Lecture 7: Humanistic Critique of Sports

I. What is the problem?
   ▶ A. Unhealthy emphasis on competition and winning– why unhealthy?
   ▶ B. Too much spectatorship
     ─ 1. Not enough participation
     ─ 2. Focus on small number of sports
   ▶ C. Exclusion of entire groups of people
     ─ 1. Handicapped
       ─ a. Physically
       ─ b. Mentally
     ─ 2. People with certain physiques

VIDEO: Columbia – the 33 game losing streak and breaking the streak
II. History and origins of attempts to counteract the competitive focus and/or elitism of current institutions of sport

A. Social background of the times in which these arose: Dates: 1960-1985
   1. "Beat" generation, late 1950's
   2. 1960's – what was happening?
      a. Anti-Vietnam war, "hippies", Hair
      b. 1963 Betty Friedan – beginning of women's movement
      c. 1964 Civil Rights Act, Free Speech Movement at Berkeley
      d. 1968 urban uprisings in response to assassinations
      e. 1969 Stonewall Rebellion → Gay Liberation Front
      f. 1972 Nixon resigns
      g. 1981 AIDS is discovered
      h. 1990 ADA becomes law
   3. Summary: What is going on here?
      - Resistance to authority, militarism, and conventional practices
      - Push for rights for excluded groups
Lecture 7: Humanistic Critique of Sports

B. The "New Games" movement- 1966. This has most direct ties to the ferment of the 60's

1. Several contradictory movements, although all had a focus on participation
   - a. Stewart Brand (1966) concerned that Vietnam war was too distant and abstract
      - Wanted “peaceniks” to recognize aggressiveness and competitiveness in selves so as to be able to combat it
      - Developed “slaughter” – intentionally offensive name for a game in which people were “killed” by being pushed off a mat
   - b. George Leonard came at it out of not liking competition – wanted creative forms of play
   - c. Pat Farrington wanted games that develop trust and cooperation – back to “play days?”

   - Earthball
   - New frisbee game
   - Infinity volleyball
Lecture 7: Humanistic Critique of Sports

3. Later development – through parks and recreation programs. "We had always felt that it just wasn’t right for only five people out of a class of 100 to be able to play ‘on the team’.”
   - New games were played in Oakland /Hayward parks
   - Institutionalized as the New Games Foundation.
   - No references to it after 1981

   - Consults with management teams
   - Related to the programs where people go out in the woods and do trust exercises

C. The Paralympic Games. Recognized by the IOC – “part and parcel of the Olympic Games.” Usually held in same venues right after the Olympics
   - 1. First held in 1960 in Rome. 400 athletes/23 countries
   - 2. In Atlanta in 1996, games started 10 days after end of Olympics. There were 3500 athletes (and staff) from 104 countries.
   - 3. “In Athens 2004, a record number of 136 countries participated at the Paralympics, making this the largest Games in Paralympic history.” (Website)
   - 4. Claim to be “the second largest sporting event in the world” Aren’t, as we shall see later.
Lecture 7: Humanistic Critique of Sports

5. “Paralympic” does not refer to paralysis but rather means “next to” or “parallel”
6. Purpose (see website)
7. Qualifications – must belong to USOC/USPC affiliated disabled sports organization. Qualify through trials sanctioned for their disability group.
8. Founded well before the movement for access by the disabled, which led to the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.

D. Special Olympics – What do you know about their origins?
1. Began in 1968 when Eunice Shriver organized the first International Special Olympic Games in Soldier Field, Chicago
   - Earlier in the 60's she started a day camp for people with developmental disabilities
   - Saw that they were far more capable in sports and physical activities than people had thought
2. Only organization authorized by IOC to use the word “Olympic” except themselves [more on this later] Headquarters in D.C.
3. Accredited programs in all 50 states + territories and 141+ other countries
4. Patterned after Olympic games – hold 15,000+ meets, games, tournaments in 22 official summer and winter sports each year.
5. Eligibility - Age 8 or older, certified as having “cognitive delays.” Put on age-similar teams with comparable abilities giving every athlete a reasonable chance to win.
Projected Special Olympics Growth to 2005

Athlete Count

2000 2002 2003 2004 2005

Africa
Asia Pacific
East Asia
Europe/Eurasia
Latin America
Middle East/North Africa
North America
Lecture 7: Humanistic Critique of Sports

- 6. Over 500,000 volunteers run local programs
- 8. Benefits

VIDEOS: Brave in the Attempt, Special Olympics Ice Skaters

E. Ultimate Frisbee – What do you know about it?
- 1. Origin In 1967 at Columbia High School in Maplewood, NJ
   - Joel Silver proposes an official frisbee team for the school
     - Had played “frisbee football” at a camp that summer
     - Was a non-jock, academic, nerdy kid; idea was to have a sport they could play
     - Started as a lark, an “anti-establishment, countercultural game”
   - Original game allowed running with the disk, line of scrimmage, downs, officials. No provision for what is now called “the spirit of the game” but a foul was “any action sufficient to arouse the ire of your opponent”. Turned into a more soccer-like game
- 2. Now played on a 70 X 40 field with 25 yard end zones, 7 players per side (this is flexible). Coverage man-to-man. Scoring by pass to end zone.
Lecture 7: Humanistic Critique of Sports

3. “Spirit of the game – ultimate stresses sportsmanship and fair play. Competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of respect between players, adherence to the rules, and the basic joy of play.”
   - Self-refereeing of fouls
   - If person who is accused of fouling disagrees, the play is done over

F. The Gay Games – origins in attempts to counteract the competitive focus and/or elitism/exclusiveness of current institutions of sport
   - 1. History - SF Arts and Athletics founded in San Francisco in 1981
      - Dr. Tom Waddell - 1968 Olympic decathlete wanted to produce first “Gay Olympic Games”
      - Purpose and philosophy
   - 2. USOC got temporary restraining order barring use of the name. AFAA removed “Olympic”. Has been Gay Games ever since. Why did they object? Discussion. Appealed.
   - 3. Later history
      - Gay Games I and II were held in San Francisco.
        - I - 1982 - 1350 athletes in 11 sports. Budget $125,000
        - II - 1986 - 3500 athletes in 17 sports
      - Case finally decided at Supreme Court, June 1987, 5 to 4. Lower court decision barring use of “Olympic” stood.
Lecture 7: Humanistic Critique of Sports

- Seattle, July 1989, international group met and organization became the Federation of Gay Games.
- Gay Games III - held in Vancouver, B.C. 1990. 7500 athletes in 23 sports. Budget of $2.1 million
- Gay Games IV held in New York, but only after battles with U.S. immigration about admitting people with AIDS.
  - Shalala (HHS Secretary) had to register games as a “designated event”
  - March 1994 Janed Reno signed blanket order allowing contestants to enter without special visas
  - 11,000 participants from 45 countries, budget of $7 million
- Gay Games V held in Amsterdam. 1998 14,715 participants. 42% women
- 4. Gay Games VI at Aussie Stadium 2-9 November 2002,
  - Used many venues from the 2000 Summer Olympic Games.
  - More than 11,000 athletes from more than 70 countries
  - What does this say about paralympics being second largest?