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Bachelor of Arts in Journalism

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A Comparative Analysis of the Coverage of the United Football League (UFL)  
and the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) in Metro Manila Newspapers  
and its Implications on Sports Coverage by the Philippine Press

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Marvin Kenneth M. Santos

October 2012



A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS  
OF THE COVERAGE OF THE UNITED FOOTBALL LEAGUE (UFL)  
AND THE PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION (PBA)  
IN METRO MANILA NEWSPAPERS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS  
ON SPORTS COVERAGE BY THE PHILIPPINE PRESS

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## **DEDICATION**

To all of you  
who believe in the beautiful game,  
and to You,  
who makes all things beautiful.



## **ABSTRACT**

Santos, M. K. M. (2012). *A Comparative Analysis of the Coverage of the United Football League (UFL) and the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) in Metro Manila Newspapers and its Implications on Sports Coverage by the Philippine Press*, Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication.

In 2009, the United Football League was created by a group of football-loving entrepreneurs as a way of promoting the sport among Filipinos. The recent success of the Philippine Men's Football Team, more popularly known as the Azkals, helped raise awareness for the UFL and the sport in general among the public. However, it appears that there is a gap in the awareness of the UFL among the general population, mainly due to the fact that the league has very little coverage in the media, particularly the press. This study compared the exposure given the UFL against the Philippine Basketball Association in the three leading Metro Manila broadsheets for the duration of the 2011-2012 UFL season. Through content analysis, it was determined that there is a significant gap in the coverage of the UFL, compared to the regular and highly prominent reportage given the PBA, in the three newspapers. Interviews with experts served to confirm this finding and to enable the study to formulate recommendations in order to resolve this apparent gap in press coverage with regard to the UFL and football in the Philippines.

**Keywords:** Agenda-setting, framing, media gap, media as influence, sports journalism

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) is Asia's oldest professional basketball league and the second-oldest in the world after the US National Basketball Association (NBA) (Bartholomew 2010). Since 1975, the PBA has provided the country with memorable basketball moments, creating a loyal following among Filipinos. This is evidenced by a recent survey by the Social Weather Stations that found out the Barangay Ginebra Gin Kings and the Purefoods Giants (now known as the B-MEG Llamados) to be the most popular teams in the league, boasting an equal 31 percent following among adult Filipinos (GMA News 2008).

In 2009, several football-loving entrepreneurs came together to provide a venue for professional football players to showcase their skills, forming what is now known as the United Football League (UFL) (UFL 2011). The effort was seen as a much-needed "shot in the arm," providing football players, who mostly stop playing after graduation, a professional venue in which they can continue to use their skills to the fullest (Henson 2009). The UFL currently has two divisions, a multimillion peso TV deal, and a stadium presently being constructed and expected to be the league's official home by the year 2013 (InterAKTV 2012).

In 2010, the Men's National Football Team pulled off one of the biggest upsets in the history of the ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) Suzuki Cup with a shocking win over Vietnam (ESPN 2010). Tenacious defending and goalkeeping, combined with scores from players Chris Greatwich and Phil Younghusband, made it possible for the Philippines—considered perennial football underdogs—to humble the tournament's defending champion two goals to none (Malig 2010).

This achievement of the Men's National Football Team, now known as the Philippine Azkals, has sparked a renewed interest in football among Filipinos. The rise of the Azkals is likewise expected to contribute to the so-called "beautiful game" breaking the stranglehold of basketball in the country. Despite being one of the oldest football teams in Asia, the Philippines lags considerably in the sport and is known mainly for producing boxing icon Manny Pacquiao (ESPNStar.com 2010).

The renaissance of football created by the Azkals' achievements, coupled with corporate backing, increased media exposure, and advertising, helped the UFL announce its presence as the official Filipino football league. However, compared to the PBA, there seems to be an apparent gap in the coverage of the UFL and its activities, with the former enjoying more extensive exposure particularly in Metro Manila newspapers. This seeming discrepancy in the extent of coverage between the two major professional leagues may have implications in the way sports news is covered in the Philippines.

This study is an attempt to understand the dynamics of sports, media, and people, in particular, the implications of the extent of media coverage of a particular sport. Studies of this type in the field of communication are, unfortunately, quite inadequate (Wenner 1989), and it is hoped that this study will be able to contribute significantly to the study of sports media in the Philippines.

### **A. Statement of the Problem**

Compared to the UFL, the PBA apparently has more extensive coverage among Metro Manila newspapers. Reports in major newspapers related to football appears to concentrate mostly on the Azkals—which, although welcomed, seem to concentrate mostly on trivial matters instead of the development of the team and the sport—and in

some cases, international football events such as the World Cup. This perceived lack of exposure in major newspapers may be disadvantageous not only to the development of the UFL as the country's premier football league, but also for the revival of the sport itself in the Philippines. Furthermore, this apparent preference may also show a bias towards basketball that affects the way sports is covered by the press in the country.

### **B. Thesis Statement**

Major newspapers in Metro Manila do not appear to give extensive coverage to the United Football League and its activities and/or personalities, as compared to the Philippine Basketball Association. This perceived gap in press coverage contributes to the country's continuing bias towards basketball. In turn, this preference for basketball may be detrimental to the long-term existence of the UFL, the resurgence of football in the Philippines, and the development of other lesser-known sports disciplines. More importantly, this bias of sports sections towards basketball may have implications on the way sports are covered by Philippine newspaper publications.

### **C. Objective of the Study**

It is the objective of this study to:

- Determine the gap in press coverage of the UFL in comparison with that of the PBA in major newspapers in Metro Manila.
- Determine the possible implications of the perceived gap in press coverage of the UFL on the development of the league and of Philippine football.
- Determine the existence of an apparent bias towards basketball on sports coverage by Philippine newspapers and its possible implications.

Furthermore, the study aims to achieve the following secondary objectives:

- Define sports news and its role in the news cycle
- Establish a history of sports news coverage
- Define the relationship between media and sports
- Determine the relevance of sports to the media and to the general public good

#### **D. Methodology**

The study conducted a comparative analysis of the press coverage of the UFL and the PBA for a full league season. News reports concerning match results and related events, as well as feature stories on league personalities, were tallied and compared to determine the extent of coverage given by press outlets on both leagues.

Sports editors were likewise contacted regarding newspaper policy on sports stories. Additional interviews with officials from the UFL and the PBA were also attempted in order to determine league views in relation to the perceived gap in public awareness and media coverage.

Finally, interviews with football writers were conducted in order to establish the significance of the UFL and its implications on the long-term development of football in the country.

#### **E. Significance of the Study**

The role of media in shaping public opinion with regard to significant social and political issues is a topic that has been long speculated, studied, and debated (Maeroff 1998; Spitzer 1993; Wilson & Wilson 2001; Wimmer and Dominick 1991 cited in Fields 2005). The press—as part of the communications quartet that includes TV, radio, and now, social media—can be argued as essential to influencing public perception, depending on the extent of the coverage it apportions to a particular topic or issue.



In this view, verifying the level of coverage that Metro Manila newspapers extend towards the UFL may be helpful in determining what needs to be done to ensure the long-term success of the league. As stated by Henson (2009), the UFL serves as a venue for football players to continue using the skills beyond their college playing careers, and for some, may serve as a means of livelihood. Ensuring the longevity of the league is obviously a contribution not only to the players but even to the industries that support the game and the people who rely on those industries, such as merchandising, logistics, and team support.

Furthermore, ensuring the growth of the UFL may help in establishing football in the Philippines and realizing the country's aspirations for sports superiority in the Southeast Asian region, at the very least. While it is true that basketball and football can coexist, the reality is that Filipinos will have a harder time competing in the international scene due to a natural height disadvantage. In Asia, China may be considered superior in international basketball, as evidenced by the success of Yao Ming (Bartholomew 2010). As such, China is considered the foremost pool of talent for the NBA (Lane 2004). The Philippine Azkals' significant improvement has allowed it to play at a level that has surprised the football powers of the SEA region, and attaining a level of play comparable to international champions is a more realistic goal compared to that of basketball (ESPNStar.com 2010).

From an economic standpoint, establishing the success of the UFL and football in general will mean convincing the Philippine government to invest significantly in a sport that has more realistic chances to succeed and produce the expected dividends. The recent debacle of the Philippine delegation's sixth-place finish in the SEA Games, cost taxpayers Php168 million (*Inquirer Sports Staff* 2012). Even more embarrassing was the Philippine campaign in the 2012 London Olympics, where Filipino athletes came

home empty-handed for the fourth straight time (Gutierrez 2012). The press, as the so-called “Fourth Estate,” thus has the means to influence the government to invest public funds in an endeavor that is more likely to produce the intended results rather than waste taxpayers’ money on a futile effort.

From a journalistic perspective, determining the existence of a bias towards basketball by sports sections and editors may help towards the crafting of a more comprehensive policy towards sports reportage in the Philippine press. Eliminating—or, at the very least, minimizing—this apparent bias may then help marginalized sports such as football to experience greater coverage and thus aid in their development in the grassroots level of society.

Finally, very few studies and extensive research has been devoted to sports media, especially in the Philippines (Panaligan 1981). It is hoped that the findings as well as the overall conduct of the study will be of help in creating a better understanding of the dynamics of sport, society, and media in the country.

## **F. Scope and Limitations**

The study will be limited to the coverage of the 2011-2012 season of the UFL and the PBA by major newspapers in Metro Manila. The newspapers include three major broadsheets: the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the *Philippine STAR*, and the *Manila Bulletin*. This choice is reflected on the performance of the aforementioned publications with regard to their readership and coverage (Nielsen Media Research 2012 cited in PDI 2012).

## **II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **A. Introduction**

From backyards, to mega-stadiums and arenas, to the billion-dollar spectacle that is the Olympic Games, sport plays (*pun intended*) an indispensable role in society. It may also be said that sport is a product of society and bears its mark in every aspect of its manifestation (Kennedy and Hills 2009). Sport makes up a considerable part of social life, and for some, is life itself.

The term “sport” refers to the playful, and oftentimes competitive, use of physical and mental skills in activities that lead to self-development and self-actualization (Beck and Bosshart 2003). Early hunting-gathering societies first looked at playtime as a means of developing one’s abilities and creating advantages over the other members of the tribal community. Hunting expeditions required good physical fitness and teamwork, which affected the success of the hunt and ultimately determined the long-term survival of the tribe (Beck and Bosshart 2003). Displaying outstanding physical qualities in the hunt likewise established one’s social standing, with those having exceptional physical and mental prowess more likely leading the tribe. Moreover, good physical, mental, and social fitness increased the chances of the community in defending itself from other aggressive groups (Beck and Bosshart 2003).

From its origins as a way to pass the time and as a training ground for the hunting members of society, the role of sports has grown to serving as integrative and image building elements for individuals, groups, and entire societies. Sports act as a unifying force and as significant factors of socialization, primarily by strengthening the social acceptance of athletes and teams by their fans. Sports likewise support social and

cultural identities and aid in the construction of a national personality (Beck and Bosshart 2003). The bottom line for sport, however, is still to provide pleasure and enjoyment.

## **B. Defining Sports News**

Sportswriting is newswriting, with the distinction of more detailed descriptions of the action and characterized by a greater freedom in writing style. Similar to a news story, the sports article has a lead and a body. The lead may be written in the classic 5Ws + H of the news story, or it may dramatize elements such as the key play, the outstanding player, or the approach taken by the winning team to clinch the game (Cruz 1993).

News publications seem to differ in the way sports stories are presented in their pages. For *The Philippine Herald* sportswriter Eduardo Lachica, a sports story may include in its body the team or individual standings, the highlights and decisive plays, the best scores of the day, a play-by-play account, and quotations from the concerned personalities. This is described as an interpretative type of sports news story (Cruz 1993).

Similarly, former executive editor Jose Luna Castro of the *Manila Times* noted eight factors essential to a sports story. These are personalities, play-by-play description, statistics, quotes from the p[layers, coaches and trainers, background material on the players or teams, the significance of the game, and a background of the game itself (Cruz 1993).

Finally, for Cruz (1993), the elements that make up a good sports story include the score or outcome, its significance, highlights of the game, a comparison of the teams, the individual stars of the game, the possible weather conditions of the match, and the crowd and resulting celebration (or dejection).

### C. Sports and Media

Sports have become an essential source of entertainment for contemporary societies because of the presence of the ingredients of delightful entertainment (Beck and Bosshart 2003). These elements (Schramm and Klimmt 2003, cited in Beck and Bosshart 2003) include:

**Public participation.** Sports encourage the public to participate in the event with activities such as songs, cheers, chants, waves, and gambling. These activities all serve to connect the spectator in the stands or in front of the television to the event by encouraging them to identify with a particular team or player (fan support) or to tie one's fortunes with a team or player (gambling). The arrival of social media enables the public to participate even more, mainly by making their voices heard in the form of support or displeasure (Jackson 2012).

**Links to art.** Elements of art, such as dancing, serve primarily to entertain the viewer. This is most commonly shown in events that display choreography such as skating and gymnastics. In some instances, a well-orchestrated game plan may be highlighted because of how it was executed, such as a perfectly-timed pass and goal in football or a soaring alley-oop pass-and-dunk in basketball. Elements such as team logos, heraldic symbols, national emblems, and fan caricatures comprise the visual art aspect of sport.

