

The Role Of Sports Newspapers In Shaping Sports Public Opinion (An Analytical Study Of El Heddaf International Newspaper)

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Abstract:

Through this research, we addressed the role of sports newspapers in shaping sports public opinion, given the status of sports media and its ability to influence the audience's convictions and, in many cases, change their opinions and attitudes. The topic was approached analytically, relying on a content analysis of El Heddaf International newspaper in terms of how it employs journalistic genres: news, report, interview, reportage, portrait, report, column, and analytical article, and in terms of its ability to use all these genres in a balanced manner, considering that this contributes effectively to its capacity to create sound orientations and form opinions among sports readers that encourage adherence to the noble values of sport and promote society as a whole. We also sought to shed light on the topics on which El Heddaf International focuses during its coverage and publication, as well as the topics that did not receive attention and were not addressed.

Keywords: sports newspapers, shaping public opinion, El Heddaf International newspaper, analytical study.

INTRODUCTION:

Written sports journalism has come to attach great importance to the sports reader and to what they seek to find when exposed to what is published about the sports field, given the rapid and diverse developments experienced by the latter, which require comprehensive and varied media coverage. The reader no longer contents themselves with what

newspapers used to publish in the past in terms of simple news and mere transmission of information; rather, they aspire to the satisfaction of their expectations and opinions regarding various sports issues. In response to these mass needs and desires, the attention of journalists and editors has been directed toward the use of what are known as journalistic genres during the process of journalistic editing, with the aim of satisfying the reader and follower of sports newspapers on the one hand, and, on the other hand, attempting to form sound opinions and direct them toward the noble values for which sport was established.

First:

1. Study Questions:

- What are the journalistic genres most frequently employed by El Heddaf International newspaper in its treatment of the sports topics it publishes?
- What is the space allocated to informational journalistic genres within the pages of El Heddaf International newspaper?
- What is the space allocated to cognitive journalistic genres within the pages of El Heddaf International newspaper?
- What is the space allocated to intellectual journalistic genres within the pages of El Heddaf International newspaper?
- Does El Heddaf newspaper address sports topics and issues that contribute to shaping sports public opinion?

2. Objectives of the Study:

Our study aimed to:

- Shed light on El Heddaf International newspaper and whether it employs various journalistic genres, including opinion genres, in its journalistic treatment.
- Determine whether what El Heddaf International newspaper publishes works to shape the opinions of the sports reader.

3. Methodology of the Study:

Our study is analytical, relying on content analysis of media material for the purpose of highlighting what El Heddaf International newspaper offers to its audience, by analyzing its editorial line through tracking the journalistic genres used by El Heddaf International newspaper over a period of six months. The analysis of the journalistic genres used by this newspaper (news, report, interview, reportage, column, analytical article, etc.) and their classification into categories according to the genre to which they belong allows for identifying the journalistic genres most frequently employed by El Heddaf International newspaper and determining whether they function to shape the opinions of the sports reader.

4. Written Sports Journalism

Definition of Written Sports Journalism:

Written sports media is defined as the oldest form of media that informs people about ongoing sports events and games. Journalism is also a medium concerned with bringing news about upcoming events; that is, it builds a fan base even before the date of the competition or the event (Lever, J., & Wheeler, S. 1993).

5. Types of Written Sports Media:

Lamprecht and Stamm distinguish three categories of print media that address sports topics: (Lamprecht, M., & Stamm, H. 2002, p148–149)

- Sports pages in a daily newspaper.
- Sports newspapers and sports magazines (general topics or specialized in specific types of sports).
- Periodicals issued by sports clubs and associations.

6. El Heddaf International Newspaper:

El Heddaf is a newspaper concerned with publishing sports topics and issues and everything that takes place in the sports arena in terms of events. El Heddaf Media Institution was founded on the first of November in the year 1998, where it achieved wide popularity among Algerians and occupied the leading position among sports newspapers in Algeria. Since the year 2001, it has annually presented the award for Best Algerian Player, and it has also been awarding the Best Arab Player prize since the year 2007. Two media supplements are issued by El Heddaf institution: the French-language daily "Le Buteur" and the daily "El Heddaf International" since the year 2009. It was initially published twice a week, then it became a daily publication except on Fridays.

