

**ATTITUDES OF JOURNALISTS TOWARDS
THE PRACTICES OF SPORTS COVERAGE
IN
ETHIOPIAN TELEVISION**

**BY
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Abstract

Television is a key medium for sports coverage; it allows fans to have instant access to the latest news about their favorite team, sport or event. Television journalists' practices in covering sports have received very little or no attention in academic studies in Ethiopia. For that reason, this research examines how Ethiopian Television (ETV) sports journalists give coverage of sports within the context of the tight relationship of sports and the television media.

In terms of sports reporting, some researchers in Ethiopia have tried to undertake projects especially in the working practices of some sports newspapers. However there are no studies on television sports coverage practices in Ethiopia.

Key research questions that guided the study were: How do journalists analyze their own work? How was different sports covered? How do journalists handle conflicting situations between their professional journalistic responsibilities in covering sports and the interests of major sport stakeholders? How journalists handle the issue of cheerleading? What difficulties exist for television journalists in critically reporting on sports issues?

Qualitative in depth interview method used to explore the attitudes of television sport journalists. Semi-structured in depth interviews with sports editors and reporters conducted. The researcher also used purposive sampling in the selection of informants.

It was discovered that different ethical issues still apply to the practices of ETV's sports coverage. Ethiopian television sport journalism is characterized by uncritical reports. Journalists tend to write stories, which are exposed to cheerleading and hero-worshipping. According to the group response continuous pressure and relationship with athletes, owners, officials and supporters made in depth reporting difficult for ETV sports journalists. Journalists felt the sport coverage in Ethiopian television inclined to football and it seems clear that the uneven coverage of different kinds of sports in ETV might have an effect on the development of other sports.

Television sports journalists examined a lot of the structures and practices that shaped television sports texts. According to the opinions, even though sport is vital in the media in many ways lots of things need to be corrected in the process of reporting.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ethiopian Sporting Culture

Sport provides the mass media with many diverse valuable qualities. In terms of audience, it is able to regularly deliver large number of listeners and viewers. The world of mass media has understood the significance of sports. As a result; newspapers, magazines, radio and television programs have devoted airtime and pages to sport turning what was once a recreational activity into a main product consumed by viewers, listeners, and readers.

In order to understand the significance of sport and its coverage by the media in Ethiopia today, it is necessary to look at some historical background focusing on the culture of sports and its coverage in the country. Like many other countries around the world, expression of national identity and sporting success cross paths in Ethiopia. In his presentation of sport as a social phenomenon, Endalk (2001: 57) noted, “sport is an important part of the Ethiopian people life and plays a major role in establishing the good values”.

In the second part of the 20th century, many of Ethiopia's proudest moments had come when one of its children won a major international athletics competitions. As explained by Longman (2007) Ethiopians have a significant position in the glorious history of Olympic. For instance the bare footed legendary Ethiopian, the first ever Olympic gold medalist from Africa, Abebe Bikela, gave humanity lasting images of success, humbleness and victory in Rome (1960). Abebe accomplished something that no runner had ever done before. The world as explained by Rambali (2007) will not forget the site of Abebe running bare-foot in the cobbles of Rome totally unpredicted to win the most prestigious of all running feats,

the marathon. Abebe is quoted as a key figure for black African nationalism.

Since the glorious victory of Abebe, Ethiopian Athletes over the years have lit up and made major championships like Olympics ever memorable. After the Rome and Tokyo victories of Abebe Bikela, another brave Ethiopian Mamo Wolde showed the world another Ethiopian triumph. In 1992 (EOC: 2001) Derartu Tulu became the first black African women from Ethiopia to win gold in 10,000 meter in Barcelona Olympic, four year later in Atlanta another Ethiopian Fatuma Roba became legend in the history of Olympic games after winning the Marathon for the first time from Black Africa. Moreover in 1990s as explained by Henderson (2007) a man declared by the world press as the best long distance runner that has ever lived on the planet, who is Haile Gebre Selassie emerged from Ethiopia. As the legend continues Kenenisa Bekele, Tirunesh Dibaba, Meseret Defar and many athletes seem to take Ethiopian athletics dominance in long distance running to new heights.

The triumphs of these men and women over the years have brought pride and unforgettable moments to all Ethiopians and provided the country honor and glory at global stage. Longman (2007) explained "Ethiopia as one of the world's poorest countries but richest in terms of distance running at major championships". Henderson (2007) also mentioned a fact that Ethiopia is known by the rest of the world as 'Land of Runners'.

Despite being ravaged by problems success in sports has played a pivotal role in showing the positive side of the country. According to Longman (2007) Ethiopian athletes are getting huge amount of money from prizes, bonuses and endorsements largely unimaginable in a country where the average annual income is about \$100. Ethiopia was also once principal country in African football. According to Gedamu (2001) the country is a founding member of African Football

confederation (CAF) together with Egypt, Sudan and South Africa. Football it is also central to Ethiopian life.

Generally as it explained in a publication of the Ethiopian Olympic Committee (EOC: 2001) sport plays a central part in the creation of Ethiopian sense of identity. It acknowledges that Ethiopians have a worldwide reputation for being attached with their success in Athletics. In its sports policy government of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia (1996: 5), illustrates Ethiopians have a unique and passionate attachment to sport, which often provides them with honor and glory on the global stage. Moreover, success in sport has long been taken as a symbol of national wellbeing.

According to information obtained from the Ministry of Youth and Sport (1996: 7), modern sport has a history of over half a century in this country. However, Endalk (2001: 68) concludes sporting activities at a traditional level started in the beginning of 20th century. Militaries, schools, and foreigners who resided in Ethiopia at the time contributed a lot in the modernization of sports.

Today, more than twenty modern sports are practiced in Ethiopia. Some 200 traditional sports are also believed to exist (EOC 2001: 17) in the country.

The way Ethiopians emphasize the importance of sport may have many causes. Despite poor economic standards in the last 50-60 years, Ethiopia has achieved remarkable success in prestigious Olympic and other international events. This sporting success has been one of the most significant symbols of Ethiopian progress, which has contributed directly to the evolution and maintenance of nationalist sentiment (Endalk 2001: 57). He also claims that sporting events and athletic achievements have been used widely to create general identity construction.

1.2 Ethiopian Sports and Media

In addition to the creation of world-class Ethiopian athletes and increased exposure of the sport in the media, Ethiopian sports culture has contributed to national consciousness. The national interest in sport is reflected in the level of the media coverage in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian media give extensive coverage of sporting events, especially when major victories and outstanding performances are achieved in international competitions. Information about sport is provided to the public through various newspapers; special-interest magazines and newspapers; live coverage on radio sport programs; and live television transmissions. The current government in its sports policy (Ministry of Youth and Sports; 1996: 2) has recognized the importance of sport as a means to achieve wider social, health and economic outcomes. Sport is also considered by the media as a means to consolidate a sense of national spirit. Following the international success of Ethiopian athletes, a keen interest for sports reporting has developed in domestic media circles. According to Leykun (1997: 40), sports have taken a major part in the program allocation of national radio and television throughout the history of broadcasting in Ethiopia. Regular sport news and analysis on domestic and international sporting events have been provided by radio and television for many years. Sports enthusiasts regularly enjoy the opportunity of live commentaries of sporting events.

The Ethiopian television broadcasts sports programs in three local languages. Considering the share of items in the programming of Ethiopian television as explained by Leykun (1997: 41) sport relatively quickly took up its share to the broadcast shows. Currently as mentioned by Abel Adamu (2006: 32) sport programs of Ethiopian television are the second most popular and widely attended programs among the programs of ETV.

In the present media, the discipline of sports journalism has become one of the key areas of print media practices (Lange: 2002-56). Recently coverage of sports continues to be used by newspapers as a method of publicizing events and attracting readers. As explained by Lever and Wheeler (1993: 130), sports coverage has mattered in the circulation battles among the newspapers. Similarly in Ethiopia, both the print and electronic media across the nation view sport coverage as a core component in the program sharing.

Throughout their history, state newspapers have often regarded sport as their integral component of their coverage. Many sports-only newspapers were formed following the EPRDF proclamation (proclamation 34/1992) that officially recognized freedom of expression and freedom of the press. This provided options for readers the opportunity to be on the lookout for specialist sports reports in addition to general news on print and electronic media.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Since the introduction of journalism as a vital mode of communication (Rowe; 2005:75) journalists have been confronted by constant difficulties. Issues of commercial influence and questions of independence affected journalism and journalists. Journalism as stated by Herbert (2001: 86) should be balance, fair and objective. Journalists should have also always answer ethical and professional questions by good journalism practices.