**Rituals before, during, and after the game.** Sporting events are filled with rituals that carry meanings or evoke emotion. Handshakes and the playing of national anthems are in keeping with social courtesy and norms, while rites such as the Maori *haka* war dance of the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team are meant to instill fear in the opposing team. Touchdown or goal celebrations convey either team pride, sheer delight, a personal tribute, or outright arrogance; league-governing bodies such as the American

National Football League (NFL) have recently been cutting down on excessive touchdown celebrations in order to promote sportsmanship in the game. The opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games or the World Cup are globally accepted and appreciated liturgies that may be considered spectacles by themselves (Schramm and Klimmt 2003 cited by Beck and Bosshart 2003).

**Suspense.** The presence of tension contributes to the creation of a range of emotions from anticipation, excitement, to fear in the viewer, thus adding to its value. A struggling player who makes the last shot, the heated rivalry between two teams considering each other sworn enemies, the crowd favorite who falls short of the gold medal, or the underdog who pulls off the upset—all these help create drama, conflict, and the existence of risk (the “win or go home” scenario). The presence of all these factors, sometimes in just one sporting event, help make sports an “ideal combination of the dramatic and the unexpected” (Barnett 1995 cited in Beck and Bosshart 2003).

**A sense of belonging and acceptance.** From casual talks around the company water cooler to Internet forums, sports offer individuals the opportunity to belong by encouraging them to identify with a player or team. Factors such as fandom and patriotism encourage the creation of a support community that identifies and communicates with the player or team.

**Identification with stars, icons, heroes, or “saints.”** Sporting events emphasize the human element by encouraging viewers to identify with a particular player or individual. In-depth profiles on television and in print present the athlete in a manner that allows the audience to relate with his or her humanity. While significance still lies in individual effort and achievement, media has done its share in manufacturing greatness for the sports stars of today (Smart 2005).

**Sex appeal.** Sports encourage a certain level of sex appeal through an emphasis, whether deliberate or unwittingly, on bodies in action and on display. This focus on the physical aspect of sport, however, has led to controversial gender issues. The debate on whether the *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Edition is relevant or not is just one example on how sex appeal affects the way sport is portrayed in media (Davis 1997).

**Mental satisfaction.** There is a certain amount of mental pleasure derived from seeing the perfect execution of a set play or the favorable result of a new strategy created in an impromptu manner. This satisfaction may then be linked to other emotions such as pleasure, happiness, and liking, which in turn leads to enjoyment. This, then, is the primary reason why audiences tune into sports. Thus, sports and emotions go hand-in-hand (Billings 2011) and both work together to provide entertainment.

In this view, this aspect of sports makes it a natural partner with the media. McChesney (1989, cited in Beck and Bosshart 2003) stated that “sports and mass media enjoy a very symbiotic relationship in American society.” It should be pointed out that this statement holds true not only in the United States but for most contemporary societies which have a well-established culture of sports and a mass media mechanism in place, regardless of whether it is a free enterprise or controlled by the state (Beck and Bosshart 2003). The partnership of sports and media, however, goes back a very long way.

## **1. History**

Sports and media have been together ever since ways of communicating on a large scale basis were invented. Examples of this partnership may be seen as far back in the great civilizations of the Mediterranean Sea. Although these methods pale in

comparison to the scope that sports nowadays uses mass media to great effect, these early attempts nonetheless served their purpose.

The Egyptians were one of the first civilizations to promote sport in the form of relief sculptures, statuettes, temple decorations, elaborate tomb paintings, and crude sketches on pot shards. During this time, wrestling was the most popular form of sport as it enabled the non-elite to participate. The majority of these images appeared during the period of Middle and New Kingdoms, which were periods of significant economic prosperity and stability. The existence of images portraying wrestlers performing before the pharaoh signified the king's endorsement of the sport, thereby ensuring its popularity (Decker and Herb 1994 cited in Scanlon 2006).

The Sumerians, notably the Third Dynasty of Sumer, are arguably credited with elevating sport to that of having significant social relevance (Scanlon 2006). Wrestling, boxing, and the footrace, by themselves, became formal public occasions (Rollinger 1994 cited in Scanlon 2006). Later Sumerian kings took up interest in sport, most notably the emperor Shulgi, who proclaimed himself a successful sportsman, claiming to have run from Nippur to Ur and back in just one day. The self-proclaimed "King of the Road," while not exactly participating in a sports event but a largely ceremonial one, nevertheless helped in bringing sports to the fore of public awareness (Vermaak 1993 cited in Scanlon 2006). This was accomplished by immortalizing the king's feats in the celebrated *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Scanlon 2006).

The Greeks were the first to utilize the concept of the victor and his relationship to his homeland or city-state, creating the idea of playing for prizes and for the honor of the society that the athlete belonged to (Scanlon 2006). The popularity of the victory ode, a lyric poem celebrating one's achievements, coincided with the rise in popularity of sports festivals, culminating in the creation of the Olympic Games (Scanlon 2006). The



month-long festival was publicized by sacred envoys called *theoroi* and the truce-bearers or *spondophoroi* who were sent out by the organizers to call everyone to watch and to participate (Scanlon 2006).

Achievements of note, and even the announcement of games of significance were given permanence in record through the so-called agonistic inscriptions, which were documents inscribed in stone. This in turn ensured the propagation of an athlete's achievement or the significance of a sporting event not only across the Greek world but for generations after. The medium of choice, however, to promote one's achievement for posterity was through the commissioning of statues honoring the victorious athlete, or in some cases, his trainer (Scanlon 2006). An inscription at the base of the statue normally included the name of the victor, his home city-state, the games and event in which he was victorious, and the source of the dedication (Hyde 1921; and Lattimore 1988 cited in Scanlon 2006).

Even though the Romans copied the Greeks in using statues to promote and memorialize the achievements of its athletes, their most important contribution to sports was the amphitheater and the circus. These structures, constructed to accommodate large numbers of people and to hold the games itself, serve as the prototype of the sporting arenas and stadiums of the present. The structures by themselves served as the medium of promoting the sporting events held within them (Scanlon 2006).

Sports did not come to the fore of public consciousness until late in the agricultural era, when the *Boston Gazette* published one of the very first sports stories in March 5, 1733. It was the description of a boxing match in England, and the report was copied from a London newspaper, which was a typical practice at the time (Enriquez 2002 cited in Bryant and Holt 2006). It should be noted that during this time, sports was considered a luxury because play time was a rare commodity. Likewise, it is important to

point out that most sports news were imported from Europe, but future innovations in the development of sport and media would later come from the United States (Bryant and Holt 2006).

## **2. Sports and the Press**

The first sports stories appeared 150 years after the actual birth of the newspaper, and by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, sports became an integral part of the everyday life of the common person. At the time, sports reportage was contained within the local news pages, and it was only in 1817 when the England *Morning Herald* created the first special section for sports. Both English and American newspapers soon followed suit: *The Globe* (England, 1818), *The American Farmer* (USA, 1819), and the conservative London *Times* (1829) soon allotted significant portions of their pages to sports news (Beck and Bosshart 2003).

The birth of the Penny Press soon ushered in a period of growth of sports journalism, as newspaper publishing became a profitable venture. The Penny Press made it possible to include reader-targeted content, thereby increasing and sustaining a loyal readership base; to attract middle-class, urban readers; and to shift the burden of publishing costs from circulation towards advertising (Thompson 2004 cited in Bryant and Holt 2006). Other notable Penny Press publications were the *New York Herald* owned by James Gordon Bennett, Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*, and Henry Raymond's *New York Times* (Bryant and Holt 2006). The market leader of the time was the *Spirit of the Times* with a readership of 100,000, and was actively involved in a vigorous, albeit failed, effort to make cricket the national sport of America (Nugent 1929 cited in Bryant and Holt 2006). Likewise, during this period, innovations in news reportage such as the sensational style popularized by Bennett in the *Herald* are of note

(Bryant and Holt 2006). It should be pointed out, however, that sports news in general did not flourish in America during the agricultural era, as there was nothing resembling the daily sports page or sports column of today during this period (Bryant and Holt 2006).

The advent of industrialization brought about a period of rapid change in the news industry, and sports reportage in particular enjoyed significant growth. Telegraphic transmission made it possible to report sporting news from distant venues. Similarly, printing innovations such as the rotary press made it possible to print large amounts of newspapers in a short time and at a much lower cost, thus making newspapers and magazines more accessible to the public. This coincided with a period of a growing interest for sports, particularly baseball in the United States and football and cycling in Europe (Beck and Bosshart 2003).

Technological breakthroughs in the field of communications in the Industrial Age helped facilitate the coverage, processing, and delivery of news. Probably the most significant innovation of this period in terms of sports journalism was the creation of the sports newsroom, which was pioneered by the *New York World* in 1883 (Beck and Bosshart 2003). It did not take long for all leading papers in major cities in US to have a dedicated sports department, led by its own editor (Mott 1950 cited in Bryant and Holt 2006).

As sports became a regular fixture in the news, cultural attitudes towards sports in America began to change. Conservative views popularized in the Puritan era began to be gradually replaced by a more accepting attitude towards sports. Likewise, the introduction of compulsory education laws helped upgrade literacy in the states and contributed to the creation of a literate audience hungry for news and for sporting news in particular (Bryant and Holt 2006). By the 1920s, as much as 40 percent of the news

contained in the *New York World* was sporting news; in the *New York Tribune*, the figure was as high as 60 percent (Beck and Bosshart 2003). Meanwhile, sporting magazines such as *Sporting Life* and *The Sporting News* covered baseball and contributed largely to raising interest in the sport and cementing its status as the country's national pastime (Bryant and Holt 2006).

Significant innovations in the crafting of news itself during this period also contributed greatly to raising interest and acceptance in sports. Traditional reportage of the time consisted mainly of the chronological style, where sports events are reported from start to finish. The modern style of reporting, where the results are presented at the beginning of the news article, was introduced in sports reportage and is the primary form of journalistic storytelling even up to the present (Garrison and Sabljak 1993 cited in Beck and Bosshart 2003). Similarly, the use of colorful language combined with journalistic fervor and an innate love of sports made sports journalism a celebrated and recognized form of entertainment. This, in turn, contributed to the emergence of the so-called star sportswriters—sports journalists who had a loyal following mainly due to their energetic style of reportage (Bryant and Holt 2006).

Interest in sports increased exponentially with the arrival of radio, and later on, television. Early radio entrepreneurs quickly realized radio's potential in sports coverage, particularly that of the live play-by-play account (Smethers and Joliffe 1992 cited in Bryant and Holt 2006). Live reporting on TV and radio helped increase interest in sports and allowed for faster delivery of the news. However, time constraints prevent most sports reportage to go in-depth. Thus, sports pages—as well as dedicated sports magazines—help fill this niche by providing detailed stories of sporting events as well as the athletes themselves (Beck and Bosshart 2003).

## D. Sports Coverage in the Philippine Press

Unfortunately, very few literature documents the complete history of sportswriting in the Philippines. Whatever references are available are based mostly on interviews with arguably the leading sports editors and writers of the country at the time. Nevertheless, their insights may be enough to create a picture of how sports coverage evolved in news publications in the country.

### 1. History

The origins of Philippine sportswriting may be traced back to 1918, when American newspapers started including sports events as part of their published news stories. There were no regular sports sections at the time. After 1918, local sportswriters gradually emerged, serving as pioneers in the creation of the new news beat. Foremost among them was Antonio Escoda, sports editor for the *Cable News American*, the first known sports editor in the country (Alforte 1951 cited in Panaligan 1981).

In an interview with Alforte (1951 cited in Panaligan 1981), Ralph Hawkins, sports editor of the now defunct *Evening News*, also identified other pioneers of sportswriting in the Philippines. These were Manuel Villareal of the shuttered *La Vanguardia* and *Daily Mirror*, and Robert Aura Smith, a former city editor for the *Manila Daily Bulletin*. It should also be noted that horse racing and baseball were the events mostly covered by newspapers during this period (Alforte 1951 cited in Panaligan 1981).

Hawkins, as well as veteran sportswriter Jaime Lacsamana, states that the years between 1925 and 1940 could be considered the Golden Age of Sportswriting in the Philippines. Sports magazines such as the weekly *Sports Spotlight* and the *Sports Review* proliferated, with editors such as Arsenio Lacson of the *Common Wheel* (who later became mayor of Manila in 1950-1958) and Peter Hernandez of *Tribune* becoming

well-known. It was during this period that Filipino athletes were excelling greatly on the world stage, inspiring sportswriters to write about their achievements (Alforte 1951 cited in Panaligan 1981).

Sportswriting came almost to a standstill during the War Years (1941-1945), and developed at a slow pace in the next six years following the Liberation. Nevertheless, sportswriters started to become known and identified with particular sports beats. Foremost among these was Enrique Romualdez of the *Manila Times*, who is rightfully considered as the dean of basketball sportswriting in the country. His writings helped popularize amateur basketball, specifically the basketball matches of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Universities Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP). His articles on NCAA and UAAP players helped cement their status as basketball stars even long before they actually played in the PBA (Panaligan 1981).

In the 1970s, sport became increasingly important to the media (Benang 1976 cited in Panaligan 1981). Sportswriters say that the decade of the 1970s saw more expansive sports coverage compared to previous periods, and sportswriters associations became established, with most writers in the country belonging to one. It was even determined that an emphasis in sports coverage was apparent in the Martial Law years (Panaligan 1981). Nevertheless, most sportswriters of the period did not have the proper training (Panaligan 1981) and there were no sportswriting courses offered in schools, let alone teachers. In fact, a significant number of local wire services did not even have a dedicated sports bureau nor any full-time correspondents in the country (Benang 1976 cited in Panaligan 1981). Compensation for sportswriters was also quite low, and although news publishers were generally thought to be well-equipped, the same could not be said of broadcasting outlets (Panaligan 1981).