7. Attitudes, Opinions, and the Sports Reader

• Definition of Attitude:

Insert here the content of the first subheading, insert here the content of the first subheading. It is a tendency or inclination learned by the individual from their social environment and used to evaluate things in a distinctive and consistent manner, as well as a mental state that affects the individual and makes them ready to engage in a certain behavior toward a specific object or an event that arouses their interest (Abdelhadi Al-Jawhar, 1998, pp. 230–231).

• Definition of Opinion:

Public opinion is a general expression by a large group of individuals of their views regarding a specific situation, either spontaneously or based on a particular invitation directed to them, expressing support or opposition to a specific issue, a particular person, or a proposal of broad importance (Allport, F., 1973, p. 23).

• The Sports Reader:

The reader: "the person who reads the newspaper or at least browses it quickly" (Sami Tabbah, 2004, p. 63). The sports reader in this study refers to every follower or browser of what is published by El Heddaf International newspaper.

8. Journalistic Genres That Contribute to Shaping the Opinions of the Sports Reader

The use of a single newspaper for a range of journalistic genres reflects the diversity of reader needs. These journalistic genres create a moral contract between the journalist and the reader and structure their expectations, allowing those readers who tend to read news to go directly to informational genres, while others turn to cognitive or even intellectual genres (Errami, A., 2016).

The most important genres that play a role in shaping the opinions of the sports reader are:

- Informational journalistic genres: news / report / interview.
- Cognitive journalistic genres: investigation / reportage / portrait.
- Intellectual journalistic genres: analytical article / column / commentary.

Second:

1. Population and Sample of the Study:

The population of the analytical study consists of the issues published by a specialized sports newspaper, El Heddaf International, which is one of the major sports newspapers regularly issued in Algeria, with wide circulation and distinguished by its electronic version. The population of the study comprises the issues published by El Heddaf International daily over a six-month period (between 1 July 2019 and 31 December 2019).

The sample of the study was selected using the systematic random sampling method, employing the industrial week because it gives equal opportunities for all publication days to be represented in the sample (Abdelhamid, 1983, p. 101). In this method, the issue

corresponding to the first day of the first week, the second day of the second week, and so on, are selected until the sample size is complete (Tamar, 2007, pp. 32–33).

The sample size was determined as 6 issues from El Heddaf International, as shown in the following tables:

Table 1: Illustrates the method of selecting the sample of newspaper issues from El Heddaf International during the period between 1 July 2019 and 31 December 2019.

Months | Weeks | Days

Months	Weeks	Days					
		Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
July	First	×					
August	Second		×				
September	Third			×			
October	Fourth				×		
November	First					×	
December	Second						×

Table 2: Sampled Issues and Their Publication Dates

Sample	Issue No.	Publication Date
1	2930	06/07/2019
2	2958	04/08/2019
3	2300	16/09/2019
4	2355	22/10/2019
5	2371	06/11/2019
6	2407	12/12/2019

2. Data Collection Tools:

Content Analysis Tool:

Researcher **Nawal Mohamed Omar** defined content analysis of media and communication materials as the deconstruction of the content produced by those responsible for written, audio, and visual mass media into material components, allowing the identification of the symbols and various forms used to express the values and ideas intended to be conveyed to the other party in the communication process (Nawal Mohamed Omar, 1986, p. 107).

Third: Presentation and Analysis of Results

Presentation of Results:

Table 3: Shows the space allocated to journalistic genres in El Heddaf newspaper compared to the studied space.

Space Allocated to Journalistic Genres	79,102.94 cm²	43.89%
Studied Space	180,216 cm ²	100%

Table 3 indicates that the space allocated to journalistic genres reached 79,102.94 cm², equivalent to 65 pages, representing 48.54% of the total studied space. The sample consisted of 6 issues of El Heddaf International, totaling 144 pages (with each issue

comprising 24 pages). The total sample area was estimated at 171,216 cm², considering that the area of a single page is 1,189 cm².