Sport, as an important subject for journalism has a news role based on immediacy and an entertainment function laid on celebrity. Therefore as explained by Rowe (2005: 126) maintaining an appropriate balance between information, entertainment and critique is a dilemma for sports journalism. Cycles of sports seasons, praising important and powerful sports personalities and other reasons made sport journalism

highly predictable. This routine on sports reporting can be broken by doing good journalism. Even though the visibility of sports across different media has increased, modern-day sports reporting faces the challenge of providing critical reporting of high quality. As explained by Shultz (2002: 29), a lot of things have to be done to secure high professional standing in reporting sports.

The growth of technology has created a fan that demands reliable access to instant information. Today's sports fans can get information about almost any sports subject from the Internet in a matter of seconds. As a result, sports coverage now drifts from former reporting style. Currently, sport reporters in any country are expected to be objective reporters, critical investigators, apologists for sports, and teams. Rowe (2004: 40) explained the proliferation of media in modern society had turned sports reporting more towards analysis and critical thinking, but a majority of the industry still relies on the old-fashioned reporting.

Campbell (2004: 216) asserts that sport journalists these days are in a difficult position to investigate critical issues. On the other hand, the development of new media forced sport reporters in the world to think differently about the way they do their jobs.

In the case of Ethiopian television sports reporting, there seems to be a high tendency to stick to the past, fact oriented reporting of sports. There seems to be a problem of in-depth reporting on sports in Ethiopia like many countries. Due to various reasons, selective coverage of sports by media personalities creates a negative influence on sports not frequently covered. The media and its sports journalists seem to have unbalanced coverage for different sports.

Although sports coverage increased its airtime in the last couple of years, television viewers who seek quality sports reports are frequently frustrated by stories filed based on play-by-play accounts. Therefore,

journalists' opinion on the practices of their sports reporting might answer some of the problems reflected in the profession.

This study mainly focuses on the critical responses of Ethiopian television sports journalists on the practices of current sports reporting.

1.4 Research Questions

- How do journalists analyze their own work?
- How do journalists handle conflicts between professional journalistic responsibilities in sports coverage and the interest of major sport stakeholders?
- How is sport reporting on television exposed to cheerleading and hero-worshipping? Does sport reporting on Ethiopian television have a tendency to be part of the promotion of pro-sports?
- In what ways might reporters and editors face problems in doing in-depth sports reports? Does the sport program on ETV have a problem to critically report sports?
- How do time, resources, and staffing level affect sports reporting on Ethiopian television?

1.5 Objective of the Study

The study has the following general and specific objectives.

a) General Objective

1. To look at the critical responses of sports journalists on the quality of Ethiopian television sports reporting
2. To evaluate the current sports journalism practices against principles of good sports journalism.

b) Specific objectives

- I. To show the state of television sports reporting in Ethiopia and to analyze the self-critical responses of television sport journalists on their works.
- II. To show how the possibilities of sports journalism are exploited (used) by television journalists in Ethiopia
- III. To identify the reasons for the variation on the coverage of different sports.

1.6. Significance of the study

- i. The study will be an academic research into a little researched area in Ethiopia.
- ii. It can contribute to theory about sports journalism in Ethiopia.
- iii. It motivates others who have an interest to conduct depth study on the area.

1.7 Definition of key Terms

- **Pro-sports** - Position taken by sport reporters to serve the promotional interests of major sport stake holders, lack of room for news that doesn't promote the sports industry. The word can be used for sport journalists who face difficulty to defer themselves to

other sports stakeholders and their relation marginalizes the news values.

- **Hero-Worshipping** - Giving emphasis for celebrity lifestyle. It represents also shallow, less analytic sport stories. Celebrity and entertainment values are overwhelming in hero-worshipping sport stories.
- **Jingoism/'me-too-ism'/** - Too much nationalism, patriotism sport journalists use of inclusive pronoun 'we' in their reports. Incapability of sport reporters for objective views.
- **Boosterism** - Lack of commitment of sport reporters for balanced and objective reporting, being too much enthusiastic to sport and being unable to criticize an own team.
- **Working Practices** - In this paper working practice refers the specified tasks and work routines of television sport journalists. It also represents the sport news production, content selection and place of objectivity of television sport journalism.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review – Sports and Media

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focuses on Ethiopian sporting culture and the relationship between sport and the mass media. Although it was briefly introduced in the previous section, the field of sports reporting will be the focus of this chapter. As previously explained, there is a harmonic association between the mass media and sport in the modern world. The mass media has had massive impact on the business of sports. Similarly, media companies and conglomerates have become profitable due to highly attractive and entertaining coverage of sports.

While sport reporting has been widely practiced in Ethiopia, there has been a little effort to study sports journalism there. Like Garrison and Salwen (2002: 33) noted in their study on Australian sports reporting, sport reporters in Ethiopia have also been suffering a lot of criticisms from sport fans including “cheerleading” and leniency to “report in-depth issues”. Furthermore, many continue to criticize the sports media for lacking professional ethics and lack of professional skills.

Even though there are problems surrounding sports reporting, there are also evidences that show the profession of television sports coverage has been changing recently and is taken more seriously. The succeeding sections of this chapter provide overviews on the connection between sports and media and their achievement.

After the Second World War sport has increased its place in the media. All media like television, radio, newspapers and Internet use it as a main component to win interests from readers, viewers and listeners.

Similarly sports has also benefited from the big attention given from the media. On the other hand ethical issues like "cheerleading", hero-worshipping start to become obstacles in the increasing interest of sports coverage. The upcoming sections come across with the above kinds of issues.

2.2 Sport and Media

Sport and media have always enjoyed a symbiotic relationship. Sport forms an important part of the current media landscape and similarly the media plays a key role in transforming, producing, and amplifying sports in the modern world. Lange (2002: 22) and Shultz (2002: 28) stress the media plays an essential role in the process of reaching sport into every corner of the world, no matter how distant the territory in question.

Since the end of Second World War in 1945, sport has become an integral part of the leisure industry. It employs a large number of people in different parts of the world and also accounts for a significant portion of the Gross National Product (GDP) of many countries around the world. As Hermens (2005: 49) clearly noted, "sports are among the most widely viewed and closely followed activities in the world." The media and the sports world have created a harmonious relationship because of the fact that each contributes to the growth and development of the other. Rowe (2004: 2) reflects that sports, which have carried many tasks and multiple messages, are hardly distinguishable from the media. Sports events and programs play a central role in attracting a large number of audiences to media. Elliot (1994: 15) adds, the media gets valuable benefits from this mutual relationship. Highly rated, profitable, and year-round available sports programs are the responses from the sports world to the media. In addition, broadcasters collect major revenue from sports. Campbell (2004: 214) claims that global sporting events generate

vast number of audiences and increase the revenue of the media industry.

As a result of the media, a new economic direction is created for sports. Elliot (1994: 34) illustrates the media as a gatherer and submitter of information on the sports area. The media brings the fans to the sports. On the upside, it also earns a lot of money due to increased coverage. As reflected in Shultz's (2002: 39), sponsors are heading to the skyrocketed business of sports thanks to media's role. According to Blain and Boyle (2002: 415), sports fans have also benefited from the symbiotic relationship. Because of its increasingly expanding presence in the mass media, sport has become the main product that is consumed by significant number of people. Furthermore, the complex relation of the media and sports helped fans to have access to live events, reports, and various kinds of productions, which pave the way for people to be selective on their own interest. Hermens (2005: 49) asserts that the increased habit of audiences to watch and read is down to extensive coverage of sports.

After reviewing the complex relation between sports and the media, scholars claim that it will be very difficult to break the deep connection between the two. Rowe (2004: 4) concludes;

It is increasingly hard to remember a time when sports and the media were not deeply entwined in a relationship of such systematic intensity that it has been characterized as a 'complex' ... notion of the media/sport production complex.

The sport/media relationship has always played a crucial role in the circulation battles among the press and competition for audiences in the electronic media. Blain and Boyle (2002: 417) share this fact by pointing out that sports win many willing and unwilling audiences for the media.

Extending the massive impact of media on the sporting world will also be pivotal in the institutionalization of sports. According to Campbell (2004: 213), organized and commercialized sport occurred in parallel with the development of organized and commercialized production in the past. Nowadays, it is very important in any country to understand the dynamics of the relationship between sports and the media. Lange (2002: 22) explained, there is an increasing recognition of the importance of the media-sports relationship. Developing the quality of sports in the media helps to meet the never-ending audience need for something new and different alongside what is familiar and known. On the other hand Rowe (2004: 11) mentioned the world of sports has been transformed into business and spectator centered technology by the massive role of mass media.