Sportswriters and editors of the 1970s projected several trends in Philippine sports media in the 1980s, including the increase in the number of sports-oriented publications, higher salaries for media practitioners, and improvement in facilities. It was also foreseen that as sports press became better recognized both by its peers and by the society, the sportswriting style in general will likewise evolve, and sport development activities will have better media support (Panaligan 1981). However, as early as the 1970s, basketball had somehow monopolized coverage in the press (Panaligan 1981), and its apparent persistence up to the present was something the writers of the 70s were not able to see.

## ***2. Sports Coverage in the Philippines: Basketball versus Football***

Basketball is unquestionably the country's national pastime, mostly due to unequivocal support from print, TV, and radio (Iñigo 2011). It is no wonder then that the sport occupies much of the sports pages and the airwaves.

Basketball was first played in the country under the tutelage of American leaders of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Interestingly, it was first taught in the public school system as a game for girls (Ylanan and Ylanan 1974 cited in Panaligan 1981).

On the other hand, football was first taught by students from British schools during the early days of the American regime. Teams were formed and met in regular matches and competitions. This allowed football to evolve into a spectator sport towards the latter years of the American occupation, with matches held regularly at the Manila Sunken Garden (Oliver 1972 cited in Panaligan 1981).

The Filipino obsession with basketball can be traced to the country's strong showing in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, with the Philippine team placing an impressive

fifth. In 1954, an all-star team led by Carlos “Caloy” Loyzaga and Lauro “the Fox” Mumar and coached by the Herminio Silva finished third in the World Basketball Championship in Rio de Janeiro (Iñigo 2011).

With these achievements, and with the help of media practitioners, basketball inevitably came to the fore of Filipino consciousness. Foremost among these was the late Willie Hernandez, referred to as the dean of Filipino sportscasters, who first popularized basketball news on radio. His live coverage of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) games as well as his unique voice and delivery not only endeared him to his audience but helped generate interest in the sport itself (Iñigo 2011).

This did not mean, however, that football did not have its share of significant achievements. Its most notable achievement of the period was its 1-0 victory over Japan in the 1958 Asian Games. Nevertheless, media coverage of football even at this time was quite minimal, according to former National Team goalkeeper Vic Sison (Ochoa and Duran 2011).

The downward spiral of the National football team helped media shy away further from the sport. As players left to play for the more lucrative basketball leagues or to settle into their careers, and the National Team suffering setbacks in international play, media coverage dwindled even more. Tony Siddayao, acknowledged as the dean of Filipino sportswriters, slowly shifted to covering basketball. And according to Sison, the death of former football manager Ricky Llanos, who served as sports editor for *The Manila Times*, was an important milestone in football coverage in the country, sealing its fate (Ochoa and Duran 2011).



### **E. Relevance of Sports to Media and the Society**

It appears quite easy to dismiss sports as merely child's play, as a pastime that is not as important as issues such as governance, the economy, or public health and safety. After all, sport is "at once both trivial and serious, inconsequential yet of symbolic significance" (Sugden and Tomlinson 1994 cited in Boyles and Haynes 2009). Life still goes on even after an epic loss in a game of considerable implications such as the World Cup, as is the case of England (Kuper and Szymanski 2009). However, sport is intertwined with society, and it inevitably bears the latter's imprint in every aspect and possible manifestation (Kennedy and Hills 2009). Sport may be described as one of the great passions of the twentieth century as well as the current age (Boyles and Haynes 2009), but a deeper examination will reveal how sport is as much a part of everyday life as much as it is an important staple of the daily news.

From the perspective of the intangibles, sport is an essential part of the culture of any society, and may even be said to be at its very heart. Baseball is a central part of American culture, cricket and Aussie Rules in Australian life, Gaelic games matter much in Ireland, cricket and basketball are essential in the Caribbean, rugby union is vital to Welsh and New Zealand identities, and football is the world's most important game (Boyles and Haynes 2009). As such, sport is a key cultural institution in the construction of a national identity (Smart 2005). It is located deeply within collective social sensibility (Eco 1987 cited in Smart 2005) and cuts across all manner of social and political divisions with its popularity and appeal (Smart 2005). In short, sport is very much a part of human individual and social make-up, with implications going beyond the confines of the pitch or the stadia (Boyles and Haynes 2009).

As discussed earlier, sport is seen as entertainment, making it a natural partner with media. Sport is also an escape from the disillusionment and disorganization

experienced by society during periods of great upheaval, such as the World Wars. Sports figures in particular are subject to a certain level of hero worship, providing individuals an example they can aspire to as well as taking comfort in the humanity of these athletes, that they are “one of them,” despite the realization that they may never be like them at all (Smart 2005). Sport in this sense is important to creating the concept of identity, as it “offers a source of collective identification and community expression for those who follow teams and individuals” (Sugden and Tomlinson 1994 cited in Boyles and Haynes 2009).

Sport is also of vital economic importance, identified by the Henley Center as the sixth largest employment sector in England in 1985, and as far back as 1939, cited by Mass Observation as the biggest English industry (Kuper 2003 and Mason 1989 cited in Smart 2005). Similarly, the 2008 Beijing Olympics cost China up to £20million to host and required 400,000 Chinese volunteers and 100,000 members of the army and the police to ensure the comfort and safety of 10,708 athletes (Elmer 2008 cited in Kennedy and Hills 2009). The opening ceremony alone was rendered a breathtaking spectacle with acclaimed Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou directing a cast of 10,000 people (Kennedy and Hills 2009).

Sport is invariably interwoven with global capitalism. Sporting events of varying scale provide useful platforms for towns and cities to attract international investment and corner a share of the tourism industry. The bodies of sports people are conspicuously marked with the logos of global brands, transforming athletes into effective marketing vehicles and identifying their qualities as goods for mass consumption. On the other hand, success in the sporting field is used to represent national success and to promote government policies. In this view, sport is inherently connected to the political and

economic aspects of society, and the global implications of this connection are quite hard to ignore (Kennedy and Hills 2009).

Considering these examples of sport and its significance to society, it may be safe to say that sporting events are definitely worth the attention of media. Sport matters to thousands of players and fans all across the globe (Boyles and Haynes 2009), and for media to deny access to a significant portion of the public may be considered quite unthinkable. Historically, media has dominated as well as documented the history of sport (Boyles and Haynes 2009), and the rise of interactive agents such as social media further strengthens this unique and inherent partnership (Jackson 2012).

It should be noted, though, that not all sporting events are what Dayan and Katz (1992) defines as “media events.” These are newsworthy occurrences that: a) have the capability to *interrupt* the normal routine of everyday lives, including regular programming; b) the interruption *monopolizes* reportage on a significant scale, with most channels devoting their attention and coverage to it and leaving only a few outlets outside the loop; c) it is happening *live*, creating a palpable sense of uncertainty and tension; and d) these happen in an *outside location*, that is, it is happening outside the control and confines of the media outlet (Dayan and Katz 1992).

While games on a local context may be interruptions of normal routine, or happen live and on a remote broadcast, this may not be enough to consider such as a media event. Dayan and Katz (1992) explain further:

These...*electrify very large audiences*—a nation, several nations, or the world. They are gripping, enthralling. They are characterized by a *norm of viewing* in which people tell each other that it is mandatory to view, that they must put all else aside. The unanimity of the networks in presenting the same event underlines the worth, even the obligation, of viewing. They cause viewers to

*celebrate* the event by gathering before the television set in groups, rather than alone. Often the audience is given an active role in the celebration. Figuratively, at least, these events induce people to dress up, rather than dress down, to watch television. These broadcasts *integrate* societies in a collective heartbeat and evoke a *renewal of loyalty* to the society and its legitimate authority.

Given these factors, one may now say that sporting events such as the Olympics, the Super Bowl, or the World Cup may be considered legitimate media events. What could probably qualify as a true media sport event in the Philippines would be a boxing match featuring pound-for-pound king Manny Pacquiao, which regularly brings the whole country to a standstill (Johnston 2012). With the World Cup being a media event, could the same be said for football in Philippines? This study will attempt to find out.

### **III. FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

#### **A. Introduction**

Previous studies exploring the role of mass media in society have shown how mediums of communication such as newspapers, TV, radio, and the Internet interact with the audience, as well as the effects of the audience in the crafting of the message. In this section, the study will explore the concepts and theories that will likely show how Metro Manila newspapers influence their readership with regard to preferences between basketball and football.

#### **B. Concepts**

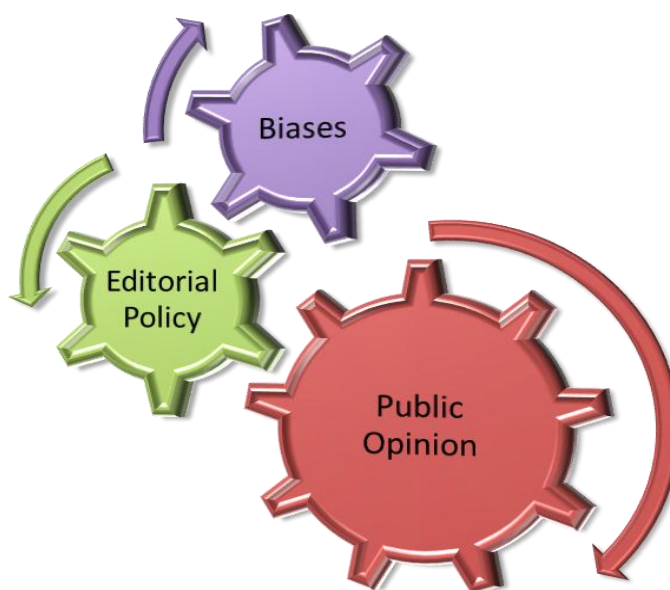
The apparent disparity between the coverage of basketball and football in Metro Manila newspapers may be explained through two important concepts. First is the power of media to influence society through the messages it sends to the audience. Historical experience has shown that media, and newspapers in particular, have been able to craft expectations and create certain mindsets through specific biases. Second is the effect of market-driven forces on the crafting of the message itself, with the audience likely dictating to the medium which messages it will more likely accept, as this act gives the most benefit to the party creating the message in terms of economic or idealistic dividends.

##### ***1. Media as an Influence***

Historically, media has been shown to influence the way people think through the messages it projects towards its audience. Media has shown certain levels of bias that aid in the creation of stereotypes and the formation of certain mindsets that lead the

audience to take specific action. Stereotypes, in turn, are formed by the persons behind the newspaper, who have personal biases that effectively influence editorial policy, despite a publication's efforts and claims of objectivity. Newspapers are, after all, run by people, whose prejudices invariably show up in the angles, slants, and space allocations of a particular story or issue (Mwambwa 2009).

Figure 1. *Media as the driving force in influencing the public*



*The personal biases and prejudices of the editorial staff drive the publication's editorial policy, which, in turn, influences or turns public opinion for or against a particular issue (Mwambwa 2009).*

Studies of media in the United States, for example, have repeatedly established the presence of political slants that become evident in the messages media outlets send out to their audiences. These messages in turn influence the audience to act in a

particular manner, such as voting for or against a particular candidate. This was especially true in the case of the 2005 Virginia gubernatorial elections, where readers of the left-leaning *Washington Post* were found to be more likely to vote Democrat (Gerber, Karlan and Bergan 2007).

Similarly, media has been found to create and reinforce stereotypes, especially with regard to gender as well as race. This is particularly true in the form of sparse coverage for women in sports, despite their high participation, with exposure limited only to women who have reached a very high level of achievement, such as Olympic champions. For the most part, media refuses to acknowledge the existence of women athletes and administrators, reinforcing the prevailing notion that sports is a man's world. In instances that women in sport are given media exposure, this is done mostly through a male perspective or in relation to men in similar fields (Mwambwa 2009).

An important aspect of the role and influence of media is that media has, in fact, actively worked to further its own agenda specifically in the realm of sports. The 19<sup>th</sup> century publication *Spirit of the Times*, for example, worked hard to promote cricket with the aim of making it America's national game. The effort, however, failed remarkably (Nugent 1929 cited in Bryant and Holt 2009). On the other hand, publications such as the *Sporting Life* and the *Sporting Times* both covered baseball and helped promote the game among the middle- and upper-class readers who subscribed regularly to these two magazines. This effort helped popularize baseball across all levels of the economic spectrum, paving the way to its acceptance as the national pastime (Bryant and Holt 2009).

The same can be said in the rise of popularity for American college football. College games of this period were mostly seen as gatherings of the Ivy League elite, and news reports focused mostly on who was attending instead of how the game

developed. This meant that to be mentioned in a news article covering the game was a sort of status symbol, and attendance and interest in college football increased significantly. Publications went further in explaining the procedures of American football to an interested public, thus codifying the rules of the game, and eventually giving birth to traditions and celebrated rivalries in the sport (Bryant and Holt 2009).