Table 4: Frequencies and Space of Sports Journalistic Material by Genre in Each Issue

Issue No.	Publication Date	Frequencies	Space (cm ²)
2930	06/07/2019	94	16,054.82
2958	04/08/2019	107	12,501.79
2300	16/09/2019	120	16,374.86
2355	22/10/2019	109	13,975.89
2371	06/11/2019	101	12,875.76
2407	12/12/2019	115	9,965.89
Total		646	81,749.01

Table 5: Ranking of Journalistic Genres Used in Covering Sports Media Material by Frequency

Genre	Frequency	%	Allocated Space (cm ²)
News	420	66.56	34,611.61
Report	170	26.49	32,936.89
Interview	22	3.49	6,158.33
Commentary	7	1.11	1,950.49
Analytical Article	4	0.63	670.25
Portrait	5	0.79	3,860.08
Reportage	3	0.47	2,926.23
Investigation	/	/	/
Column	/	/	/
Total	631	100	83,113.88

The table above indicates that the use of journalistic genres in covering various articles occupied a space of 83,113.88 cm² of the total studied space of El Heddaf International, estimated at 171,216 cm², representing 48.54%. This shows that the utilization of journalistic genres is relatively low compared to the total space.

Regarding the Use of Each Genre and Its Allocated Space

Table 6: Shows the frequency of use of the news genre and the space allocated to it across 6 issues.

Issue No.	Frequency of News	Allocated Space for News (cm ²)
2930	68	7,095.39
2958	76	6,290.44
2300	74	7,830.95
2355	68	4,973.83
2371	60	4,001.63
2407	74	4,419.37
Total	420	34,611.61

News: It ranks first with a frequency of 420 times, representing 67.97% of all other journalistic genres. The newspaper allocated a space of 34,611.61 cm² to cover its journalistic material in the news format across the 6 issues.

Table 7: Shows the frequency of use of the report genre and the space allocated to it across 6 issues.

Issue No.	Frequency of Report	Allocated Space for Report (cm ²)
2930	22	3,791.04
2958	17	3,529.80
2300	33	6,230.43
2355	36	7,644.95
2371	39	8,201.01
2407	23	3,539.66
Total	170	32,936.89

Report: The report ranks second in terms of frequency and allocated space, with this genre used 170 times, as shown in Table 5, representing 25.12% compared to other genres. This type, which is known for exploring details more than news, is defined as a sports journalistic report that presents facts in a detailed and comprehensive manner, covering the event from all aspects without including the journalist's personal opinions.

Table 8: Shows the frequency of use of the interview genre and the space allocated to it across 6 issues.

Issue No.	Frequency of Interview	Allocated Space for Interview (cm ²)
2930	5	1,205.51
2958	2	1,292.24
2300	5	793.65
2355	5	1,301.73
2371	1	799.23
2407	4	765.97
Total	22	6,158.33

Interview: This genre ranks third, with a frequency of 22 times across the 6 issues out of a total of 631 repetitions, representing 3.77% of all journalistic genres used by El Heddaf International. It was allocated a space of 6,158.33 cm², which represents 7.41% of the total studied space, as shown in the table above.

Table 9: Shows the frequency of use of the commentary genre and the space allocated to it across 6 issues.

Issue No.	Frequency of Commentary	Allocated Space for Commentary (cm ²)
2843	1	226.79
2888	3	1,169.15
2915	/	/
2951	/	/
2964	/	/
2992	3	554.55
Total	7	1,950.49

Commentary: This genre ranks fourth, used 7 times by the journalists of El Heddaf International, representing only 1.10% of all other journalistic genres. The allocated space was 1,950.49 cm², representing 2.35% of the space allocated to journalistic genres across the 6 issues. It was absent in 3 of the issues consecutively.

Analytical Article: This genre ranked fifth, used 4 times out of 637 journalistic materials processed in various genres, representing 0.78% and occupying 670.25 cm² of the 83,113.88 cm² allocated for covering topics, equivalent to 0.81%. The analytical article had a

consistent placement under the fixed title “Dhaba Horra” (Free Kick) on page 2, the first page after the headlines, with each instance occupying approximately 96–155 cm², except for its absence in one issue.

Portrait: This genre also ranked fifth, sharing the position with the analytical article in terms of frequency, used 5 times by El Heddaf across the 6 issues, representing 0.78% of all journalistic genres analyzed in 144 pages, with a total space of 3,860.08 cm², equivalent to approximately 3.25 pages, representing 4.61% usage. Its higher space allocation compared to the analytical article is due to its structure and specific requirements, appearing once per issue except for one issue where it was absent.