The symbiotic relationship between sport and the media is like a happy marriage with both parties becoming mutually dependent as described by Beck and Basshart (2003: 23).

2.2.1 Sports and Television

Television is one of the most influential and important innovations of the twentieth century and continues to revolutionize the world of sports. It has brought sports to almost every corner of the globe. According to Shultz (2002:23), Parente (1977: 128), the rise of cable television in the late 1970s increased options and signal delivery to millions of customers. Satellite transmission reached to places unthinkable in previous years. It linked people and places of different cultures and races providing access to information from any where in the world. This phenomenon gave the people of the world multiple options by which they can access their sports information.

Parente (1977: 127) reflects that the deep association between television and sport dates back almost to the beginning of broadcasting history. The primitive, poor presentation and format of sports changed significantly as a result of the innovation of television. According to Shultz (2002: 15) sports became a social phenomenon because of the medium. Television has also increased the value of sports and played a central role in the recent business of sports. Whannel (1992:108) and Rowe (1999:24) asserted that teams made most of their money from ticket sales before the emergence of the electronic media, especially television. Due to this fact, owners of sports teams fought so hard to keep games off television and radio. According to Shultz (2002: 28), the recently rights paid to televise sports skyrocketed and created a new economic structure for sports. As a result, most of the operating money and profit for teams started to come from television. Blain and Boyle/2002: 419/ describe this huge influence of the medium as:

Television's influence on sport goes beyond simply broadcasting events and creating individual sporting stars and teams. It has also helped to shape what we actually understand to be the nature, structure and organization of modern sport.

In recognition of the huge contribution of the medium, various sports have molded, adapted, and changed their rules to meet the desires and needs of television. This included adapting the rules of sports to fit the appeal of the home viewer. Shultz (2002: 26) indicates that owners and leagues made concessions and even rule changes to help their games fit into fast-paced electronic format. Generally, television has created a much different sense for sport than in the past. It has played a significant role in supporting, popularizing, and globalizing sports.

While television's role in the development of modern sport has increased during the years, the medium has also reaped the benefits from this relationship. Highly rated, profitable sports programs are the

benefits of television from sports (Shultz 2002:29). According to Parente (1977:132), television, like sports, profits from this mutual relationship. He adds:

Television has become dependent upon sports to fulfill many of its programming needs. The result has been an intimate relationship between two essentially dissimilar entities.

Sports events are ready-made, accessible, and in-expensive source of programs for television. In addition to that and sports attract sizable audiences. Millions around the world on television often view global sports events. This kind of coverage has helped television to become the leading medium in the context of sports. Beck and Bosshart (2003: 10) explained the tight relation between television and sports as a happy and tight marriage that benefits both.

2.2.2 Sport and the Print Media

The print media is the oldest medium regularly informing people about sports. With the increasing popularity and the growing relation between the media and sports, the sports section of newspapers has become very important.

One commonly accepted reason for the fast growing coverage of sports in the print media is the impact of sports coverage on the circulation battle of most newspapers and magazines/Lever and Wheeler 1993: 130/. To win the battle for readers, sports pages in daily papers, sports newspapers, and general or specialized-topic magazines try to provide readers with variety coverage.

The competitive coverage of sports in the print media has helped sports journalism to become a more demanding profession. Beck and Bosshart (2003: 7), Lange (2002: 56) assert that the competitions of new media have changed the significance of sports coverage in the print

media. In addition, technological transformations and the introduction of radio and television have also changed the look of sports pages in print media outputs. Coakley in Lange's work (2002: 45) described the change as a progressive change: the print media now covers more than scores and description of action. Since people could easily access scores and detail of analysis on action, print media have moved to a culture of providing stories that go beyond the action. As a result, sports has benefited from the significant coverage in the print media.

2.2.3 Sports and Radio

On the other part the added value of radio sports coverage as compared to the print media is the opportunity of live reporting. The live reporting of sports has given viewers the second best option to physical presence in competition venues. Shultz (2002: 6), Beck and Bosshart (2003: 6) describe this special contribution of radio to sports as a unique means for spectators and listeners to witness the emotional side of competitions. Live reporting on radio has a lasting impact of increasing the number of people who attend sports events. Therefore, radio enjoys a large number of listeners as a result of sports.

Even though people like Shultz (2003: 9) witness that television controls more sports programming, radio hugely helps sports in every aspect as a local and interactive medium. Even if radio has competition with television still it remains as important medium for sports news and it is still advantageous to provide results and scores of sporting events immediately (Beck & Basshart 2003: 9).

2.2.4 Sport and the Internet

Internet is another medium where a sport is widely and increasingly covered. It has contributed for the expansion of sports texts in many ways. Journalists, media organizations, sports audiences are

now days dependent on the Internet to get immediate and instant information's about sports.

Studies show that there are many sites which are currently devoted to sports.

The medium is beneficial in providing results and information's about sports activities very immediately. Internet is also influential on providing users options like pictures, photographs, and texts together on sports actions. Like television it has also an enormous a huge role in the current business of sports.

2.3 Sports Reporting

The previous topic focused on the relationship between sport and media. The symbiosis between sport and media described and discussed. The field of sports reporting now becomes the focus of this sub topic.

The role of journalists in today's media should not just only providing information using descriptive phrases. Journalists have to investigate and report. They need to handle complex stories in the field of journalism. Sport journalists in their professional practice are expected to be objective for the good of the profession.

According to Anderson (2001:4), sports reporting evolved rapidly in the years after World War I. The reporters of the 1920's wallowed in jargon, very much ornamented phraseology, and mixed figures. In Anderson's work (2001: 1), Woodward explains that play-by-play reporting and presentation of statistics characterize sports' reporting in the mid-twentieth century. However, today's sports reporting in general tries to strike a balance. Anderson (2001: 5) also tries to illustrate that current sports reporting is heading towards an approach that goes beyond bare-bond statistics.

The growth of technology in the modern global world has created a sports fan that demands access to continuous information. As a result of the proliferation of more media outlets and demanding fans, it is now becoming difficult for reporters to simply report on sports. Shultz (2002: 74) underlines that there is a greater need for sports information, which is a result of additional media outlets. This huge interest cannot be satisfied simply by the traditional way of sports reporting. A number of studies also show many writers in the sports media still feel the need for a more critical approach in reporting sports.

Rich (2003: 366-371) suggested that sports reporters do not craft and write only about games and athletes of different sports. Journalists in the current media sport should be as well versed in other fields due to sports' nature to touch every aspect of life. Writers like Fischer (1995: 11) underline that there must be a struggle to strengthen the link between journalism and sports. He noted:

To improve daily sports coverage by the media, there must be a need to tighten writing even more by continuing the war on clichés and jargon; the need to use better images; and the need to place more emphasis on coverage of local events.

Even though sports' reporting is rapidly moving away from the trends of the past, it is also currently suffering a number of criticisms. As explained by Wilstein (2002: 5) and Herbert (2001: 294), cheerleading and unwillingness to report in-depth on different issues are some of the problems in current reporting.

Damien Cox (2006: 5) wrote an article on the television reporting of sports in Canada. The quality of television sports reporting; the standards of sports writing in Canada and different journalists' opinion on were discussed. Television sports reporting according to Cox's finding ignores the basic principles of journalism, analyzing significant issues

are sacrificed in favor of endless array of scores, videotape highlights and clichés. In addition to much cheer leading and promotion of teams and athletes reflected in sports reporting in Canada.

Similarly Mason (2005: 4) conducted research on New Zealand's sports journalism. After investigating the media activities Mason made some general points about the state of sports reporting in the media. As Mason pointed out the media needs much more than cheerleading, excessive patriotism and journalistic values need to be much more effectively established. Rowe (2004: 37-40) examined the professional status and practices of sports reporting on different mediums. He noted inaccuracy, incompetence, technical weakness and ethnical failings characterize sports texts on different media. Cheerleading, jingoism, lack of depth reporting is mentioned as recent problems for quality sports reporting. Rowe (2004: 51) explains:

Sport journalists are less tempted to cut corners in the interest of the big scoop... not only because much of their work involves interpreting what is already publicly known and visible, but also because they are heavily dependent on cultivating good relationship with sports people, officials, sponsors and soon.

