

Sport and the Media

A Work in groups and discuss these questions:

- Which newspapers do you read regularly?
- Which English-language newspapers have you read? What were they like?
- What current affairs programmes do you watch or listen to?
- Which Czech newspaper would you recommend if you were asked? Give your reasons.

B Match these words and phrases to their synonyms below:

*article circulation editorial issue magazines newsreader
the papers reporter reviewer*

critic the dailies journalist leading article monthlies&weeklies
newscaster number number of copies sold report

C Here are some typical newspaper headlines. Rewrite them as full sentences.

1. Ban on smoking in public places
2. Seat belts to be worn in rear seats
3. 70 mph speed limit to be lifted
4. 1000s forced to flee after quake
5. 'Non-swimmers on the up' says sports minister

D

The Creative Act of Watching Television

Sport, for the television executive, is a way of ensuring audience ratings stay healthy and of keeping the advertisers' money rolling in. From the point of view of the consumer, televised sports mean something different: it is a form of entertainment that allows the fan to satisfy personal desires and even reach a level of self-actualisation. Mark Gottdiener argues that, far from being passive consumers conditioned by advertising, television viewers are engaged in "the creative act of consumption".

Now, let's turn to the consumers. For years, TV fans were led to believe that they received televised sports for free. In fact, they have always had to pay one way or another, usually by a few more pennies on, for example, the retail price of a bar of soap, the manufacturers of which advertise their products in the breaks of sports programmes. The cost of buying broadcasting rights is built into the price the customer pays. But, they surely get something in return.

Sport in the raw is insufficient for the TV viewer: s/he wants it packaged and presented, just like any other commodity. In sports, the action does not speak for itself: it needs the direction and narration that produce drama. If you disagree, try hitting the mute button on your remote control next time you watch sports and see how long you can take it.

There is now a mature second generation of people, the kind of people who prefer waiting for videos instead of going to the movies and playing computer games at home instead of playing ball in the park. Attendance at sports events must seem pretty one-dimensional to them. 'Where are the captions and statistics?' 'I missed that piece of action. How about a replay?'

Expectations and perceptions of sports have changed, as have patterns of viewing. Television has gently encouraged us to *read* sports differently: we may be watching the same piece of action as our grandparents, but we will not necessarily interpret it in the same way. Television's facilities for replays allow us to relax our concentration. Missing a goal or

a homer is not a disaster when you can see it reviewed again from different points. This, plus the comments, summaries and statistics encourages analysis.

Maybe we generalize too much: many viewers are active, engaged and passionate. Yet, there are those who value the social dimensions of watching sports, those who use it as emotional blow-out and those who just use sports viewing to kill time. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the amount of critical intellectual work that gets done when watching televised sports.

(Adapted from Cashmore, E. *Making Sense of Sports*. London: Routledge, 2000)

Highlight each of these words and phrases in the passage. Then decide which of the two meanings in italics below is correct.

Self-actualisation

- a) *the need of humans to make the most of their abilities*
- b) *the need to be respected, to have self-respect and to respect others*

In the raw

- a) *in a way that does not hide the unpleasant aspects of sth.*
- b) *in cable/satellite systems*

Patterns of viewing

- a) *the way you feel about TV*
- b) *the regular way in which people watch TV*

Television's facilities

- a) *services, equipment etc. provided for broadcasting*
- b) *the people and activities involved in producing programmes*

Emotional blow-out

- a) *an occasion when you control your emotions*
- b) *sudden release of emotion*

Decide whether these statements are true or false:

1. We pay for sports on TV when buying advertised products.
2. Watching sports without commentary is unthinkable.
3. When watching sports on TV we have to concentrate on the action more.
4. Grandparents prefer reading about sports to watching sports on TV.
5. Watching sports on TV is intellectually challenging.