Reportage: Following the portrait, reportage ranked last, used 3 times across 144 pages, representing 0.47% of usage. The space allocated was 2,926.23 cm², approximately 3.52% of the space allocated to other journalistic genres. This genre appeared in 3 issues and was absent in the remaining 3 issues.

Column and Investigation: Both of these genres were completely absent in the study sample over the six-month period. The column is considered one of the most important genres capable of shaping attitudes and opinions, yet it was not used even once. Similarly, the investigative report, which usually addresses issues of corruption and misconduct in the sports field, was not found in any of the analyzed issues of El Heddaf International during the studied period.

Results – Table 10: Shows some sports topics and issues addressed by El Heddaf International

Related Topics/Issues	Journalistic Genres Used in Coverage	Total
	News	Report
Refereeing	1	/
Fans and Supporters	5	1
National Team	43	25
Women's Sports	/	/
Sportsmanship	/	/
Addressing Violence in Stadiums	1	/
Addressing Sports Corruption	/	1
Racism Against African Players	/	1
Total	50	28

Observations:

- **Topics related to the National Team:** Most of these topics consisted of news and reports, with a total absence of other journalistic genres such as investigation, analytical article, and column. The commentary genre was used only once, related to a match against Benin.
- **Topics related to refereeing and fans/supporters:** The space allocated for these topics was very limited, with very few occurrences as shown in Table 10: 2 for refereeing and 7 for fans/supporters.
- **Topics addressing violence in stadiums, sports corruption, and racism against players:** Across the studied space of 144 pages, each of these topics appeared only once:
 - Violence in stadiums through a single news item.
 - Sports corruption through a single report.
 - Racism against African players through a single report (published on page 2 of issue 2843). The space allocated to such topics was extremely limited, almost negligible, representing only 0.24% of the 6 analyzed issues, both in form and content.

- **Topics related to women's sports and promotion of sportsmanship:** These topics were completely absent. No coverage or articles promoting sportsmanship were found within the studied space of 171,216 cm². This indicates that El Heddaf International does not prioritize these values in its coverage for its readership.

Interpretation and Discussion of Results:

The results of **Table 4** indicate that the space allocated to articles addressing sports topics, across all journalistic genres, did not exceed 48.54% of the total newspaper space. This is a very limited proportion for a newspaper specialized in sports, which can be explained by the large space dedicated to advertisements and the use of large images (posters) of players and sports celebrities, where El Heddaf International often allocates an entire page per issue (out of 24 pages).

The results of **Table 5** revealed differences in the frequency of use of journalistic genres in covering sports media material:

- **News:** Ranked first with 433 occurrences, representing 67.97% of all other genres. 99.28% of the news items concerned football topics, primarily focusing on players, then clubs, followed by coaches, and national team news.
- **Report:** Ranked second with 160 occurrences, representing 25.12% of all genres. Reports mainly addressed football topics mentioned above (95.77%) except for one report covering racism against African players in European clubs. This genre is more detailed than news, presenting facts comprehensively without including the journalist's personal opinion. It is described as "the objective narrative of the event" (Liebler, C.M & Bendix, J., 1996, p. 98).
- **Interview:** Ranked third with 24 interviews, representing 3.77%, all conducted with football players and coaches. These were exclusively news-oriented interviews, aiming to gather information about a sports event or ongoing championship (Farouk Abu Zeid, 1990).
- **Commentary:** Ranked fourth with 7 occurrences (1.10%), distributed across six commentaries on European leagues and local matches (Mobilis Professional Division One), with one commentary on a national team match against Benin. This genre presents the journalist's personal viewpoint, including line-ups, results, and highlights of the match.
- **Analytical Article and Portrait:** Both ranked fifth with 5 occurrences each (0.78%). Analytical articles focused on football topics, including three topics about club news and two analyzing match results. Portraits appeared once per issue (absent in one issue), focusing on football players and coaches. The portrait genre highlights a person's characteristics: biography, activities, statements, lifestyle, and physical appearance (Lagardette, M., 2000).
- **Reportage:** Ranked seventh with 3 occurrences (0.47%), covering football-related issues. Reportage allows the journalist to creatively immerse the reader in the event: "it makes others live the situation or describes a state where the style is as important as the content" (Yves Agnès, 1979, p. 35).
- **Column and Investigative Report:** Both genres were completely absent across the six-month analyzed period. Columns are highly personalized commentary by a journalist with professional recognition (Adib Khaddour, 1986, p. 36). Investigative reports are crucial due to their focus on issues that engage sports public opinion, such as corruption, questionable conduct of prominent figures, illegal advantages, or mismanagement in sports clubs. However, no examples were found in the analyzed sample.