It has been clear that the sports industry in any country needs media coverage and the media on the other side needs a story. However, broadcasters in many countries have unlimited access to the sports world. Sports reporters many times meet with athletes due to the nature of their work. This relationship between the media and players, owners and coaches has opened a space for criticism on sports reporting. Shultz (2002: 79) asserts that this kind of relationship "can create a situation where the business relationship can become more like a friendship with its obvious ethnical considerations."

There are times when reporters did not say something critical on the sports actors as a result of their strong attachments. Herbert (2001:

294), Anderson (2005: 7) in this context write that sports reporting compelled to favor the players because of the fact that reporter's fear of verbal or physical abuse from supporters, players and other bodies. According to Shultz (2002: 180) the pressure from athletes, supporters and owners led sports reporters to be cheerleaders for so long those coaches and players have come to expect journalists to be a source of scrapbook material for them. Moreover sports reporters' closeness to the figures as part of their news beats has created bias towards the sport and its representatives, the extreme relation put sports reporting in a difficult position to investigate critical issues. Campbell (2004: 216) and Steve Wilstein from the Associated press (2002: 4) recommended sports reporting should not cheer, "rather its job must be letting the fans see and hear what is going on through honest reporting."

Writers like Fisher [1995: 11) also noted sports reporting should create detachment with athletes and teams, the reporters' promotion role need to be stopped to practice more investigative reporting on sports.

Different people explained too much nationalism, exaggerated patriotism; 'me-too-ism' has been also one of the major features of sports reporting. Local sports fans and viewers want their teams to win, this created excitement in every community and generated huge interest for local sports newspapers and broadcast outlets. This situation carries several ethical considerations. Reporters or broadcasters may not report truthfully or critically against their home team. Hermens (2005: 54-56) for example, underlined 'me-too-ism' and nationalism is a problem in Dutch sports. He added when the Holland national team plays the sports media show strong nationalist feeling, involving a suddenly totally clear sense of "we the Dutch". This trend has put a question mark on the objectivity and truth of sports reporting in the country. This phenomenon is common for different countries. Nationalism and

boosterism mentioned as problem in practicing sports reporting on different media. Mason (2003: 3) pointed out

Nationalism in the form of the inclusive pronoun “we” is an uncomfortable mix of marketing, patriotism, populist identification and ‘me-too-ism’, which infects and overwhelms the sports pages, radio and especially television.

Nationalism in sports reporting has created a tendency amongst sports reporters to slant news in favor of the home team. Rowe in Allan’s book (2005: 132) mentioned the reasons why sports reporting favor home teams. According to Rowe sports journalists are highly dependent on limited news sources, and are highly visible to tightly packed groups of local team. Lowes (2004:170) on his part added the more locally based a sports journalist in relation to covering sport, the greater are the pressures to become fan of and apologist for prominent local sports entities.

The construction of sports reporters as fan makes critical, reflective commentary difficult. Cox (2006) in his article about television sports coverage in Canada noted this is a widespread problem in the country. The fear that negative sports reporting will offend a league, a player or a team hindered journalists from critical sports reporting. Moreover sports reporters’ perception as a highly partisan spoken people for their chosen sports and teams or athletes carries a question of objectivity. As Campbell (2004: 216) noted:

Partisanship or local or national grounds may have some degree of legitimacy in terms of outlets to audience, but the role of sports reporters becomes much more problematic when a sport experiences a period of fundamental crisis or controversy.

The practitioners of sports reporting on the sports media face the challenge to cut through the hero-worship and resist the temptation to

deify the modern athlete. As explained by Shultz (2002: 83) treating life celebrities, athletes as heroes, villains have created an impact on the perception of sports reporting. Many sport journalists who gave their opinions on different studies and books also didn't deny this point. New York Herald Tribune sports editor Stanley Wood Ward quoted in Anderson's work (2003: 6).

I won't deny that heavy majority of sports reporting myself included have been and still are guilty of puffing up the people they write about. I'd rather if I could, preserve a sense of promotion, to write about them as excellent ball players, first-rate players. But I'm sure I have contributed to false values.

Wood Ward's opinion reflected the close relationship reporters enjoyed with players. The relationship allowed sports reporters to develop a special trust with the players, as a result reporters repeatedly seen when they protect the players.

Sport is central to the African way of life. The role, which sports can play in the continent's prior interests, is getting on increasing recognition. Many people in the continent have a tendency to watch and participate in sports activities. It is also a fact that young men and young women in Africa are permanent audiences to sports leagues, which have global acceptance. Television, Internet and other mediums are playing a central role in reaching sport leagues to every corner of the continent.

Following the growth of media sport has become one of the most widely viewed and closely followed activities in Africa and the other world (Hermens; 2005: 49). The coverage of sports in African media is also increased.

Even if sport has become an integral part of African media and population the field of sports journalism is one of the least researched areas in the continent. Therefore the researcher found it difficult to

include literatures on how African media cover sports, especially literature on television sports coverage.

However sports reporting in most countries, regularly confronted by a complete choice to celebrate or criticize. As a result the current challenge towards sports reporting is the challenge of providing listeners/readers/ something more than basic facts. Years ago sport reporters could rely on writing primarily about games and athletes. Today reports on the sport area need to be all rounded on other fields as sport is touching every direction. Normally sport journalists mostly witness the event they cover first hand. Due to this they have a responsibility for interpreting what they saw with different technique (Rich: 2003: 371)

There is no doubt that a large audience attends sports closely through the media so that journalists need to make their comments objectively and precisely. Mason (2005: 5) stressed, due to the pressure from a newer, younger, better-educated and increasingly fragmented audience there is a sign of change on sports reporting. The introduction and growth of electronic media has also contributed for the nature of reporting sports. This technological transformation gave the consumer thousands of options for sport and entertainment in general; it has created competitions among the media. The battle for supremacy with the viewers or readers as concluded by Shultz (2002: 52-53) showed sport reporters the way to start to “criticize, analyze, debate and put sports under the microscope of public inspection”. Lange on her unpublished thesis (2002: 38) asserted “the contemporary technological and economics of the broad cast and print media significantly contributed to an expansion in the volume of sports texts.”

Despite the problems surrounding sports reporting like considering it as less important and require less skill than other forms of journalism there is also evidence that the profession of sports

reporting has been changing and currently taken more seriously. Even if the number of studies and books like Rowe's (2004: 63) show there are changes in sports reporting many writers in the sport media like Garrison and Salwen (1998: 88-89) still feel that there needs to be a more critical and enquiring approach. They say sports reporting should interpret and illustrate, be fact oriented as the same time opinion oriented.

All in all writers suggested that it is no more for sports reporting to craft and write only about games and athletes of different sports. The struggle to strengthen the link between journalism and sport needs to continue in reporting sports. Fischer (1995: 11) in this context noted,

To improve daily sports coverage by the media there must be a need to tighten writing even more by continuing the war on clichés and jargon,

For Wilstein (2002: 5) good sports reporting on the media mean, "being original, clever, and passionate and true reporting not relaying on play-by-play descriptions." He added, it should inform, interpret and illustrate, be fact, background and opinion oriented.

Despite the continuous changes in modern day sports reporting on television and other mediums are encouraging indications, sports reporting has also suffered a number of criticisms by viewers, listeners and readers for the weakness it has experiencing

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN: METHODS AND APPROACHES

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, literature in the field of sport journalism and television reporting was explained. Sports and the media are deeply entwined in a complex relationship, both becoming mutually dependent. The media brought sports to every part of the world and it has also become dependent to fulfill many of its programming needs. As a result of the tight relationship between sports and the media and the growth of technology in the modern global world sport fans that demand continuous information increased. The media improved its coverage of sports events. However, following the development of sports journalism ethical issues rose on the area. Inaccuracy, incompetence, technical weakness and ethnical issues characterized sports texts on the media. Cheering, lack of depth reporting mentioned repeatedly as recent problems for quality sports reporting. Writers like Rowe (2005: 73) recommend that there must be an effort to tighten the relation between good journalism and sports reporting to address the recent problems.

The researcher discovered that there is lack of research dealing with television sports reporting on Africa especially in Ethiopia to include in the review. One can notice that research about the working practices of television sport coverage is almost absent in Ethiopia. So it will be the aim of this paper to show how journalists view the practices of sports reporting in Ethiopian television. The research questions, which guide this study as it was mentioned in the first chapter, are:

1. How do sport journalists analyze their own work?

2. How do ETV sports journalists handle conflicts between professional journalistic responsibilities in sports coverage and the interest of major sport stakeholders?
3. How do sports reporting in television be exposed to cheerleading and hero-worshipping? Do ETV journalists have part on the promotion of sports and do they have problems to critically report sports?
4. How do television journalists entertain different sports?
5. What is the journalists' perception to the future of television sports reporting?