Similarly, media has the power to construct the image of celebrity among sports figures. In the period of chaos following the First World War, media created heroes out of athletes in order to appease the public's collective disillusionment. The blistering pace of innovation in information and communications technology has likewise led sports organizations and individual athletes to create specific images of themselves for public consumption. The pace has been such that former notions of greatness in athletes—specifically, a remarkable athletic feat or one of significance social importance—has been replaced by commercial viability and marketability, and it is feared that the image-building capability of media has somehow spun out of control (Smart 2005).

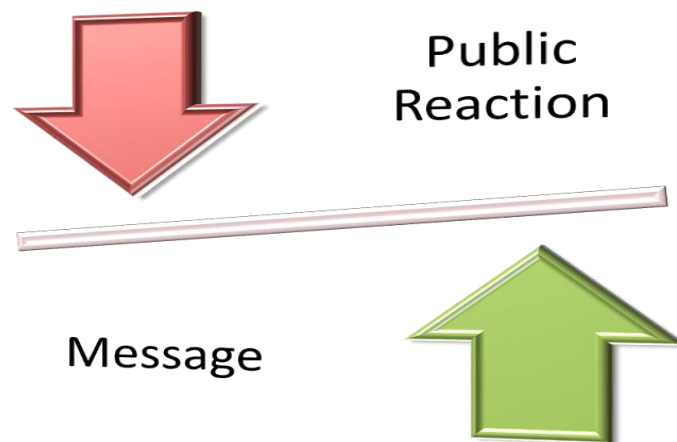
It may then be said that news publications play an important role in creating certain mindsets in the audience, leading to the conduct of certain actions. In the context of sports, media—news publications in particular—has been found to influence the audience in their conduct towards certain sports, leading either to their rejection of a game (as in the case of cricket), or accepting and eventually embracing a sport (as in the case of baseball and American football). The creation of the cult of celebrity by media may also be said to be instrumental in the acceptance or rejection of a particular sport, depending on how media markets the appeal of a specific athlete or sporting organization.



### ***Market-Driven Content***

While studies have shown that news publications do further their own agendas, it may also be said that the audience *does* have a role in determining the content that they read in the pages of the newspaper or the online publication. In this sense, a reader may subscribe to a particular publication because it meets his or her specific need.

Figure 2. *Public reaction as the driving force in influencing the media's message*



*Public reaction to a specific message determines the level of acceptance of a publication; thus, audiences determine what content goes into a newspaper's pages.*

An example of this concept at work may be seen in the way Americans perceive bias in media. Media outfits in the United States are owned by corporations, which increase the likelihood that certain slants are propagated for profit instead of ideological leanings. Similarly, from a demand-side perspective, audiences may perceive news as a form of entertainment and look for content that will subscribe to their individual preferences and leanings. In response, news organizations will present their news in a

particular manner in order to cater to a specific clientele and thus maximize opportunities for profit (Baron 2004).

Market forces in particular may also be tagged in the reinforcement of popular stereotypes in media, especially towards women. Demand-side restrictions are thus to blame for the underrepresentation of women sports in general (Hilliard 1984 cited in Higgs, Weiller and Martin 2003), as women's sports are seen mostly as having lower ratings as compared to men's sports (Mwambwa 2009). On the other hand, in instances where women's sports are given coverage, media serves to reinforce prevailing views of women by highlighting events that are viewed as traditionally "feminine," such as gymnastics and figure skating (Shifflett and Revelle 1994 cited in Higgs, Weiller and Martin 2003). This approach was seen to provide high ratings for media networks (Remnich 1996 cited in Higgs, Weiller and Martin 2003).

This concept, taken in the context of this study, thus implies that Metro Manila publications contain more basketball coverage as compared to football because audiences *want* more basketball. This means that readership preference dictates the news content of the sports page, instead of being influenced by editorial policy.

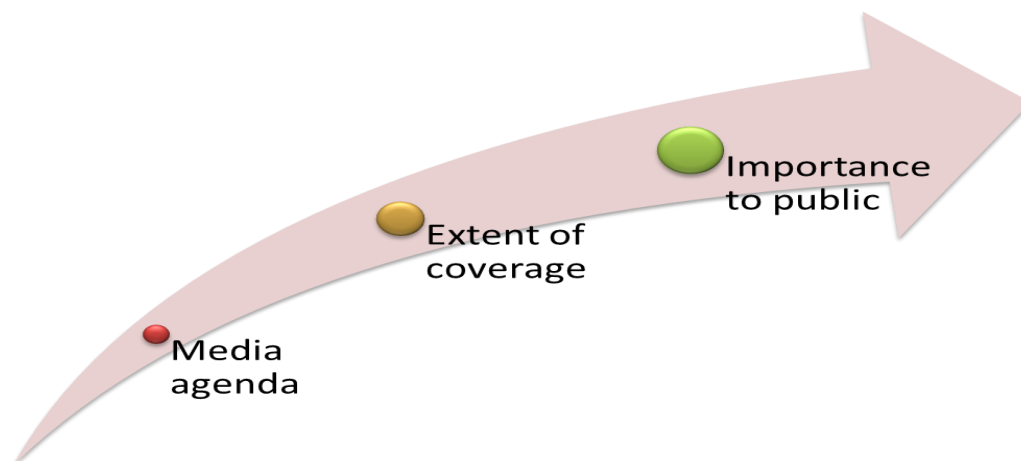
### **C. Theories**

Media does not reflect reality, but instead, through specific words and images, depict or represent people, places, events, and issues in a specific manner. This school of thought operates on the theory that media messages are constructed through a series of complex choices that determine what the public should know (Gasher et al 2007). The main idea of this line of thinking is what is known as *agenda-setting*. While researchers differ in their views, a similar approach called *framing* also utilizes a certain amount of "spin" or slant in the messages, but requires a specific construct in order to be effective.

### 1. Agenda-Setting

McCombs and Shaw (1972, cited in Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007) believed that there was a direct correlation between the emphasis placed by media on certain issues and the importance that mass audiences attribute to these issues. This is the basic premise of *agenda-setting*, and is most likely characterized by the amount of exposure media gives to a certain issue, measured in terms of air time or placement.

Figure 3. *Direct correlation between media agenda and the importance the public attributes to a specific issue*



*The more coverage media ascribes to a particular issue, the more likely it is for the public to perceive that issue as important. This premise forms the foundation of agenda-setting (McCombs and Shaw 1972 cited in Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).*

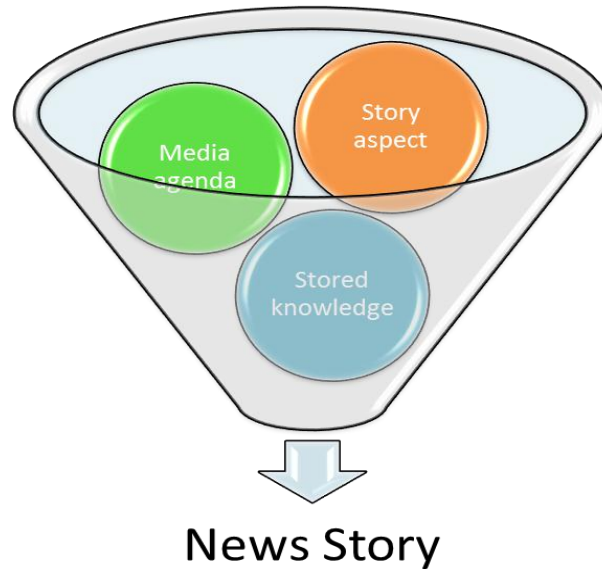
Health care in Canada, for example, has tremendous news value, often garnering front page coverage. Hardly a day goes by that a health-related story goes unreported in Canadian media (Gasher et al 2007). It comes as no surprise then that health ranks as a number one priority issue for Canadians, with as much as 85 percent

of the population treating it as the foremost government spending priority (Cobb 2002 cited in Gasher et al 2007). In this case, Canadian media help to specify the issues as well as the boundaries for the discussion of health care because media serves to reinforce certain conventions and thus determine the legitimacy of various issues and solutions (Wallack 1990 cited in Gasher et al 2007). With a topic as broad as health, however, it is important for media editors and reporters to determine which stories and issues to highlight, which then leads to the inevitable effect of the public giving importance to certain issues over others (Gasher et al 2007).

## **2. *Framing***

A somewhat deeper level of agenda-setting is referred to as *framing*, wherein issues are “framed” or presented a certain way in order to influence the public into attributing importance to a particular concern. Frames are representations or modes of presentation used to present information in such a way that it resonates with the audience by appealing to underlying themes or concepts that the audience can easily relate with (Shoemaker and Reese 1996 cited in Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Framing is especially helpful in presenting relatively complex issues, which may be restricted by limitations on air time and available page space. This is done by relating the issue at hand with experiences or stored knowledge of the audience, thus facilitating a more practical understanding of the issue (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).

Figure 4. *Framing in the media*



*Specific aspects of an issue or event are selected either due to constraints in reporting (such as space or airtime) and are affected by the media agenda. The audience's ability to comprehend the issue in terms of stored knowledge is likewise considered, with the resultant news story appealing to what the audience already knows in order to generate a clearer understanding of the issue (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).*

Bias in the media, for example, may be grouped into two distinct categories. The first category refers to ideology, which determines whether a media outlet is leaning to the right or the left. The second may be described as the manner in which a particular issue is presented in order to make it a socially-relevant and understandable story. This is referred to as *spin*. Any attempt to present a complicated topic such as a political issue or a man-made tragedy in a simplified manner will inevitably lead to the elimination of certain aspects of the story, thus creating a certain level of bias, unwittingly or intentionally (Mullainathan and Shleifer 2002). While ideologies may be presented intentionally, framing more often happens in the latter case, inadvertently or deliberately,

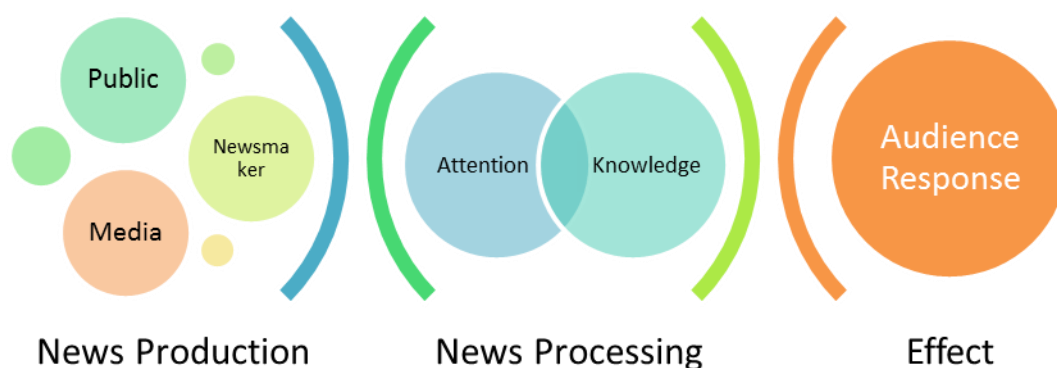
as news agents seek to present the story in a way as to captivate the interest of the audience.

### 3. Considerations

#### a. News production, processing, and actual effect

Agenda-setting and framing are not independent systems, and as such, several essential factors are to be considered in the operationalization of these two related theories. The first consideration is that of news production. Newsmakers, along with the media entities that cover them, all have their own agendas. As the focus of the news, newsmakers will want to be seen in a certain way, tailoring their message in a manner that will project them in the most favorable way. Similarly, the media, as well as the public, will have certain ideas of the news in question, thus shaping the story in a particular way (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).

Figure 5. *Important considerations in agenda-setting and framing*



1) Newsmakers, media, and the public all have specific agendas that influence the way news is presented. 2) The level of attention as well as the background knowledge of the

*audience are essential to the way news is processed. 3) Effects of agenda-setting and framing differ based on amount of exposure and how information is presented (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).*

Likewise, the way the audience processes the news as presented by the media is affected by two important factors. First is the amount of attention that the audience actually gives to the issue being presented by media. It is in this aspect that agenda-setting and framing differ greatly, as attention to messages is important for a framing effect to occur, whereas significant exposure is enough for agenda-setting to happen (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). The second is the amount of background information or stored knowledge the audience has regarding the issue being presented. Chong and Druckman (2007 cited in Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007) state that the repetition of frames is essential for those with a weak background of the issue in order to be rendered effective, while those with a significantly strong knowledge base are more likely to lead in comprehensive discussions of the issue. On the other hand, a relatively lame framing effort may backfire on certain individuals, leading them to react in a manner opposite of the intended effect.

The third aspect of consideration is the actual effect the constituted message has on the audience. Agenda-setting rests on the premise that audience reaction is determined by the amount of exposure an issue receives. It may then be said that it is not the information per se that achieves the intended effect, but rather the fact that the issue has received significant exposure that allows the public to give it a certain level of importance (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Framing, on the other hand, depends greatly on how the issue has been described in such a way as to appeal to the underlying schemas of the audience. The difference between the two thus rests on

*whether* the audience is thinking about an issue and *how* (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).

### ***b. Gatekeeping***

The question of who determines what goes into the news is equally important in the discussion of agenda-setting and framing. Traditionally, this role has been fulfilled by editors and policy-makers in the newsroom, and even reporters who exercise a certain level of self-censorship. However, with the arrival of social media, the restrictions exercised by gatekeepers are effectively bypassed as information becomes more and more “crowd-sourced.” This, in effect, has led to the proliferation of misleading and often inaccurate information, and has likewise put the credibility of established information sources into question (Giridhadaras 2011).

