), *Sport and psychoanalysis: What sport reveals about our unconscious desires, fantasies, and fears*. Lexington Books.
Black, J., & Reynoso, J. S. (2025). Exploring the psychoanalytic dimensions of sport: And introduction to sport and psychoanalysis. *Sport and Psychoanalysis (Cogent Social Sciences)*, *11*(1), 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2488200
Black, J., Sinclair, G., & Kearns, C. (2024). The fetishization of sport: Exploring the effects of fetishistic disavowal in sportswashing. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *48*(3-4), 145–164. https://doi.org/10.1177/01937235241269906
Bos, J., Park, D. W., & Pietikainen, P. (2005). Strategic self-marginalization: The case of psychoanalysis. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, *41*(3), 207–224. https://doi.org/10.1002/jhbs.20101
Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Volume 1: Attachment*. Basic Books.
Cheng, A. A. (2001). *The melancholy of race: Psychoanalysis, assimilation, and hidden grief*. Oxford University Press.
Colás, Y. (2016a). 'Ball don't lie!' Rasheed Wallace and the politics of protest in the National Basketball Association. *Communication & Sport*, *4*(2), 123–144. https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479515572811
Colás, Y. (2016b). *Ball don't lie: Myth, genealogy, and invention in the cultures of basketball*. Temple University Press.
Coubertin, P. D. (1967). *L'Idée Olympique*. Carl-Diem-Institut/Verlag Karl Hofmann.
Cushman, D. G. (2024). The psychoanalysis of basketball. In Jack Black and Joseph S. Reynoso (Eds.), *Sport and psychoanalysis: What sport reveals about our unconscious desires, fantasies, and fears*. Lexington Books.
Deutsch, H. (1926). A contribution to the psychology of sport. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, *7*, 223–227.
Emde, R. (1988). Development Terminable and Interminable: 1. Innate and Motivational Factors from Infancy. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, *69*(1), 23–42.
Freud, S. (1900/1953). *The interpretation of dreams. The standard Edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, Volume IV (1900)* (J. Strachey, Trans.). Hogarth Press.
Frosh, S., & Baraitser, L. (2008). Psychoanalysis and psychosocial studies. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, *13*(4), 346–365. https://doi.org/10.1057/pcs.2008.8
Garratt, D. (2015). Psychoanalytic-autoethnography: Troubling natural bodybuilding. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *21*(4), 343–353. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800414542699
Geal, R. (2024). Football and fetishism. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, *29*(2), 269–279. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41282-023-00387-4
Grier, W. H., & Cobbs, P. M. (2000). *Black rage*. Wipf and Stock Publishers.
Jacobson, E. (1954). Contribution to the metapsychology of psychotic identifications. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, *2*(2), 239–262. https://doi.org/10.1177/000306515400200204
Kristeva, J. (1991). *Strangers to ourselves* (L. S. Roudiez, Trans.). Columbia University Press.
Lacan, J. (1973/2004). *The Four fundamental concepts of psycho-analysis* (J.-A. Miller, Ed. and A. Sheridan, Trans.) Karnac.

Lacan, J. (1991/2007). *The other side of psychoanalysis, the seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII* (J.-A. Miller, Eds.and R. Grigg, Trans). W.W. Norton & Company.
Lemma, A. (2010). *Under the skin: A psychoanalytic study of body modification*. Routledge.
MacAloon, J. J. (2008). *This great symbol*.
Mannoni, O. (2003). I know well, but all the same…. In M. A. Rothenberg, D. A. Foster, and S. Zizek (Eds.), *Perversion and the social relation*. Duke University Press.
McNamee, M. (2008). *Sports, virtues and vices: Morality plays*. Routledge.
Mead, G. H. (2015). *Mind, self, and society*. University of Chicago Press.
Meeuwsen, S. (2024). Editorial: special issue sport, ethics and philosophy: 'Sport and Psychoanalysis'. Sport, *Ethics and Philosophy*, *18*(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2023.2295776
Pang, B. (2023). *Creative and inclusive research methods in sport, physical activity and health: Understanding British Chinese children's experiences*. Routledge.
Reynoso, J. S. (2021). Boston sucks! A psychoanalysis of sports. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, *26*(4), 591–607. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41282-021-00241-5
Samai-Moskovich, S. (2024). Siblinghood and the formation of fraternal psychic zones: Becoming-sister in Yehoshua Kenaz's Henrik's secret and its clinical contexts. *Mikan, Journal for Hebrew and Israeli Literature and Culture Studies*. (Hebrew).
Sport for Business. (2024). *The world's most watched sports*. July 17, 2024. https://sportforbusiness.com/the-worlds-most-watched-sports/
Suits, B. (1978). *The grasshopper: Games, life and Utopia*. University of Toronto Press.
Thomas, B. A. (2024). The racial melancholia of aspiring black NFL head coaches. In J. Black and J. S. Reynoso (Eds.), *Sport and psychoanalysis: What sport reveals about our unconscious desires, fantasies, and fears*. Lexington Books.
Van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. Viking.
Winnicott, D. W. (1971). *Playing and reality*. Tavistock Publications.
Zirin, D. (2021). The Kaepernick effect: Taking a knee. *Changing the world*. The New Press.

Jack Black
School of Sport and Physical Activity, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, U.K.
j.black@shu.ac.uk

Joseph S. Reynoso
Psychoanalytic Psychologist in private practice, New York City, U.S.A.

Ben Bernstein
Silver Hill Hospital, Connecticut, U.S.A.

David Cushman
Psyd: Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Oakland, CA, U.S.A.

Rayyan Dabbous
Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada.

Zane Dodd
The Chrysalis Center, Southlake, Texas, U.S.A.

Robert Geal
University of Wolverhampton, U.K.

Sandra Meeuwsen
Paris Institute of Health and Sport Sciences, Paris City University, France.

Bonnie Pang
Department for Health, University of Bath, U.K.

Miguel Rivera
Tufts University, Medford, MA, U.S.A.

Shani Samai-Moskovich
Tel Hai Academic College, Israel.

Patrick Scanlon
University of Florida, U.S.A.

Lee Shapiro
Psychologist in private practice, NY, NY, U.S.A.

Bradley A. Thomas
Clinical Psychologist in Private Practice, New York, U.S.A.

Stacy Thompson
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, U.S.A.

Karen Tocatly
Postdoctoral Clinician in Private Practice, New York, NY, U.S.A.

Steve Tuber
City College, CUNY, NY, U.S.A.

Klaudia Wittmann
Centre for Dance Research Coventry University, U.K.