This chapter will look on the methods used to answer the above research questions. In this research paper in-depth interview with Ethiopian television sport journalist used to answer the questions raised in the study.

3.2 Methodology

First and foremost, this research paper aims to make a significant contribution to the existing knowledge of television sport journalism in Ethiopia. It also has a vital value, because there is no research conducted in the field. By examining television sport journalists and their work practices in detail the researcher believes knowledge about this field increases and possibilities for further research in the area will be created.

In -depth Interviews are adopted for this study. The method would help to come out with depth of responses, which is necessary to gain a detailed understanding of the beliefs and experiences of television journalists on the practices of sports coverage in their media. Crabtree and Miller (1999: 18) explain, individual interviews often provide more depth about a topic. In addition they noted depth interview is a powerful

qualitative research tool when the focus of inquiry is narrow' (1999: 90). In this project the focus of inquiry is narrow.

The other fundamental reason why the researcher chooses this method is that qualitative methods such as unstructured or semi-structured interviews and participant observation as explained by Lange (2002: 79) allow access to the meanings of individuals in the context of their environment. This study aims at explaining the working practices of Ethiopian Television sport journalists with the help of this qualitative research method. Analysis, description, and explanation of how television journalists do their job are discussed. Unstructured or semi-structured interviewing was central in the process of conducting the research so as to understand individual meanings and definitions of Ethiopian television sports journalists.

For Silverman (2005: 93) this data collection tool (depth interview) is appropriate if the potential respondents are familiar and comfortable with the interview as a communicative performance, if the study is exploratory and the goal is to discover and create individual perceptions and narrative understanding. This research aimed to find how television sport journalists feel about working as sport journalists where they have been for many years. Journalists were asked about their practices as sport reporters, their attitudes to sports stake holders, their positions and opinions about good journalism compared with their experiences. Interview is a known communication routine among journalists as a result ETV sport journalists were comfortable and familiar with the method.

Even if the in-depth interview method attempts to explore social reality, it can never be also objective because of the informants' subjective perception of reality as explained by Gubrium and Holstein, (1997: 27). The method also reduces the comparability of the data gathered. This is a disadvantage in validity.

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 In-depth Interview

This study uses in depth interview method to give analysis of the working practices of television sports department in Ethiopia. Taking this in mind, semi-structured interviews with nine sports editors and reporters conducted in a time from May to July 2006.

The researcher used purposive sampling not random sampling in the selection of informants. For Kuzel (1999: 18) the 'validity, meaningfulness and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases'. Patton (1990) on his part suggests that qualitative researchers who 'focus in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (n=1) should select purposefully'.

Due to the sample size and the researcher's interest to create a deeper understanding on the field of television sport journalism this study chooses purposive sampling. Contacts with television sport journalists were made personally to identify the interviewees. There were not difficulties in determining the subjects due to the small number of sport journalists working on ETV sports desk.

To maximize the richness of information obtained relevant to the research questions the researcher conducted depth interviews with nine television sports journalists.

3.3.2 Informant Selection and Profile

Ethiopian television sport journalists were at different stages of their career. Nine sports journalists currently working on ETV believed by the researcher that they could give rich information on the research questions were interviewed. Some were very experienced and had worked over 25 years, while some had worked from three to nine years. Their educational background ranged from tertiary education to high

school. Six had tertiary education qualification while two finished high school. All but one was male and employed on full-time bases. The researcher had also worked as a sport journalist in Ethiopian television for the last five years.

3.3.3 Data Collection

Nine semi-structured interviews covering television sport journalism situation, views on journalists' sports reporting and recommendations for its future were conducted.

Semi-structured interview guide is developed instead of using a specific interview schedule as it occurs in structured interviews. The interview guide helped to focus on the above issues that were central to the research questions. Minichigloo mentioned in Lange's unpublished study (2002: 65) noted that the process of developing the interview guide helps researcher to guide the interview. In other words the semi-structured interview guide was developed to focus on the issues that are very important and necessary to the research questions. This process also leaves more space for flexibility than the close-ended type of question.

The content of the interview guide is based on the suggested research questions and covered the four assessments and future outlooks of editors and reporters of television sport department in Ethiopia. The data collected in the in depth interviewing method described what the informants felt, perceived and behaved on ETV's coverage of sports.

This type of interview as explained by Lange (2002: 68) should be used to obtain individuals objectives experience, because the only person who understands the social reality in which he/she lives is the person him/herself.

The aim of the conducted interview was to gain the necessary response on the working practices of television sports journalism in

Ethiopia. The interviews were conducted in a conversational style between the researcher and the participant informants focusing on the questions proposed in the study.

The interview guide forwards questions about the working practices of television sports journalism. Some questions included from the literature available on sports journalism in general and television sports reporting in particular.

Questions also developed from the needs of the study, which was to describe the working practices of television sports reporting. The notion of using unstructured interview as noted by Minichiello (Lange 2002: 90) is:

Unstructured interview is one, which provides the informant with little or no information about the research aiming to avoid biasing the informant understanding of the issues toward the researcher interests.

While conducting the interview the researcher also asked open-ended questions relying on the previous answers of the respondents. The method used for the interviews allowed the researcher to ask follow up questions within the topic instead of following a fixed order of questions.

Lange in her M.A thesis (2002: 69) collected data through in-depth interviewing using a recursive model. The research of this paper found this form of in-depth interviewing convenient and adopted it into the data collection methods. Recursive questioning defined in Lange work is the most unstructured way of conducting in-depth interviews relies on the process of conversational interaction.

All the in-depth interviews were personal interviews and the limit in length is from 35 to 65 minutes. The main part of the interview was focused on discussing the situation of television sports on Ethiopian television. How are reports produced? How are the staffing levels, editorials used in the sports program? How is the relationship between

sports journalists and the major stakeholders of leagues? and (So on). The interview focus then changed to the journalists view on ETV sports reporting, editors and reporters asked to describe the work routine they faced in the organization. Questions like what influences the news production process of television sports? What things prohibit journalists from producing critical reports on sports? How journalists control boosterism, hero-worshipping and cheerleading in sports reporting? What are the journalists' views to the selective coverage decisions of sports? Etc. They were questioned also about the interactions between them and the other community of sports.

At the final stage of the interview, the interviewees asked to form an opinion about the future of their work. Their considerations on the modification of television sports reporting were also requested. All participants shared their opinions views, meanings and values of the informants in the interviews were recorded. The transcription of the interviews included a complicated process of translating from oral Amharic discourse to English written language.

Depending on the original research questions the researcher decided on the style of transcription. The transcription of the interview materials was not occurred in a formal, comprehensive method. However crucial statements given by the interviewees were selected out of the entire interview to be reported as quotations and evidences in the coming chapter. The analysis part shows what was said by the interviews and how it related to the proposed research questions.

It should be clearly understood that the sample size was small. The researcher kept the recordings of the interviews during the research period and research. Each interviewee was asked for permission to keep the recordings and for other people to be given access as required. To insure confidentiality the informants were identified by their occupational title (editor, deputy editor, senior reporter, and reporter).

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher attempts to refer to the critical responses of television sport journalists. At the start of the interpretation the study tried to answer the following points based on qualitative or interpretative research principles. The research questions focus, the boundaries of the questions and domain, the field that the texts derive, were taken into consideration in the initial stage of the interpretation. To present the actual responses of the informants the researcher reproduced what the informants were saying. Crabtree and Miller (1999: 135) goes on to explain the role of analyst in this kind of research that:

Qualitative analyst reduces, highlight, arrange and rearrange data so that connections are made and new sense is created at any particular time in the overall interpretative process.

Using the editing organizing style the researcher tried to explore the relationship of the interpretations to the experiences of the research informants. As explained by Crabtree and Miller (1999: 135) the interpreter of this research after translating the text segmented the data by identifying the information most relevant to the research questions. After the identification of the pertinent information, categorizing, cutting, pasting, splitting and splicing processes followed. The discussion and analysis part of this research attempts to remain true to the voices of ETV sport journalists.

Taking the research questions and the focus of the research into consideration the analysis part of this research presented in five categories. Depth reporting in ETV sports, uncontested sports, cheerleading and promotion in ETV sports, future perceptions and

speculations of the journalists discussed and presented. The texts were re-viewed in and after the analysis process to make sure the multiple truths or perspectives of the journalists voiced in the texts.