The implications of the loss of gatekeeping privileges by traditional media are yet to be fully understood. In the context of this study, this may mean that the way certain sports are accepted by the public does not rely on traditional media exposure, but in the way influential members of the public promote them in order to encourage acceptance or rejection. As gatekeeping goes into the public realm, agenda-setting and framing may thus rest more on the audience instead of the media institutions that seek to propagate their respective messages.

## **D. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

In view of the concepts and theories discussed above, this study identifies four aspects essential to the study. These are the media agenda, public reaction, league performance, and public acceptance.



Media has the capacity to formulate an agenda that it deems important for the public to know. In terms of sports coverage, this was seen in efforts of news publications in extending awareness of American football and baseball in the US, which led to their eventual acceptance (Bryant and Holt 2009) and in the way basketball has grown in the Philippines (Iñigo 2011). With constant coverage, media was able to influence public reaction. This may be physically manifested by the rise of fan clubs and team supporters (Schramm and Klimmt 2003, cited in Beck and Bosshart 2003).

The sports league, on the other hand, is also recognized as a newsmaker, having a role in promoting itself favorably towards its intended audience. With the public reacting to the media agenda, the league is pushed to perform accordingly, delivering events that meet audience expectations. As the media drives the public reaction, which in turn influences the league's performance, public acceptance of the sport is encouraged, thereby persuading media to turn out coverage favorable to both the public and the league.

The study thus recognizes three major factors in the promotion of sport: media, public, and the league itself. All have roles to play in the way a sport gains acceptance to the general public. The study recognizes that media has the power to drive public acceptance towards football, for example, but that the overall aim of making football known throughout the country also rests on the way audiences react to coverage and how the league itself performs.

Figure 6. *The study framework*



1) Media provides the agenda, to promote a sport. 2) The media influences public reaction with its coverage. 3) Favorable public reaction influences the league to package itself more favorably towards the audience, leading to its acceptance. 4) The sport becomes widely accepted, in turn influencing the media to provide coverage to satisfy its audience base. As such, each aspect may be considered interdependent of each other.

### **E. Operational Framework**

The primary objectives of this study are as follows:

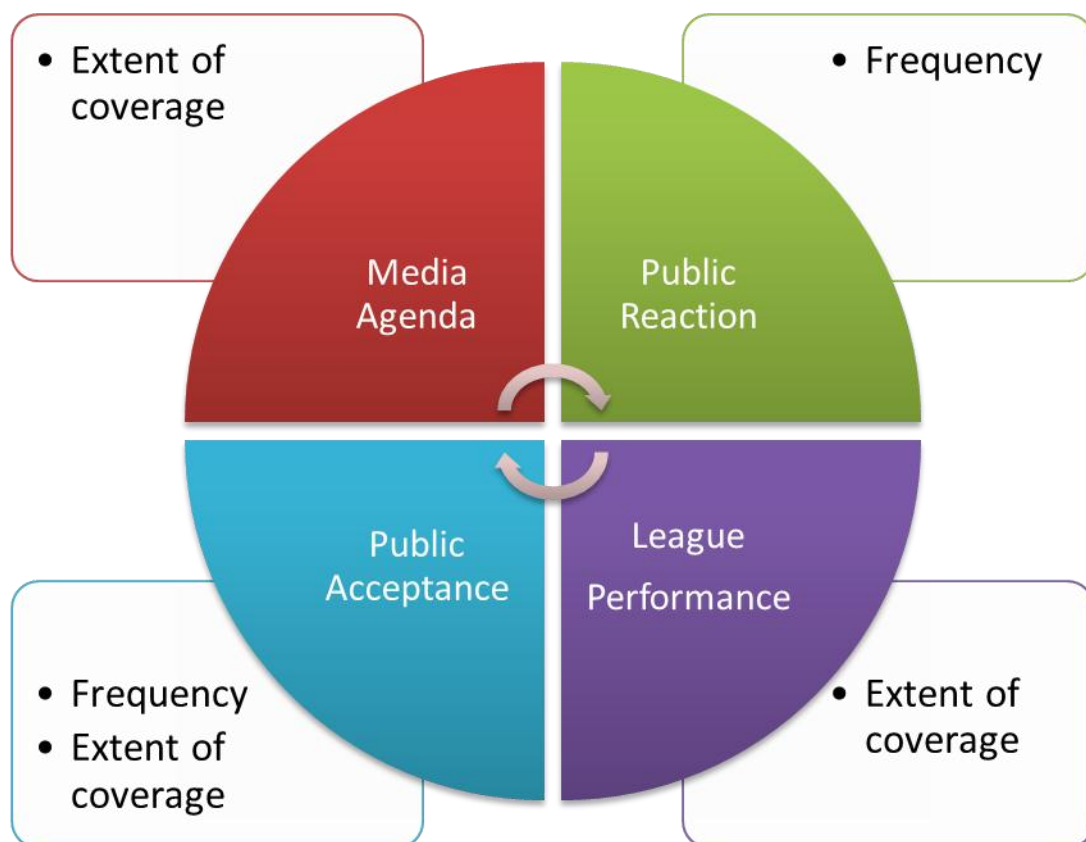
- Determine the gap in press coverage of the UFL in comparison with that of the PBA in major newspapers in Metro Manila.
- Determine the possible implications of the perceived gap in press coverage of the UFL on the development of the league and of Philippine football.

- Determine the existence of an apparent bias towards basketball on sports coverage by Philippine newspapers and its possible implications.

In view of these objectives, the study has so far attempted to establish the relevance of sports to the media and the public by providing a comprehensive history of how sports coverage has evolved through the ages. The implications of sport to public good and to the media, mostly in social and economic terms, have also been explored in the previous chapters.

In the previous section, it has also been established that the major factors involved in the promotion of basketball and football include the media, the public, and the leagues themselves.

Figure 7. *The operational framework*



The operational framework of this study, as shown above, posits that the four aspects (media agenda, public reaction, league performance, and public acceptance) may be measured in terms of frequency and the extent of coverage accorded to the sport in the newspapers. Media agenda in promoting a specific sport may be measured in terms of the coverage it extends towards that sport; in the case of this study, basketball and football. Since the leagues are also considered newsmakers, the amount of coverage they garner may also indicate their performance both as a newsworthy event and as a public spectacle.

On the other hand, public reaction to basketball and football may be measured in terms of frequency. This answers the question of whether the sport enjoys a minimum level of acceptance in the target audience in order for it to be given regular coverage in the newspaper pages. If the acceptance of the sport is widespread enough, amounting to a public clamor, this would naturally influence the news publication to give it a considerable amount of exposure and on a regular basis. As such, public acceptance may then be measured in terms of both frequency and the extent of coverage.

In summary, this study will then determine how much importance (agenda) the media gives towards basketball and football, and how the PBA and the UFL react towards their audiences (performance). Equally important, the study will try to find out how the public reacts to the media agenda and the performances of the respective leagues, and how this influences the acceptance of basketball and football in the country.

#### **IV. METHODOLOGY**

Is there a gap in the coverage of the United Football League by Metro Manila newspapers, as compared to that of the Philippine Basketball Association? Are Metro Manila newspapers favoring basketball in their coverage of sports news? These are questions this study aims to address, with the intent of finding out the existence of this media gap and to find out its implications on the long-term existence of UFL, the development of football in the Philippines, as well as on government policy regarding sports.

This study utilized content analysis in order to determine the existence of the media coverage gap. Content analysis is an objective systematic description of the content of communication (Berelson 1952 cited in Okorie and Oyedepo 2011). This involves the study and analysis of certain variables in communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner (Kerlinger 2000 cited in Okorie and Oyedepo 2011). In this view, this study used content analysis in order to determine the importance Metro Manila newspapers give to the UFL and the PBA in terms of frequency and prominence.

##### **A. Sampling size**

The sample size was limited to news articles, feature stories, and sports columns published within the duration of the 2011-2012 UFL season. Ad placements by the UFL or advertisers supporting the league were not considered as part of the coverage, but were likewise noted for discussion purposes. While the sports section served as the primary source of data, front-page reportage was also included in the samples for study.

Articles and stories on the Philippine Azkals per se, however, were not included in the content analysis, unless these were in the context of the UFL. These stories,

however, were also included in specific cases in order to form a basis of comparison, such as periods where league games and Azkals matches happen to coincide.

The *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *Philippine STAR*, and *Manila Bulletin* served as the primary data sources of the study. The selection of these publications was based on their recognition as the top national broadsheets in terms of readership (Nielsen Media Research 2012 cited in PDI 2012). Daily issues published during the 2011-12 UFL season were examined and analyzed. The 2011-12 season of the UFL ran from January 14, 2012 to June 30, 2012.

## **B. Implications**

Interviews of personalities related to sports news coverage, the United Football League, the Philippine Basketball Association, and the Philippine Football Federation were conducted in order to determine the perception of a media gap in football and its possible implications. The interview sought to address the following questions:

1. Is there a gap in the coverage of football, particularly the United Football League, in the Philippines?
2. What do you think are the implications of this gap in media coverage on the UFL and in the development of football in the country? How do you think this will affect government policy? What is needed in order to close this “gap”?
3. Do you think there is an apparent bias towards basketball in Philippine sports media?
4. Is Philippine football worth attributing the same amount of news coverage accorded to events such as Manny Pacquiao’s fights? What must be done in order to elevate Philippine football to the status of a “media event”?

5. What do you think are the implications of social media on the long-term promotion and development of the UFL and Philippine football in general?

The respondents from these different stakeholder groups were treated as *resource persons*, as experts with specialized and significant knowledge about the production and processing of sports news, and the general situation of basketball and football in the Philippines.

The general aim of these interviews is to attempt to obtain information from these experts. This information was then analyzed to serve, along with the processed data, as the basis for formulating conclusions with regard to the status of the UFL and the PBA and their exposure to coverage by Metro Manila newspapers.

## V. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Preliminary findings of the study reveal that, indeed, there appears to be a significant disparity in the extent of coverage between the Philippine Basketball Association and the United Football League. A detailed content analysis of the sports pages of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *Philippine STAR*, and the *Manila Bulletin* also show pertinent data with regard to the coverage and hence, the level of acceptance, of basketball compared with that of football.

### A. Findings

A total of 2,560 news articles on basketball and football were surveyed for the purposes of this study. These news articles were taken mostly from the sports pages of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (PDI), *Manila Bulletin* (MB) and the *Philippine STAR* (PS), although in some instances, front-page coverage such as photos, articles, and news bits was also considered. The March issues, which featured the Asian Football Confederation Challenge Cup, and the June issues, which featured the NBA Finals, were particularly examined in this manner. Of this number, the *STAR* had the most number of news articles pertaining to both basketball and football.

Table 1. *Total number of articles surveyed from the three leading broadsheets*

Philippine Daily Inquirer	831
Manila Bulletin	745
Philippine STAR	984
<b>Total number of articles surveyed</b>	<b>2560</b>



A total of 494 daily issues from the three broadsheets provided the data (Table 1). Of this number, *Manila Bulletin* had the most number of issues available (174), followed by the *STAR* (164) and by PDI (156). Some of the copies of the issues were unavailable at the University of the Philippines Main Library, as was the case for the February 1-7 issues of PDI and the *STAR*, as well as the June 8-15 issues of PDI. This was due to the fact that these issues were being encoded or recorded into the University Library database at the time. Likewise, PDI and PS both had issues unavailable on April 6 and 7 due to the observance of Good Friday and Black Saturday.

The issues analyzed started from January 8, 2012, one week before the start of the 2011-2012 UFL season, to June 30, 2012, four days after the league's final games (Table 2).

Table 2. *Total number of issues surveyed by the study*

<b>Month</b>	<b>PDI</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>PS</b>
January	24	24	24
February	22	29	22
March	31	31	31
April	28	30	28
May	29	31	31
June	22	29	28
<b>Total Issues</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>164</b>

News articles pertaining to the PBA included match reports and league news. Reportage on the PBA Developmental League (D-League) was also included in the survey. Mentions on articles on the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas, and in some

cases, the college basketball scene, were also included as part of PBA coverage.

Columns by sports writers were also examined and included in the study.

The study found out that in a six-month period, the PBA had more coverage in the sports pages of the three leading broadsheets as compared to the UFL. Of the three, the *STAR* had the most number of articles covering both the PBA (329) and the UFL (70). The *Bulletin*, on the other hand, had the least number of articles devoted to the UFL, tallying only 19 for the whole football league season from January 14 until June 30, 2012 (Table 3).

Table 3. *Comparison of coverage of the PBA and the UFL in the three major broadsheets*

<b>Publication</b>	<b>PBA/D-League</b>	<b>UFL</b>
PDI	277	69
MB	282	19
PS	329	70

The study also found out that the three broadsheets covered both basketball and football, with several beats under each category. Aside from the PBA and the D-League, coverage was also extended to collegiate basketball leagues and events (Universities Athletic Association of the Philippines or UAAP, National Collegiate Athletic Association or NCAA, Father Martin Cup, and the Fil-Oil Flying V Preseason Tournament), the NBA, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Basketball League (ABL). Coverage for football, on the other hand, was composed of the UFL, the Philippine Azkals, world football (English Premier League, Euro 2012, Major League Soccer), and collegiate football (mostly UAAP).