In summary, the analysis shows a strong dominance of news and reports, while genres capable of deeper analysis, opinion formation, and critical investigation (columns and investigative reports) were either minimally used or absent, reflecting the newspaper's editorial priorities.

Interpretation and Conclusions:

Based on these data, it can be concluded that there is a significant disparity in the use of journalistic genres by El Heddaf International. The newspaper's heavy reliance on certain genres while neglecting others creates an imbalance in its capacity to shape the opinions of the sports readership.

- The top three genres (news, report, and interview) account for over 96% of usage, indicating a strong focus on the news-oriented approach, as these genres belong to the news category. This focus can be explained by the newspaper's aim to satisfy readers seeking immediate information about ongoing sports events. Additionally, this aligns with the newspaper's profit-oriented strategy, which prioritizes speed and low-cost production. These genres are easier to produce in terms of information gathering and editing, with news being the simplest. This is reflected in the fact that news alone accounted for 67.97% of the nine analyzed genres.

- The absence of certain genres, such as the column and investigative report, which are intellectual genres that satisfy analytical reader expectations, is notable. These genres require substantial material and human resources, as they demand experienced journalists with a high level of expertise in sports reporting, as well as more time for fieldwork and production than news genres.

- Results from **Table 10** show:

- National team topics dominated coverage at 85.16%.
- Fans and supporters accounted for 8.64%, and refereeing issues for 2.47%.
- Issues such as stadium violence, sports corruption, and racism against players were addressed only once each, occupying a very limited space (1.23%).
- Topics promoting sportsmanship and women's sports were completely absent.

- Coverage of the national team included 43 news items, 25 reports, and 1 commentary about the Algeria vs. Benin match. Football dominates the newspaper's priorities, reflecting its popularity among Algerians and the media institution's goal to reach and satisfy the largest possible audience, primarily for profit purposes. However, the marginalization of other sports represents a shortfall for readers interested in other team sports (e.g., handball) or individual sports (e.g., swimming, athletics, weightlifting). This limitation makes it difficult to meet all audience needs and to shape opinions and attitudes across all readership segments.

- In summary, the topics that were given significant space were predominantly news-oriented (96%), while intellectual genres such as columns and investigative reports were almost entirely absent. Reportage and analytical articles were minimally used relative to the sample size.

- The newspaper's focus on news and genres satisfying immediate information needs deprives audiences seeking analytical content. The lack of columns, investigative reports, and limited use of reportage and analytical articles prevents readers from achieving cognitive and analytical satisfaction. These genres are important for enhancing the readership's understanding of sports events with positive orientations, contributing to the development of a highly informed and culturally sophisticated audience, which in turn raises sports awareness and cultural literacy across society.

- Marginalized topics, such as stadium violence and promoting sportsmanship, reveal the newspaper's neglect of its educational and ethical role in sports media. Although 99% of the content was dedicated to football, which dominates the field, these socially and ethically significant issues received minimal attention from journalists.

In conclusion, El Heddaf International exhibits a clear **news bias**, prioritizing rapid, easily produced content for profit, while neglecting genres and topics that could provide deeper

analytical, educational, and ethical value to the sports readership. This imbalance limits its ability to shape well-rounded opinions and instill broader sports values among its audience. Based on these data, we can conclude that there is a considerable disparity in the degree of use of journalistic genres by El Heddaf International. Its reliance on certain genres while neglecting others creates an imbalance in its capacity to shape the opinions of the sports readership. Considering the top three genres (news, report, and interview) whose combined usage exceeded 96%, we infer that El Heddaf International emphasizes the news-oriented approach, as these genres fall within the category of news journalism.

This can be attributed to the newspaper's effort to satisfy the segment of its audience seeking immediate and up-to-date information about ongoing sports events. It may also be linked to the newspaper's pursuit of profit, which requires speed of production and minimal cost. Using these genres facilitates this process due to their relative simplicity in terms of information gathering and editorial work, compared to other genres. Among them, news is the simplest, which is reflected in the fact that the newspaper allocated 67.97% of coverage to it among nine (9) genres.