4.2 Football's uncontested position

The coverage given for different sports and the criterion is the first topic raised in the interviews. Almost all the respondents/informants/ answered that soccer (football) gets the largest coverage in ETV sports programs. Some of the television sports journalists felt that Ethiopian television sport department has no clear instructions on the amount of time given to the coverage of each sport. An assistant editor who had worked for four years in ETV stated the audience interest on different sports is the determinant rather factor than the editorial policies. Moreover an editor from Tigrigna sports in ETV also felt that “football a sport which won many hearts in the world forced television journalists to give more coverage for it. According to the respondents view the attention given to soccer is almost not comparable with other sports. According to an editor of Amharic sports:

The reason for the huge coverage of football is not only the high interest of television audiences towards it but also the journalists’ leniency towards other sports. The little room for other sports is closed because of most television journalists choose to stick in covering football.

This view coincides with an assistant editor of Tigrigna sports in Ethiopian Television who stated “because of its continuous competitive calendar than other kinds of sport football appears more frequently on television programs”. Some journalists like a reporter for Amharic Television sports in Ethiopian Television, oppose this idea. She noted, “Almost all sports have their annual calendars like football. The difference is the attention given by the media towards the sports.” The

variation in the coverage had different influences on other sports. An editor in Oromigna sports in Ethiopian television reveals:

Excess coverage for one kind of sports will have a side effect on the other. The activities on different sports couldn't be publicized adequately and the sports would remain weak. In terms of audiences, advertisements, and sponsors they would be last.

One informant from the Oromigna Television sports in Ethiopian television felt that the complaints on the media by most sports federations in the unbalanced sports news coverage is acceptable /fair/

There are about twenty-one federations. However there is no balanced coverage, due to this fact most federations have complaints. Media coverage means lots to sporting activities so I believe the grievances are fair on the bias of the media. (Editor Oromigna Sports)

Television sport reporting is changing faster. The technological transformations in the current globalize time created a quick influence on the symbiotic relationship of television and sports. Different television channels have taken sports to every corner of the globe. As a result the expectation from this medium has increased by an alarming rate. Therefore journalists working on Ethiopian television should work hard to close the spaces of criticism of lack of proper coverage on sports.

4.3 In-Depth Reporting in Ethiopian Television Sports

There are criticisms on sports reporting in general that sport reporters are not doing enough critical, investigative work in the name of their fourth estate function. As stated by Shultz (2000:77) the tendency of modern-day sports reporting focuses on celebrity and sensationalism. The tendency to praise and worship sports personalities, has made critical and truthful reporting difficult. Do sport reporters in Ethiopian television cover truthfully or critically against home teams? Do they take the opposite approach, which is very critical for the sake of audience?

Do their sports coverage attest from the personal relationship between them and supporters, players, club owners and coaches?

An editor for the television sports department notes that the relation between journalists and other sports families, the tendency of worshipping and praising players weighs down sports reporting. He stated that

My impression is that reporters are not free to report critically against popular clubs and athletes. Sport journalists also face a verbal or even physical abuse from supporters, players and club owners. When two popular clubs in Ethiopia are playing journalists are always in danger. Supporters only want them to speak the positive things. These problems made critical report difficult.

In this context there is suggestion that Ethiopian television sports programming should be used for the exploration of wider subjects and themes instead of telling results. A journalist describing these demands as:

There is lack of critical and investigative reporting on our television sports. There are lots of debates in sports, the sports administration, the coaches' athletes' corrupted relation, and many things that are very serious problems on sports. I think this media due to different reasons has been slow to see those things. There must be a sign of change on the television coverage of sports to see that (Assistant editor Amharic sports)

As Salwen and Garrison quoted in Rowe (2003:42) pointed out, the attention given to sports departments in news papers and broadcast media organizations fosters the obstacles for critical sports reporting. A senior reporter in ETV sports desk asserted, "The management in Ethiopian television give very little attention to its sports department editorial standards for accuracy and truth. Efforts for a better reporting are not applied in sports sections. This created a huge gap on what is reported and to be reported."

A reporter working on the Amharic section agrees the sports coverage by Ethiopian television is characterized by shallow reporting.

Critical reporting is not common on ETV's coverage of sports. Mostly the reports focus on scores and facts. The trends established by the veterans, the structure of sports departments, the capacities of journalists to conduct investigative and critical reporting are the reasons in my opinion

The unlimited access of broadcasters to athletes has a huge influence on the coverage of sport. As Shultz (2002:179) for example notes sport reporters and athletes obviously spend time together at the game, and then many times they see each other afterwards. That can create a situation for unnecessary friendship possibly to be reflected on the sport journalist's work. As one sport journalist working on Ethiopian television put it:

When a sport journalist in the station critically writes a story on individuals, clubs or sports administration, there will be a clear danger. There is always a danger of an athlete cutting off a reporter simply not talking to him any more; there is also a verbal and physical abuse on Journalists by fans of clubs and individuals. As a result sport journalists prevent themselves from things, which lead them to conflicts. (Senior editor sport desk)

Many of the problems sports reporters face according to the respondents came from the fact that their subjects are considered heroes and some how and above ordinary people. As Shultz (2002:180) exclaimed it is very difficult for sports journalists to report or criticize the athletes considered as heroes by many. As one of Ethiopian television journalists exclaimed,

It is very difficult to cut through the hero-worship and write something different on the professional Ethiopian athletes who make millions of birr and become larger than life celebrities. Footballers from clubs of huge supporters are also very untouchables by the media. They are even

respected by media organizations than the reporters. Reporters mostly don't get back up from the organization. So that they feel they are in danger if they critically write stories. (Editor Tigrigna sports)

Much of the negative reaction on critical reports came from people who admire and support their clubs, athletics and players. According to the responses from the sport journalists in Ethiopian television reporters considered as if they crossed a line to bring down a public hero when they try to do critical reports on celebrity athletes. Due to the above-mentioned reasons sport reporters forced to report more favorably on a player, home team and omit damaging information.

A long serving editor on the television sports department noted that journalists should be courageous to cut the trend of hero worship and start in depth reporting by them selves. They should attempt to find the interesting stories behind the facts. He went on to remark that:

If a club, player or an authority has weakness sports reporters should write about it, explain it and analyze it. I know from experiences sport reporters insulted, intimidated and kicked because of their works, but they should strive for the respect of their profession of. There is a sort of negligence on our selves to pay the sacrifice. (Senior editor Amharic Sports Desk)

It seems almost all journalists are worried concerning in depth reporting. Apart from the deep relation with sports people, officials and players the providers of the necessary information, the access to the sports competition made depth reporting very difficult. According to the responses from sports reporters sporting competitions of Ethiopian teams, athletes out side Ethiopia solely covered by sources out side the country. This heavy reliance on foreign new sources has hindered journalists inside the country from analytical reporting, and compelled

the sports journalists too overly and unnecessary rely on fact-based reporting.

The relationship between sports reporters and their principal source as clearly stated by different scholars is a relation of mutual dependency. The sports entity needs media coverage and the media needs a story (Row 2003:52). Many scholars recommend this relationship must not compromise journalistic integrity. At this point journalists explained that their temptations to be 'mate' of athletes rather than independent journalists doing critical and depth reporting on any issue of sports.

According to the responses from Ethiopian Television sports reporters, the standard of reporting is not as high, the programming of their media overly reliant on fact-based reporting.

4.4 Cheer leading, Nationalism, Promotion and Ethiopian Television Sports Reporting

As for sports reporting and cheerleading seven informants perceived that there is too much cheering on the practice of television sports reporting. An editor from Amharic sports noted for a long period of time sport reporters had spent their time flattering over athletes and players as if these people were not making mistakes. According to him journalists are still not reporting the weaknesses of some of the widely accepted popular athletes. Furthermore he expressed similar sentiments:

Journalists in the electronic media developed a special trust with the known athletes so that they always try to protect them. The reporters may know the weaknesses of players performing on the competition areas however the information will never be used by most journalists. (Senior editor Amharic sports)

Ethiopian great sports men considered as a symbol and permanent icon for most citizens. This fact has created a huge problem for an objective report according to the interviewees. On the contrary an assistant editor

of Tigrigna sports stated there is no such a huge promotion to the Ethiopian known athletes. Ethiopian Athletes portrayed as heroes when they win in global competition like Olympic, world Athletics championships. For him they deserve to be portrayed as heroes, because they are at the moment.