News articles and columns on these beats were tallied and included in the content analysis. It should also be noted that in some cases, coverage pertaining to the US NCAA, specifically during the period of the Final Four semifinals known as March Madness, was included in the tallying of the collegiate basketball news. The results are shown in the table below:

Table 4. *Comparison of coverage of the PBA, the UFL, and other basketball and football news beats in the three major broadsheets*

Publication	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	College Football	Total Articles Surveyed
<b>PDI</b>	277	105	177	82	69	91	23	7	831
<b>MB</b>	282	122	169	94	19	42	14	3	745
<b>PS</b>	329	171	227	81	70	95	6	5	984

Taken collectively, it appears that basketball has the edge over football in terms of coverage and frequency. The *STAR* logged the most number of articles for basketball (808), followed by *Bulletin* (667) and PDI (641). The *Inquirer*, however, posted the most number of football articles (190) compared to the *STAR* (176). The *Bulletin* gave football the least coverage in the six-month period covered by the study (Table 5).

Table 5. *Comparison of coverage of basketball and football in three major broadsheets*

Publication	Basketball	Football	Total Articles
<b>PDI</b>	641	190	831
<b>MB</b>	667	78	745
<b>PS</b>	808	176	984
<b>Total Articles</b>	2116	444	<b>2560</b>

## B. Analysis

Major Metro Manila newspapers do seem to favor basketball over football in terms of coverage and frequency of publication. This is seen in the disparate number of news stories covering the PBA and other basketball events compared to the UFL, world and college football, and even the Azkals.

Table 6. *Comparison of monthly coverage of the PBA and the UFL in the Inquirer, Bulletin, and STAR for the extent of the UFL 2011-2012 season*

Publication	PDI		MB		PS	
Month	PBA/D-League	UFL	PBA/D-League	UFL	PBA/D-League	UFL
January	53	15	49	4	62	15
February	35	9	32	2	39	14
March	52	7	50	5	58	12
April	53	13	51	1	61	11
May	48	13	53	1	58	10
June	36	12	47	6	51	8
<b>Total</b>	277	69	282	19	329	70
<b>Percentage</b>	33%	8%	38%	3%	33%	7%
<b>Total Articles Surveyed</b>	831		745		984	

The *STAR* recorded the most number of articles covering the UFL (70) and the PBA (329). It should be noted, however, that PDI has a little over two weeks' worth of issues that were not included in the study due to their unavailability and would probably have caused a noticeable difference in the numbers.

Nevertheless, Table 6 clearly shows that there is a gap in the coverage of the UFL compared with the PBA. News about the PBA and the PBA D-League accounted

for 33 percent of articles surveyed in both the *Inquirer* and the *STAR*; the number is higher in the *Bulletin*, which has 38 percent of its news stories devoted to the PBA and its developmental arm. Of a total of 2,560 articles surveyed, the UFL only had 8 percent coverage in PDI, 7 percent in the *STAR*, and 3 percent in the *Bulletin*.

Table 7. *Comparison of coverage of the PBA and the UFL in the Inquirer, Bulletin, and STAR in relation to other news beats*

Publication	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	College Football	Total Articles Surveyed
<b>PDI</b>	277	105	177	82	69	91	23	7	831
<b>MB</b>	282	122	169	94	19	42	14	3	745
<b>PS</b>	329	171	227	81	70	95	6	5	984
<b>Total</b>	888	398	573	257	158	228	43	15	2560

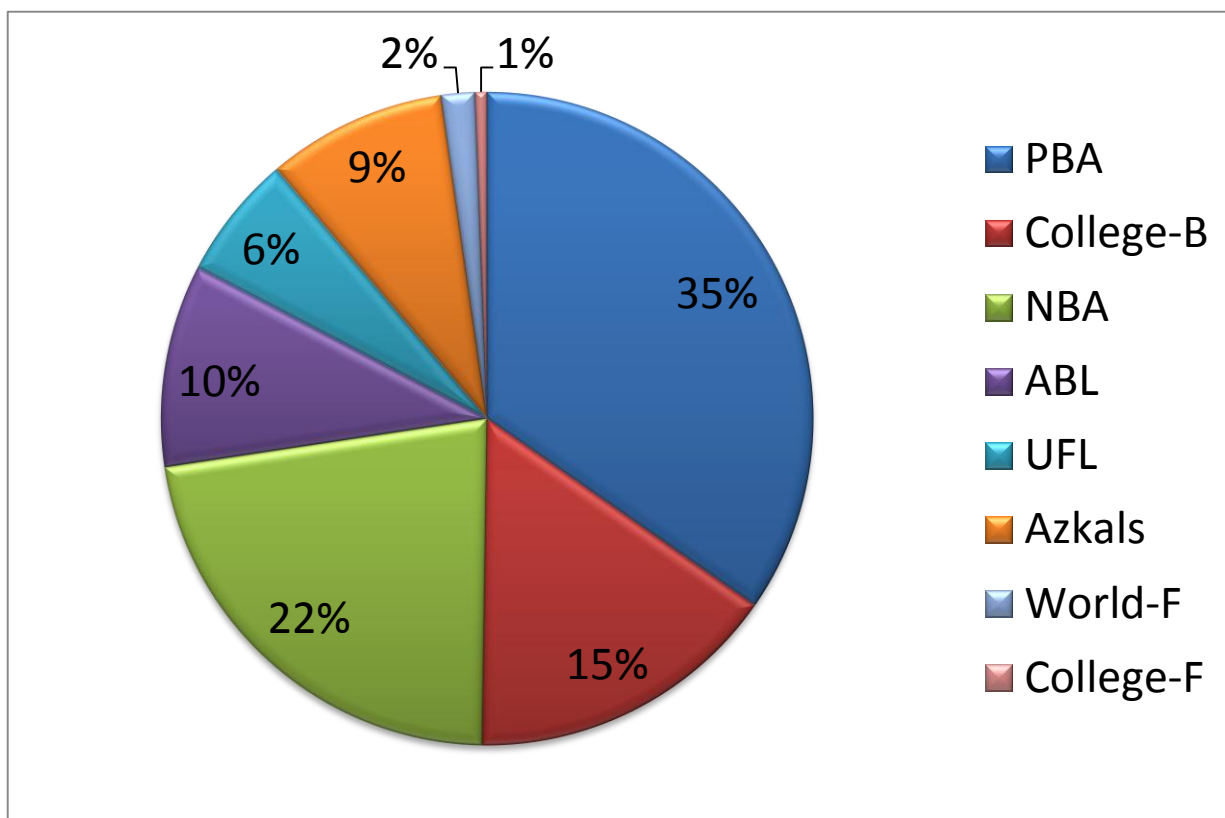
The gap becomes more apparent when coverage of the UFL is compared with other beats covering basketball as well as football in the same six-month period (Table 7). Table 5 previously showed that basketball amounted to 2,116 articles out of 2,560 articles surveyed, compared to 444 articles covering football. As much as 35 percent of this number covers the PBA, almost five times the total coverage allotted by the three major newspapers to the UFL.

It can be noted that coverage of the PBA is more or less on a regular basis, with at least one news article a day, in general. Coverage of the UFL, on the other hand, may be considered irregular and may be due to several essential factors (see Appendix A and B). UFL articles were highest in January for the *Inquirer* and the *STAR* because of the league's opening of the 2011-2012 season. This was not applicable with the *Bulletin*

which had its most number of articles in June, during the closing weeks of the league (6) as compared to its January rate (4) (Table 6).

Interestingly, coverage of the UFL seemed to taper off in both PDI and the *STAR*. This is most noticeable in the amount of coverage in the *STAR*, decreasing steadily until the league closing in June. The *Inquirer* coverage of the UFL dropped in February and March, probably due to increased coverage of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Challenge Cup and the sexual harassment scandal against the Azkals, which was the prevalent news at the time (Table 6; see also Appendix A and B).

Figure 8. *Comparison of coverage of the PBA and the UFL in the Inquirer, Bulletin, and STAR in relation to other news beats*



Coverage of the UFL championship games in June was most lacking in all three newspapers, although this was highest in the *Inquirer*. The UFL had to compete with the PBA, the NBA Finals, the Fil-Oil Flying V Preseason Finals, and the opening of the UAAP and the NCAA for exposure. Moreover, news of the Pacquiao-Bradley bout and its result occupied most of the pages of all three broadsheets within this period.

Of the three publications, only the *Inquirer* devoted a full article reporting the UFL champion (Global Football Club) although this was revealed two days after the event instead of the customary day after. However, the reportage was given less prominence compared to an article reporting the possibility of Alaska Milk leaving the PBA. Meanwhile, the *Bulletin* only gave two inches of column space in its report of the UFL championship, while the *STAR* did not give any mention of this whatsoever, despite publishing an article on the impending championship games on June 26 (Appendix B).

While the Azkals had front-page coverage in March during their run to the AFC Challenge Cup semifinals, the UFL did not have this same exposure. This is in comparison to occasional front-page photos or headlines on the Ronda Pilipinas or the Le Tour Pilipinas cycling events. This is highlighted even more by front-page coverage of the NBA Finals, culminating in LeBron James' first championship, especially in the *STAR* (Appendix B).

For the duration of the 2011-2012 UFL season, basketball accounted for up to 83 percent of sports news coverage. The UFL, in comparison, had only 6 percent for the same period, and almost five times less than the 35 percent coverage given to the PBA (Figure 8). Other sports stories—outside of football and basketball—given significant coverage during this period included the Ronda Pilipinas, Le Tour Pilipinas, Palarong Pambansa, the international tennis circuit, the Masters golf tournament, the Philippine Open golf tournament, Pacquiao versus Bradley, and the 2012 London Olympics.

Considering these events, the 6 percent given to the UFL shows how the league is competing for space and exposure along with other sports, while the PBA and other basketball stories are almost assured of regular coverage.

### **C. Implications**

Several prominent sports writers in the country were contacted for this study. Two of them responded: Craig Burrows, a social media practitioner and media officer for the Philippine Azkals, and Mike Limpag of *SunStar Cebu*. Coco Torre, head of marketing for the United Football League, also gave his views on the issues at hand.

Unfortunately, PBA officials as well as the editors of the *Inquirer*, *Manila Bulletin*, and *STAR* did not return requests for interview for this study.

The interviews were conducted through email correspondence due to the hectic schedules of the resource persons. Discussion focused on the following questions:

1. Is there a gap in the coverage of football, particularly the United Football League, in the Philippines?
2. What do you think are the implications of this gap in media coverage on the UFL and in the development of football in the country? How do you think this will affect government policy? What is needed in order to close this “gap”?
3. Do you think there is an apparent bias towards basketball in Philippine sports media?
4. Is Philippine football worth attributing the same amount of news coverage accorded to events such as Manny Pacquiao’s fights? What must be done in order to elevate Philippine football to the status of a “media event”?
5. What do you think are the implications of social media on the long-term promotion and development of the UFL and Philippine football in general?



All three resource persons agreed that there is indeed a plausible gap in the reportage of UFL events in Metro Manila newspapers. According to Limpag, this was mostly due to the fact that the PBA has its own media bureau and press corps. This made it more convenient for the league to promote itself among the media, especially the newspapers, as news articles and league updates get circulated easily, to the point that releases from the PBA do not even get rewritten at all. Despite the fact that both the PBA and the UFL are play-for-pay leagues, the presence of a media bureau spelled the difference between the two in terms of media coverage.

Torre agreed that it was only natural for the PBA to have significant coverage given the fact that a majority of Filipinos follow the sport. However, he pointed out that media—especially broadcast TV—has been quite fair to the UFL in terms of coverage. He noted that at present, AKTV, the official UFL carrier, is now showing the league twice a week, at primetime hours no less, compared to thrice a week. Torre believes that with TV coverage of the UFL nearing the frequency of the PBA, the media gap is actually closing and that football will be in the national consciousness in due time.

As for the implications of this gap in the press, Burrows indicated that media is important to catch the attention of the public, particularly the young, in sustaining football as a developing sport. He also believed that football was a natural for Filipinos, and if the youth start playing, there will be more opportunities for sporting glory for the Philippines.

On the other hand, Limpag said that football in the Philippines will still survive, as it has in the past few years, even with scant media coverage, mainly due to social media. He also pointed out that at present, government only waits for increased media coverage on football to decide whether or not to support programs.

However, Limpag indicated that a widespread promotional blitz may be needed in order to raise awareness of football and the UFL. By “blitz”, he meant spending significantly in order to get page space in the newspapers, referring to different “rates” comparable with the level of publicity (see Appendix C). He also referred to the sports beat as an “old boys’ network,” where one can get press and media coverage by paying the right people in the business. Thus, for the UFL to close this media gap, the league can either choose to spend for publicity or simply wait for sports editors to realize that there is demand for football news.

Burrows, meanwhile, believes that a long-term vision is essential to close the gap. As much as ten years’ worth of youth playing football “in schools and for fun” are needed in order to produce players capable of competing in the international level.

Limpag was frank in saying that there is, indeed, a bias towards basketball in the sports pages of Metro Manila newspapers. This was mainly due to the fact that “sports editors and sportswriters represent your average Pinoy sports fan—and they are interested in—1.) Basketball, boxing, billiards and that odd hot chick.” He added that the sports pages’ lack of football coverage provides quite an accurate picture of the Philippine sports scene.

Burrows also said that while basketball deserved to be equally promoted with football, it has caused regression in football’s development mainly because of its widespread promotion. He believed that there was an apparent media bias towards basketball, although it was understandable for historical reasons, but that football was closer to being referred to as a national sport because it has deeper roots in the Filipino game of *sipa*.