As for the absence of certain journalistic genres, such as the column and the investigative report, which were completely missing over six issues, these are considered among the most important intellectual genres that fulfill analytical reader expectations. They rely on journalists with high expertise and experience in analyzing and discussing events. This absence can be explained by the fact that these genres require substantial material and human resources, due to their specificity, which demands production by professional and experienced journalists in the sports field. Additionally, these genres require more time for preparation and fieldwork compared to news genres, as they often involve working outside the newsroom.

Results from **Table 10**, which addresses certain sports topics and issues covered by El Heddaf International, revealed the following:

- Topics related to the national team accounted for 85.16% of coverage.
- Topics related to fans and supporters accounted for 8.64%, while topics concerning refereeing issues represented 2.47%.
- Topics addressing stadium violence, sports corruption, and racism against players were covered only once each, occupying a very limited space (1.23%).
- There was a complete absence of topics promoting sportsmanship, as well as any topics related to women's sports, as previously highlighted in the results section.

Coverage of the national team included 43 news items, 25 reports, and one commentary regarding a match between the Algerian national team and Benin. El Heddaf International prioritizes football news, which is natural given its status as the most popular sport among Algerians. The media institution's goal is to reach the largest possible audience and satisfy them by publishing relevant and engaging news, primarily for profit purposes. However, the marginalization of other sports constitutes a shortcoming for segments of the audience interested in other team sports, such as handball, or individual sports, such as swimming, athletics, and weightlifting. Failing to meet the informational needs of all audience segments makes it impossible to guide opinions and shape attitudes across the entire readership.

From these results, we deduce that the topics receiving substantial coverage in El Heddaf International were predominantly news-oriented (96%), with an almost complete absence of intellectual genres such as the column and investigative report, and minimal use of reportage and analytical articles relative to the sample studied.

Focusing on news-oriented genres that satisfy immediate informational needs deprives audiences seeking analytical content. The absence of columns and investigative reports, coupled with the limited use of reportage and analytical articles, prevents readers from achieving cognitive satisfaction. This particularly affects readers seeking in-depth analytical

content authored by expert sports journalists, which is essential for raising the audience's level of understanding, analyzing sports events with positive orientations, and enlightening the sports public. This, in turn, contributes to creating a highly informed and culturally sophisticated readership, positively impacting all segments of society and elevating sports awareness and literacy.

Regarding marginalized topics, such as stadium violence and promoting sportsmanship as a societal value, this reflects the newspaper's shortcoming in addressing an important educational dimension, which ideally should be achieved through collaboration between sports and media. Although 99% of the topics were dedicated to football, which dominates the field with numerous events requiring coverage, these socially and ethically significant issues received minimal attention from journalists.

Key Findings:

- There is a lack of educational and guiding topics, which are among the primary responsibilities of sports media, such as addressing stadium violence, fan fanaticism, and analyzing developments in the sports arena. This absence has led to reader dissatisfaction regarding these issues.
- The lack of diversity in the coverage of topics by the written sports press indicates that it fails to fulfill its role in guiding the public and shaping sports-related opinions on ethical issues, such as promoting sportsmanship and reinforcing these values within society.
- The limited content variety also resulted in the neglect of topics related to women's sports, reflecting a failure of sports media to fulfill its responsibility in raising awareness among women about the importance of participating in sports activities.

Suggestions:

- El Heddaf International should utilize all journalistic genres. Combining simple news and brief reports with investigative pieces, feature reports, and dedicated analytical articles would ensure diversity and balance in both form and content, enhancing the newspaper's capacity to inform and engage readers.
- Sports media should strive to address the needs of all segments of society by diversifying coverage of different sports issues. This contributes to raising awareness and fostering well-informed opinions regarding the noble values of sports.
- Sports topics should be handled by competent and experienced journalists with the ability to analyze sensitive issues thoroughly, helping to eliminate harmful practices in the sports scene and facilitating the adoption of healthy behaviors among audiences.
- Cultivating positive attitudes and informed convictions through sports media ultimately reflects on the awareness of sports audiences, who are likely to share these convictions with their social circles, thereby spreading them across society. This represents the highest goal of both sports and media.

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