According to the assistant editor the television media always try to exaggerate and promote the heroic image of sports personalities from the other world instead of giving the proper coverage for Ethiopian sports personalities. One Ethiopian television journalist disagreed that Ethiopian sports men have not yet established themselves as great symbols especially in the field of football. Due to this fact sport reporters cheer for teams in general instead of individuals. He reflected television sport journalists used to sit the press box and actually cheer when Ethiopian team were playing. Editor of Oromigna sport desk on the other hand pointed out television journalists show too much nationalism, too much emotions and they lack objectivity when Ethiopian teams play in any sporting event. Especially if the national teams or clubs play at a zonal continental or global level many sports reporters completely loose the balance on their reports.

He also remarked sport reporters felt that; there will be a huge upset if they don't cheer for the home teams. He noted

Sport reporters as citizens try to always favor their country's clubs, they try to establish a sense of belongingness on the teams, and they don't isolate themselves with the supporters in and out side of the stadium. As a result they are criticized of objective and balanced report. (Editor in Oromigna sports Desk)

A reporter in the Amharic sports desk mentioned the trend of cheering came from the earlier journalists in the area. She added in other countries journalists are trying to break the trend of cheerleading.

However journalists here are not courage enough to stop cheering and forward reasonable opinions and critics because of different obstacles.

An Assistant editor on the Amharic desk on his part pointed out that Ethiopian television reporters try not to tarnish the heroic image of athletes, clubs and national teams. He noted

The media portrays athletes as heroes, villains, they are untouchable. No one in the media tries to say something negative concerning them Journalists give them titles and nick names. For example Even by the time Ethiopian athletes result was declined by a world championships reporters choose to praise instead of investigating the failure.

One Journalist also pointed out administrative bodies and media owners have a contribution on the cheerleading role of television sport. Administrators in different federations put pressure on the media to give a positive value to any result at international level by putting participation as a positive goal by itself. As a result television sports portray athletes as heroes and heroes what ever the result would be.

Another journalist also reflected Television journalists always count the home team as their team.(Senior editor).

Boosterism is not a problem when two Ethiopian teams or clubs are playing. However if the game involves the national team the journalists don't alienate themselves. If Ethiopian athletes run on international competitions at any rate journalists wouldn't say, "Ethiopian athletes have participated" they rather say, "our athletes have participated". (Assistant editor Television sports)

This kind of thing for the informants show there is too much cheerleading and hero-worshipping in the coverage of sports on television.

Two very experienced television sports journalists noticed cheerleading has affected the quality in television sports reporting.

Journalists don't write freely against national teams, players, and coaches instead they just practice reports based on the points and scores. Some of the respondents also assumed that many television sports reporters don't possess the necessary knowledge on journalism, which would have helped them to do objective and accurate reporting.

4.5 Future perceptions and speculations for television sports programs

At the end of each interview, the respondents /informants/ were asked to provide their recommendations about television sports reporting and possible solutions for its future developments.

Continuous changes are at the present common in the television sports coverage. Internet, Radio became challenges to television in immediacy. Sport channels dedicated to sports only are growing rapidly. So television stations need to change their traditional working culture and future of their sports departments. Therefore, informants were asked to speak about possible changes in which Ethiopian Television should take in order to go hand in hand in the modern reporting. Assistant editor of Amharic sports in ETV speculated that:

In terms of structure the sport departments of Ethiopian Television must show changes. Sport journalists must get continues short and long term training' on how to cover sports, and I think the short time and low attention by the management have to show improvement.

From Tigrigna sports desk an editor stated that Ethiopian television has to use the power of sports in its future structures. Sport in ETV at the moment is not properly used in his opinion. Some respondents felt it has not much point to continue the coverage of sports in this way. They recommended that the capacity building of sport journalists and

organizing sport departments as independent departments rather than sub-departments may be vital solution to the future

The journalists working the job are from different disciplines and backgrounds. Television sport journalists including me have no any training on how sports are covered. Past trends are dictating the sport journalists on how to do their jobs. So in order to go hand in hand with the fast growing sports reporting, ETV journalists should get training. The other point is ETV must improve its news gathering methods. News sources had created a huge influence on what to be reported so better are various sources should be available. (Editor from Tigrigna sports)

Another interview also had identical view and perceived that the logistical and structural problems should get the priority to be solved. As it is the experience of many television stations sport departments should be organized independently as sole departments. That helped them to draft their working guidelines, and the journalists will be able to produce quality content in the future. Nearly all television sport journalists were of the opinion that there could be a possibility of sport channels, which possibly add further pressure on the television journalists Audiences will have a chance to watch detailed sport coverage that may result the loss of audiences for sport programs on ETV.

Two respondents perceived the coverage towards different sports should be balanced and the style of reporting need to be critical. According to a senior reporter in Amharic sports "critical and depth reports must be entertained instead of sticking always telling facts and statistics". A journalist from Oromigna sports view coincides with this, "to change the future of Ethiopian Television sports the fast working practices should be changed and updated by the current status of television sports reporting".

In the end, the clear belief from all the informants was that Ethiopian television sports had many challenges and the organization needs to apply radical changes and reforms avoid those challenges. The potential of sports has not yet been used to its full capacity by Ethiopian Television. Some journalists suggested what should be done to bring changes quickly. According to their suggestions television sport journalists need to acquire skills to advance their reporting methods.

In addition nearly all informants suggested that sport departments should be recognized as Independent departments.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

In this chapter the researcher tries to discuss on the main points of the research questions and the answers. The first point in the analysis part looks at the coverage of different kinds of sports on Ethiopian television sports reporting, the journalists intention to cover each sports and so on. From the evidence presented almost all television sports journalists felt the coverage inclined to football. The reasons for the variation of the coverage as mentioned by journalists can be the very high interest of audiences towards football, the sports journalists' bias to football and athletics sports and lack of sources on the activities of other sports, unlike football and athletics sports. Ethiopian television as the only television station in the country has a responsibility of covering all kinds of sports activities inside the country. The high demand for television coverage on the sports area and limited capacity forced the journalists to give selective coverage. However, the selection created huge differences in the popularity of different sports. In addition it has to be assumed that football, currently dominating the world, compelled journalists to dominantly focus on it.

From the responses, it seems clear that the uneven coverage of different kinds of sports by ETV sports programs affected the development of other sports. Television sports journalists work on with no guides. This according to the responses affected the coverage. The country's success in international competition is recorded in athletics sport. However, the coverage of athletics is not even as good as to football. Different countries have been trying to give a balanced coverage to different sports in order to increase their popularity, and they give emphasis to sports, which increase their citizen's uniqueness and solidarity. From this point of view Ethiopian television sports journalists

need to work a lot. They should make every effort to give emphasis to sports, which has meanings in the life of their audience. Furthermore they must increase the coverage to other kinds of sports to help the development of various sports in the country and to increase their popularity. In general, it can be said that Ethiopian television sports inclines towards few sports, especially football and athletics sports.

As the respondents revealed, football and athletics sports are the two kinds of sports which organize their competitions regularly than other kinds of sports. On the other hand, it has to be taken into account that there are sports, which like basketball and volleyball had more competitions than athletics in a year but less covered by television sports programs.

Recently, different media organizations tried to win as much audiences as much as possible. Sport is one component to catch audiences. It is better from all kinds and television sports departments give emphasis to it. On the other hand countries represented in different sports in higher competitions like Olympics, all African Games and so on. The media on its part have a responsibility to pay due attention to the different kinds of sports in order to increase the effectiveness of the country in international staged.

The other point was the practice of critical, investigative report by Ethiopian television sports journalists in the name of their Fourth State function. From the evidences presented journalists said due to different reasons it has been difficult to report critically on sports. Television reporters face verbal and physical abuse from different parties in the sports areas if they critically report against them according to their responses. The unlimited and unrestricted relations, lack of cover from their organization, lack of skill to break the traditional sports reporting were also other reasons.

In spite of the above reasons many of the respondents agreed sports reporting on Ethiopian television exposed to celebrating and hero-worshipping rather than looking things critically. The pressure from larger audiences forced them to report more favorably to some players, home teams and soon.

Depth reporting is one of the obligations for journalists. Journalists under their fourth Estate role need to report critically and truthfully. Despite there are very serious problems on Ethiopian sports activities, the reports on the television media were not good on investigating them. Though there are deep-rooted problems in doing depth reporting journalists should find a way to increase the quality of their reporting. Depth reporting as mentioned in the literature part is a problem in many countries sports reporting. However as recommended by one of the veteran journalists of Ethiopian television reporters should sometimes be courage enough to cut the trend of hero-worship and start in-depth reporting. Otherwise the objectivity of sports reporting will always be in danger. Many of the respondents agreed that the sports program of Ethiopian television largely rely on stastical reporting.