Torre, on the other hand, disagreed with the notion of bias in the industry. He did note, however, that the press may be giving basketball more column space in the sports pages, but that the UFL is enjoying coverage comparable with the PBA over free TV.

As for being considered as a media event, the respondents agreed that football in the country at present does not have this status. Torre said that the league and Philippine football in general must always exceed people's expectations for this to happen, as exemplified in the Azkals' surprising run in their 2-0 defeat of Suzuki Cup champion Vietnam in 2010. Burrows believes that Philippine football needs to earn its right to be considered as such. Limpag pointed out that this could only happen if the Azkals book a berth in the World Cup, and that is still a significant way from the present. However, he also noted that Pacquiao did not become an overnight sensation, but became known mainly for his winning ways, and as such, the Azkals must continue to win—and to win big—in order to keep interest high for the sport.

Burrows said that social media will play a significant part in sustaining long-term promotion and development of the UFL. He specifically cited its advantage in creating relationships with the audiences that will allow them to feel connected to the sport. Torre likewise agreed, saying that with the Philippines as a “social media capital of the world,” social media plays a helpful role in promoting UFL events and activities. Limpag also added that social media has been primarily responsible for creating the interest currently surrounding the Azkals, including their official moniker. It thus remains to be seen whether traditional media—especially TV--will take the cue from social media and give substantial coverage to football and the UFL.

## VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### A. The complete picture

Out of the several thousand sports stories published for the duration of the 2011-2012 United Football League season, of which 2,560 were surveyed for this study, only 158 articles or 6 percent referred to the UFL or its events or personalities. This is in direct contrast to the 888 articles covering the Philippine Basketball Association for the same period, amounting to 35 percent of the total articles surveyed. The 2011-2012 season of the UFL ran for six months, from January 14, 2012 until June 30.

Through content analysis, the study has shown that there is a significant gap in coverage of the UFL compared to the PBA in the sports pages of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *Manila Bulletin*, and the *Philippine STAR*. Up to 33 percent of the sports stories in the *Inquirer* and the *STAR* pertain to the PBA, compared to only 8 and 7 percent, respectively, for the UFL. The gap is considerably high in the *Manila Bulletin*, with 38 percent of stories covering the PBA and only 3 percent referring to the UFL.

This disparity in press coverage is even more significant when taken in the context of the full extent of basketball news exposure in all three broadsheets. Basketball stories take up to 82 percent of sports news, while the UFL garners only 6 percent. Aside from basketball, the UFL also has to compete for column space alongside other sports and significant sporting events such as the Palarong Pambansa, the Olympics, international tennis and golf tournaments, and cycling races such as the Ronda Pilipinas and Le Tour Filipinas.

This assessment was confirmed by experts who also acknowledged the existence of a bias towards basketball in the sports department of newspapers. Not only is the PBA established as a league, but basketball itself as a sport enjoys a considerable

following both inside and outside the offices of these publications. The people writing the news tend to favor basketball because they represent the average Filipino sports fan. Add to this the fact that the PBA has the adequate promotional machinery in place, and because it delivers on people's expectations.

Although it is acknowledged that this lack in press coverage affects the way football is promoted across the country, it should also be noted that social media plays a significant role in plugging this gap. Even during the times that football was not given much attention prior to the Azkals' breakthrough win in the 2010 Suzuki Cup, dedicated communities of football fans have labored to keep interest in the sport alive. Similarly, broadcast TV also plays an important part in promoting the sport, and the league itself believes that the gap in TV coverage between the UFL and the PBA is actually closing due to increasing air time.

## **B. Conclusions**

The World Cup is not just the world's biggest sporting event—it is the world's biggest *event* (Trecker 2007). That the World Cup garners such a significant following shows how important football is to society and its different aspects.

Football in the Philippines is not yet at this level of news coverage, let alone the level of boxing icon Manny Pacquiao. But it is possible to attain this level of newsworthiness for the country's fledgling football league and for the sport itself. It will have to take all three components of the sports news cycle to interact together and make this happen: the media, the league, and the public.

As shown in this study, media—historically—has been able to influence the public to favor certain sports over others. That basketball came to the forefront of Filipino consciousness over the years is no accident, but the product of deliberate coverage.

This is made even more significant by the finding that sports editors, the gatekeepers of news publication, are themselves basketball aficionados. As such, it should come as no surprise that basketball enjoys more regular and extensive coverage in the sports pages of Metro Manila newspapers because of editors' preferences.

On the other hand, the league is in itself a newsmaker, and must do its part in order to raise awareness both of itself and the sport. It may be in the form of actively lobbying the news publications for coverage in order to garner more exposure to the public. More importantly, it is in the form of creating events and connections (quality of games, visible fan bases) that will earn the league acceptance from the public, thereby creating more demand for its content.

Finally, it is the public which must ultimately determine the acceptability of the UFL and its long-term sustainability. Members of the public who are supporters and followers of the league do have the distinct advantage of social media in order to further their cause. By deliberately bypassing the traditional gatekeepers of media, the editors, it is now possible for the public to produce content and influence it by being a part of the general audience.

### **C. Why it matters**

From the days of the early Olympic Games of ancient Greece until the present, sport has been promoted through various means: sculpture, paintings, print media, radio and television, and now, the Internet. The advent of mass printing techniques, and eventually, the newspaper, provided a medium in which sport could be promoted to an even wider audience. As radio and TV made it possible for the audience to be right at the event as it happened, print media supplemented this by providing in-depth reportage that was not possible due to constraints of air time (Beck and Bosshart 2003). That

divide between sport and audience has been blurred even further with the arrival of social media, which allows the public to participate in newsmaking events even further (Jackson 2012).

Much can be said about sport's entertainment value, as well as its economic, social, and cultural importance. At the root of it all, however, is the *story* itself. An athlete's performance may be mind-blowing, or a team's stats be considered off the scale, but these are nothing without a comprehensive backstory (McDonnell 2011). Sport certainly does not take precedence over other important issues such as hunger and famine, disaster, the threat of nuclear war, or corruption in government. Sport does, however, deserve to be reported, whether it be basketball or football, because it has a place in society.

Senior editor Kostya Kennedy (2011 cited in McDonnell 2011) probably said it best when he came to an important realization while covering a sporting event:

"...sports, as a part of and a companion to history, are a way to give context to our lives and to our collective past, present and future."

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

As discussed earlier, sports news has the components of the media, the league, and the public interacting together. In order to at least minimize the gap in coverage between the PBA and the UFL in Metro Manila newspapers, the study recommends the following:

### **A. The Press**

- Sports editors must realize the importance of football and take it upon themselves to influence the public to encourage them to take up the sport. As gatekeepers, they need to realize the significance of football and its implications on society, economy, and government policy and take the lead in creating a sports culture that is more supportive of the UFL. This is not just a matter of preference but rather in adherence to a news publication's journalistic duty to uphold the public good.
- Balanced treatment between UFL and PBA and basketball news in general must be achieved in one way or another. This may be measured in terms of degree of prominence or the volume of news stories published on any given day. Media also has the power to create superstars who can serve as the face of the league and enable the UFL to relate better with its audience.
- Increase visibility of the UFL by showing the UFL logo. Branding has helped the PBA to achieve sustained audience interest and name recall. By accompanying stories about the league with the UFL logo, it becomes possible to create visual recall that allows the audience to identify the UFL in concrete terms.



## **B. The League**

- The league needs to actively promote itself in the newspapers, either through paid advertisements, or through regular news feeds sent to the sports section. As a newsmaker, the league has the capacity to create the image that it wants the media to portray. Although this will definitely cost the league, promotion through print media is an alternative the league must explore in order to generate the needed interest and awareness in the public and thus convince sports editors of the demand for league news.
- The league needs a media bureau that interacts with newspaper practitioners and produces content that will make its way to the sports page. This is in conjunction with the league's effort to increase TV coverage; a media bureau may help facilitate the expansion of coverage in newspapers and contribute to further promoting the league.
- It is important that the league maintain a level of competence throughout the league that will make games newsworthy and meet or even exceed audience expectations. This may mean a more expansive system that will weed out underperforming teams, relegating them to the lower divisions, and promote excellent Division II teams that can keep up with the league's top flight. An even playing field will also produce meaningful games that the audience can absorb and identify with.
- The league likewise needs to encourage visibility and name and brand recall by encouraging merchandising aimed at promoting the league and the teams and personalities behind it.

- It may also help the league to encourage fan bases centered on the teams and personalities of the league. It is also important for the league to maintain and expand good relations with the public through social media.

### **C. The Public**

- The public is no longer a passive audience. Social media enables the public to become gatekeepers of information, and football stakeholders must take it upon themselves to influence the general public into supporting football and the UFL.
- The public must also take measures to encourage the proliferation of the sport especially at the community level. These activities may also be done in cooperation with the league in order to create newsworthiness and thus raise media awareness.
- It may also help members of the public who advocate football to petition government support, especially at the local level, either in terms of assistance or infrastructure.

### **D. Final recommendations**

- It is highly recommended that a more comprehensive study of sportswriting in the Philippines be undertaken in order to provide a complete picture of this specific sector.
- The researcher likewise recommends that more studies on the dynamics of sport, media and society in the Philippine context be done in order to further understand how these three interact and the implications that they carry.

While studies on these abound in Western contexts, the role of sport in media and society in the Philippines needs to be explored further.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### Breakdown by Month of Basketball and Football Coverage in Three Major

#### Newspapers

##### Philippine Daily Inquirer

Month	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Total
January	53	17	25	13	15	13	4	1	141
February	35	11	24	8	9	16	0	4	107
March	52	7	35	17	7	44	4	2	168
April	53	25	34	13	13	5	3	0	146
May	48	28	34	13	13	3	0	0	139
June	36	17	25	18	12	10	12	0	130
<b>Total</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>831</b>

##### Manila Bulletin

Month	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Total
January	49	19	17	11	4	2	2	0	104
February	32	20	33	16	2	10	1	2	116
March	50	9	27	20	5	24	1	1	137
April	51	22	28	16	1	0	0	0	118
May	53	30	35	14	1	0	1	0	134
June	47	22	29	17	6	6	9	0	136
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>745</b>

## Philippine STAR

Month	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Total
January	62	26	28	11	15	14	0	1	157
February	39	15	39	8	14	12	0	3	130
March	58	20	39	17	12	47	1	1	195
April	61	37	34	16	11	6	1	0	166
May	58	44	50	10	10	4	0	0	176
June	51	29	37	19	8	12	4	0	160
<b>Total</b>	329	171	227	81	70	95	6	5	984



## Philippine Daily Inquirer

February	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1									Copy unavailable at UP Library
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8	3		1						article on disabled basketball
9	3	1	1			1			
10	1		1			1			PHL Open (Golf); full-page PBA ad
11	2		1	1	1	1			
12	2	1	1	1	1	1			PHL Open; Davis Cup
13	1		1	1		1			PHL Open; Davis Cup; Linsanity
14	1		1			1			
15	2		1			1			
16	1		1			2		1	Linsanity
17	1	1	1			1			Linsanity
18	1		1	1		1			Linsanity
19	2	2	2	1	1				Linsanity
20	1	1	1		1	1			
21	1	1	1		1				
22	2	1	1		1			1	
23	1		1			1			
24	1		1		1				Golf
25	1	2	2	1	1				Golf
26	1		1	1	1				V-League; golf
27	1	1	1	1				1	
28	2		1			1		1	
29	4		1			2			
	35	11	24	8	9	16	0	4	107

## Philippine Daily Inquirer

March	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	1		1	1		1			Azkals vs Malaysia
2	1		1				1		
3	1		1			1			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
4	1		1	1		1			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
5	2		1	1		2		1	Harassment complaint vs Azkals
6	1		1	1		1			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
7	2		1			1			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
8	1		1	1		2		1	Harassment complaint vs Azkals
9	1		1	1		2			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
10	1		1	1		2			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
11	3		2	2		2			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
12	1		1		1	3			Front page: "Bahag basketball"
13	2		1			2			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
14	2			1		1			Front page: Azkals win vs Tajikistan
15	1		4	1		5			Front page: Azkals (AFC)
16	2	1	1	1		3			
17	1		1	1		1			
18	1		1	2		2			
19	1		1			1			Linsanity
20	2		1			1			Front page: Azkals win vs Palestine, 3rd
21	3		1			2			
22	2	1	1			2	2		Aftermath of Azkals AFC 3rd place win
23	3		1		1				Tebow-mania (column)
24	1		1		1	1			
25	2		1	1	1	1			Arnold Clavio vs Azkals
26	1	2	1	1	1	2	1		*includes US NCAA Final4
27	2		1		1				
28	4	1	1			1			
29	3	1	1						
30	2		1			1			
31	1	1	2		1				
	52	7	35	17	7	44	4	2	168