Sport personalities considered as above human beings because of their continuous success on sporting fields. These according to the respondents have created an impact on the sports reporting. It has created a huge problem for an objective reporting. In any ways journalists responses showed that there are too much nationalism, too much emotions, and lack of objective reporting in the practices of ETV's sports coverage.

From the recommendation and predictions, which Ethiopian television journalists made, it is requirable that reporters need to exercise in depth reporting and try to cut the cheerleading practices. From the informants asked on this topic many of them agreed that there are lots of obstacles and pressures from different areas, which made

critical reporting difficult. However, they all underlined the necessity of change on their practices to fulfill the obligation of their watchdog role.

Therefore, on the points of depth reporting and cheerleading practices by Ethiopian television sports journalists, it can be said that ETV sports reporting exposed to the mentioned practices.

From the recommendations and predictions television sports journalists made it is obligatory that further changes in sport coverage should be seen by Ethiopian Television. In the case of skilled man power almost all television sport journalists believed that the organization must organize short and long term trainings about journalism in general and sports journalism in particular, in order to make changes on the contents of sports on ETV. The respondents also predicted that independent sport channels like in other countries might be opened in times, which cause fierce competition against Ethiopian Television. As a result the media's management should create structural changes in the sport departments' organization and competent skilled manpower.

As for the future of television sports journalism, informants showed reservation. Some journalists suggested that television sports reporting might change from fact, statistics reporting towards in depth analysis and reporting if the attention given to the capacity building of sport department and sport journalists paid quickly. The other respondents said even the problems in the sports department are not yet identified separately, so that change in very close time may not be possible.

In general the interviewed Ethiopian television sports journalists recommended all the possible solutions based on the challenges they faced during their work routines. The short time and low attention given to sports department by the management have to show improvement. At

least ETV has to give time for live transmission for domestic competitions and enough sport programme time which can accommodate many of the sports existing in the country. According to the recommendations news sources had created a huge influence on what to be reported on ETV sports so better are various sources should be available. Priority to the logistical and structural problems, organizing sport departments as sole departments, and balanced coverage of sports should be solutions to the challenges. They were confident that their suggested solutions would make sports as an important component of Ethiopian Television program structure.

Conclusion

Television sport reporting has often been the subject of mass criticism. This is the conclusion of the research about practices of sports reporting on Ethiopian Television.

The respondents examine a lot of the structures and practices that shape television sports texts. Though sports journalism has a significant importance to attract audience for the media lots of things need to be seen in the process of reporting. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, generalizations cannot be made from this relatively small sample size. However, some significant characteristics of television sports practice in Ethiopian television can be presented.

For instance rather than focusing on variety of sports, most television sports reporters focus and cover their favorite sport, which is often soccer. This means, ETV's sport coverage largely ignores other types of sports. This also leads to wide criticism by viewers of other sports. Among the nine informants six ETV sports reporters and editors point their inclination to football coverage to the fact football attracts large audience and is the number one choice of their viewers. However, their coverage has created an un-even impact in sports, which has a global importance on creating the good image of the country.

According to the responses of television sports journalists, the continuous pressure and relationship from athletes, owners, officials, and supporters makes in-depth reporting difficult for them. This means that the television sports texts tend to be more results than deep reports.

Nearly all interviewees agree that it is not common to see a critical approach in the coverage of sports on ETV. Their job involves a close working relationship with different stakeholders in the local and domestic sports scene. Whenever ETV sport reporters did say something critical about the sport, they would subject themselves to conflicts with

concerned bodies. Therefore, ETV sports reporters would seem to have a limited role in presenting in-depth stories. Television sport journalists also suffer from a lack of capacity, and security problems occasionally produced reports focused on results of games. Some television sports journalists also pointed out that the difficulties they face when they try to change the trend of reporting. The long serving journalists established a kind of trend not going with the current status of sports reporting. Sport journalists need to overcome these barriers.

Other common practices often observed in the practice of sports journalists on Ethiopian television is cheerleading or hero-worshipping. Sport reporters have a tendency to slant news in favor of the home Ethiopian team. Due to the huge public fame of athletes and players, journalists often produce only positive stories about these stars. Some of the television sports journalists point out that, like the local fans and viewers, the journalists also reflect their support for their national team in their work. Television reports often face difficulties to report critically against their national teams and their popular players.

Excessive nationalism, partisanship, and populist identification are also visible in television sports texts. Sport reporters in Ethiopian television should underline the harmonic relation between sports reporting and journalistic values.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are provided with the aim of encouraging other researchers in the country to build on the issues discussed in this study. For the research, a qualitative method approach using semi-structured interviews was chosen. This method revealed important points on the practices of Ethiopian television coverage of sports.

Apart from this approach, other studies could be conducted using different approaches. Comparison of Ethiopian television coverage of sports with other similar international stations can be useful point. Moreover, future studies might also consider a detailed content analysis of television sporting news in order to determine some of the strengths and weaknesses of Ethiopian television sports coverage based on the stand sports reporting.

Depending on the audience, researchers can also analyze consumers of sporting news. Views of the audience can also be included in a lengthy study. Ethnographic studies on sport newsrooms using observation, interview and text analysis methods might also be considered.

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Interviews

Note: All personas names were not used and only informant's occupational titles were used to protect the identity of the participants.

- All interviews conducted in person from May to July 2006.

Interviews

- Interview with senior Amharic sports editor, → 30, May 2006
- Interview with senior Amahric sports editor → 3 June 2006
- Interview with Amharic sports editor → 6 June
- Interview with Amharic sports Assistant editor → 2 July 2006
- Interview with Amharic sports reporter → 4 July 2006
- Interview with Tigrigna sports editor → 11 June 2006
- Interview with Tigringa sports assistant editor – 10 July 2006
- Interview with Oromigna sports editor → 20 June 2006
- Interview with Oromigna sports editor → 16 July 2006

Appendix A: Information Form

Attitudes of Journalists towards the practices of ETV sports coverage

Interview with Journalists on Sports coverage in ETV

Currently the use of sport as an important means in establishing good values and as a means of expression for national identity is increasing in Ethiopia. Sport is also playing a vital role in every corner of the country. Despite there is positive change in understanding sport as important component by print and electronic media in Ethiopia; sport journalism is one of the little researched areas. Much of the research literature has focused on other continents. It is the goal of this research to increase the understanding of the status of television sport reporting by talking to Ethiopian television sport journalists. The research in one of little researched areas gives useful information for television and others media sport journalists, academics and researchers that are interested in sports reporting.

Procedures

As a participant in this study, you will be requested to participate in an interview, expected to end in 45-60 or maximum of 90 minutes. In the interview you will share your experience working as a sport journalist in ETV. The interview will focus on the contents of the sport reports; Questions will cover topics such as the attention given to each sport, the conflicting situations between professional journalistic responsibilities, and the difficulties to critically report on sports issues and other situational variables in the television sports desk.

Strictest confidentiality will be upheld for example your name will not be used with any information given by you please be aware that participation is voluntary.

Appendix B Interview Guide

Sport Journalism and Television, Working practices of Ethiopian Television sports

Warm - Up Question

How did you become a sport journalist working for ETV?

On coverage of different kinds of sports

- What is your favorite sport to watch and to cover?
- Could you please tell me about sports which ETV sports covers most?
- What kinds of influences can be seen on sports, which entertain much coverage, and sports getting less coverage?

On depth and critical Reporting

- Please describe the use of reporting critically on sports for the development of different sports?
- How do you see sport programs of ETV from the point of good, critical reporting?
- How do you see the skills of ETV sport journalists, the news gathering means in the process of producing reports?

On cheerleading, too much nationalism and promotional aspects

- How do might sports reporters in television be exposed to cheerleading and hero-worshipping practices?
- Do you think cheering or flattering over athletes and players is a normal in television sports reporting?
- How do you see those practices of sport journalists in Ethiopian Television sport programs?

Self-Assessment

- Do you feel that you are doing standard sport journalism?

Future Outlook

- How do you think Ethiopian television sports reporting will be changed in the future?

Appendix C: Evaluation Form

Demography

1. Gender

Male - Female

2. Age Range

- Under 20 years
- 21 - 30 years
- 31 - 40 years
- 41 - 50 years
- over 50 years

Educational Background

- High school
- Undergraduate studies
- Postgraduate studies

Position in the sports desk

- Senior editor
- Editor
- Assistant editor
- Senior reporter
- Reporter

Current Employment Situation

- Full time
- Freelancer

Declaration

I the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and that all sources acknowledged.

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as university advisor.

(PhD)

Name _____

Signature _____