## Philippine Daily Inquirer

April	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	2	1	1	1	1				
2	4	2	2						*Includes US NCAA Final 4
3	1		1	1	1	1			*Puentevella appointed to FIFA
4	3	2	3	1					*Includes US NCAA Final 4
5	1		1	1					
6									Holy Weekend break
7									Holy Weekend break
8	2	1	2	1					
9	1		1	1					V-League; Golf
10	2	1							Masters at Augusta
11	3	2	1				1		Le Tour Pilipinas
12	2		1			1			
13	2	1	2		1				
14	1	1	1	1	1	1			Le Tour Pilipinas
15	2	1	1	1	1				Le Tour Pilipinas; PBA "Clasico" ad
16	1		2		1				Le Tour Pilipinas
17	2		1		1	1			Le Tour Pilipinas; PHL Volcanoes
18	3	1	1			1			Le Tour Pilipinas; PHL Volcanoes
19	2		1						Tim Tebow
20	1	1	1						PHL Volcanoes
21	1	1	1	1					PHL Volcanoes
22	3	1	1	1	1				PHL Volcanoes
23	1	1	1	1					PHL Volcanoes
24	2	2	2		2				PBA Finals; V-League opening
25	2	1	1						V-League
26	2	1	1	1					V-League
27	2	1	1		1		1		V-League
28	1	2	1		1				
29	2	1		1	1				Full page PBA finals ad
30	2		2				1		Full page PBA finals ad
	53	25	34	13	13	5	3	0	146

## Philippine Daily Inquirer

May	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	1		1	1	1				
2	1	1	2						
3	3	1	2						
4	2	1	1		1				
5	1	1	1	1	1				
6	2	1	1	1	1				Palarong Pambansa
7	4	1	1						Palarong Pambansa
8	2	1	1						Palarong Pambansa
9	2	1	1	1					Palarong Pambansa
10	1	1	1						Palarong Pambansa
11	1	1	1	1					Palarong Pambansa
12	1	2	1	1	1				Palarong Pambansa
13									Copy unavailable at UP Library
14									
15	2					1			
16	2	1	2	1	2				
17	2	1	1	1					
18	1	2	1		2				Loyola Sparks in S-League
19		1	1						
20	2	1	1		2				PBA full-page ad
21	1	1	2						V-League
22	1		1	1					Ronda Pilipinas
23	2	1	2						Ronda Pilipinas
24	2	1	1						Ronda Pilipinas
25	3	1	1						Ronda Pilipinas
26	1	1	2						
27	2	1	1	1	1				
28	1	1	1	1	1				
29	1	1	1	1					
30	2	1	1			1			Ronda Pilipinas
31	2	1	1	1		1			Ronda Pilipinas
	48	28	34	13	13	3	0	0	139

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June	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	2		1			1			Ronda Pilipinas
2	2	1	1	1		1			Ronda Pilipinas
3	1	1	1	1		1			Pacman vs Bradley
4	1	1	2	1		1			V-League
5	1		1	1		1			Pacman vs Bradley
6	2	1	1			2			Ronda Pilipinas
7	2	1	1			1			Pacman vs Bradley
8									Copy unavailable at UP Library
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16	2		1	1	1				
17	1		1	1	1		1		
18	2		1	1	1	1	1		
19	1	1	2	1	1				
20	3		1				1		Green Archers FC ad (UFL)
21	1	1	1	1	1				
22	2	1	1		1		1		Half-page NCAA ad; 1/4 UFL ad
23	2	1	3	2	1	1	1		Frontpage: Heat win NBA championship
24	1	1	1	1	1		1		
25	1	1	1	2	1		1		
26	1	1	2	1	1		2		1/4 UFL ad: Final Games
27	2			1			1		No news of UFL championship
28	2	1			2				Late UFL news; Alaska might leave PBA
29	1	2		1			1		
30	3	2	2	1			1		
	36	17	25	18	12	10	12	0	130



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January	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
8	2					1			
9	2	1	1						
10	3		1						
11	2			1					
12	3			1					Puzakals vs Germany game
13	2		1	1					
14	2	2		1					
15	2		1	1	1				*Photo: Kaya FC vs PAF
16	1	1		1	1				*Stallion FC
17	3		2						
18	2		1						
19	3	1	1						
20	2	1					1		
21	3		1	1		1			
22	1		1				1		
23	1	1	1	1					
24	2	1	1						NFL Super Bowl (US)
25	2	2	1						
26	3	2	1	1	1				*Stallion FC
27	2	1							
28	2	1		1	1				*Stallion FC
29	1	2	1	1					
30		3	1						
31	3		1						
	49	19	17	11	4	2	2	0	104

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February	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	2	1		1					
2	2	1	1		1				*Photo: Navy vs Russia friendly
3	1	2	1	1			1		Frontpage: Football stampede
4			2	1		1			
5		1	1	1					
6	1	2		1					NFL Super Bowl (US)
7	1			1					
8	2		1						
9	1	1							
10	1	1							
11	1		1	1		1			
12	1	1	1	1		1			
13	1		1	1		1			
14	1		1	1		1			
15	2		1			1			
16	1	1	1			1		1	
17			1						
18	1	2	2			1			Frontpage: Linsanity
19	2	1	2						
20	1	1	2	1					
21	1	1	3		1				Frontpage: Linsanity
22	1	1							
23	2	2	1						
24	1		2						
25	1		1	1					Frontpage: Linsanity
26	1	1	1	1					
27	1		2	1				1	Frontpage: NBA All-Star Game
28	1		2	1		1			Frontpage: NBA All-Star Game
29	1		2	1		1			Frontpage: NBA All-Star Game
	32	20	33	16	2	10	1	2	116

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March	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	1		1	1		1			
2	1		1	1		1			
3	1		1						
4	1		1	1					
5	1			1		1		1	
6	1		1	1		1			
7	1					2			Frontpage: Harassment vs Azkals
8	1	1	1	1		1			
9	1		1	1		1			
10	1		1	1					
11	2		1	1		1			
12	2	1	1	1		1			
13	1		1			2			
14	2		1	1					No mention of Azkals in AFC Challenge Cup
15	2		1			1	1		Azkals one win away from AFC Finals
16	2		1	1		1			
17	2		1	1		1			
18	2		1	1		1			
19	1	1	1	2		2			*includes US NCAA
20	3		2		1	1			
21	2					2			
22	3	2							
23	2				1				
24	1	1	1		1				
25	1		1	1		1			
26	1		1	1					
27	2		1	1	1				
28	3	1	1			1			
29	3	1	1			1			
30	2	1	1						
31	1		1	1	1				
	50	9	27	20	5	24	1	1	137

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April	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	2	1	1	1					
2	2	1	1	1	1				*US NCAA
3	2		2	1					
4	2	1		1					*US NCAA
5		1	1						*US NCAA
6	1		1	1					
7			1						
8	1	1	1	1					
9	1		1	1					
10	3		1						
11	3	1	1						
12	3		1						
13	2		1						
14	1	1	1	1					
15	1	1	1						
16	2		1	1					
17	3								
18	2	1	1						
19	2	1							
20	2	2	1						
21	3	1	1	1					
22	2	2	1	1					
23	2	1	1	1					
24	1	1	1						
25	1		1	1					
26	2	1	1						
27	2	1	1	1					
28	1	1	1	1					
29	1	1	1	1					
30	1	1	1						
	51	22	28	16	1	0	0	0	118

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May	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	1		1	1					
2	1	2	1						
3	1	2	1						
4	5		1						
5	1		1	1					
6	2	1	1						
7			1	1					
8	4	2	1						Full-page ad, B-Meg (PBA)
9	2		1	1					
10	2	1	2						
11	1	1	1	1					Article: PHL Sports High School bill
12	2	1	1	1	1				
13	1	1	2						
14	1	1	1	1					
15	3		2						
16	2	2	1	1					
17	1	2	1	1					PHL Olympic debacle
18	2	1	1						
19	1	1	1						
20	1	1	1						
21	2	1	1				1		
22	2		2	1					
23	2	2	2	1					
24	3		1						
25	2		1						
26	1	2	1	1					
27	3	2		1					
28		1	1						
29	2	1	1	1					
30	1	1	1						
31	1	1	1						
	53	30	35	14	1	0	1	0	134

## Manila Bulletin

June	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	2		1						
2	2	1	1	1					
3	1		1	2		1			
4	1		1	1					
5	2		1	1		1			
6	2		1						
7	1	1	2		1	1			Frontpage: Boston Celtics (NBA)
8	3	1	2						Frontpage: OKC Thunder (NBA)
9	1	1	1	1					
10	1	2		1		1			
11	1		2	1					
12	2	2	1			1			
13	1	2	1	1					Frontpage: NBA playoffs
14	2	1	1			1			
15	2		1				1		
16	2		1	1	1		1		
17	1		1	1					
18	1		1						
19	1		1	1			1		
20	2	1	1				1		
21	1	1	2	1	1		1		
22	3	1	1		1				
23	2	1	2	1	1		1		
24	1	1		1					
25	2	1					1		
26	2	1		1			1		
27	2	1	1						
28	1	1			1				*UFL Championship article: Filler
29									Copy unavailable at UP Library
30	2	2	1	1			1		
	47	22	29	17	6	6	9	0	136

## Philippine STAR

January	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
8	1		1			1			Puentevella appointed to FIFA
9	3					1			
10	2					1			Puzakals vs Germans game
11	2		1					1	Puzakals vs Germans game
12	3		2		1				
13	3		1	1					Half-page UFL ad
14	1	4	1	1	2				Half-page UFL ad; Half-page Kaya FC ad
15	1		2	1	1				
16	1	2	1	1	1				
17	3	1	2	1	1				
18	4		2		1	1			
19	2	1	1		1	1			
20	3		1						Full-page PBA ad
21	2	2	1	1		1			Half-page RIO Cup ad
22	2		1		1	1			
23	3	3	1	2	1	1			World Tennis
24	3	2	1			2			
25	4	1	1			1			Tennis; NFL Super Bowl
26	5	1	2		1				
27	4	1	1						
28	3	2	2	1	1	1			
29	2		1	1	1				
30	2	2	1	1	1	1			Full-page TNT ad
31	3	4	1		1	1			
	62	26	28	11	15	14	0	1	157

## Philippine STAR

February	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1									Copy unavailable at UP Library
2									Copy unavailable at UP Library
3									Copy unavailable at UP Library
4									Copy unavailable at UP Library
5									Copy unavailable at UP Library
6									Copy unavailable at UP Library
7									Copy unavailable at UP Library
8	4		1		1				Wheelchair basketball article
9	2		2			1			NFL Super Bowl
10	1	1	2						PHL Open; Full-page PBA ad
11	2		2	1	1	1			
12	3	2	1	1	1				
13	1		1	1	1	2			PHL Open; Linsanity
14		1	1			1			
15	3		2			1			
16	1	1	1		1	1			
17	2	1	1			1			PHL Volcanoes
18	1	1	2	1	1	1			
19	2	1	1		1				
20	2	2	5	1	1			1	
21	1	2	5	1	1				
22	1	1	3		1				
23	1		1			1			
24	2		2		1				
25	2	1	1		1				
26	2		1	1				1	
27	2		1	1	1			1	
28	1	1	2		1	1			
29	3		1			1			
	39	15	39	8	14	12	0	3	130



## Philippine STAR

March	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	1		2	1		1			
2	3		1			1			
3	1		1		1	1			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
4	1		3	1	1	1		1	Harassment complaint vs Azkals
5	1		1	1	1	1			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
6			1	1	1	2			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
7	3	2	1			3			Harassment complaint vs Azkals
8	1	1	1	1		2			
9	2	1	1		1	2	1		
10	2		1	1		2			
11	3		1	1	1	2			
12	1		1		2	1			
13	2	1	1	1		2			
14	2		2	1		2			AFC Challenge Cup
15	4		2	1		3			AFC Challenge Cup
16	2		2	1		3			Frontpage: Azkals/AFC Challenge Cup
17	1	2	3	1		1			Frontpage: Azkals/AFC Challenge Cup
18	2		1	1		2			
19	2		1	1	1	2			
20	1	1	1			1			Section head: Azkals/AFC
21	3		1			4			
22	2	2	1			2			
23	3		1						
24	2	1	1						
25	1		1	1	1	2			
26	1	2	1			1			*includes US NCAA Final 4
27	2		1		1				PHL cyclists in Tour de France
28	3	3	1	1		2			
29	2	1	1						
30	3	2	1			1			
31	1	1	1	1	1				
	58	20	39	17	12	47	1	1	195

## Philippine STAR

April	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	3		1	1	1				
2	2	3	1	1					*includes US NCAA Final 4
3	3	1	1	1	1	1			
4	4	2	1	1		1			*includes US NCAA Final 4
5	1		1						
6									Holy Weekend break
7									Holy Weekend break
8	2	2	1	1					FIBA: Cager hits 113 points
9	1	2	1	1		1			
10	3	1	1	1					
11	2	1	1						
12	3	1	1			1			
13	3	3	1		1	1			
14	2	1	1	1	1		1		
15	1	1	1	1	1				Le Tour Pilipinas
16	2	1	1		1				
17	2	1	2		1				
18	2	1	1						
19	3	1	1						
20	4	1	1						
21	2	1	1	2					
22	2	2	1	1	1				PHL Volcanoes
23	2	2	1	1		1			PHL Volcanoes
24	2	2	1	1					
25	1	1	1	1					
26	2	2	1	1					
27	3	2	2						
28	1		4		1				
29	2	1	1		1				
30	1	1	2		1				
	61	37	34	16	11	6	1	0	166

## Philippine STAR

May	PBA/D-League	College B'ball	NBA	ABL	UFL	Azkals	World	Coll. Football	Notes
1	2		3	1	1				
2	4	1	6		1				
3	1	2	3						
4	3	2	2		1				
5	2	1	2	1					
6	1	1	2	1	1				
7	1	2	1		1				
8	4	2	1						
9	1	1	1	1					
10	1	1	1						
11	1	1	1	1					PHL Sports High School bill
12	2	2	1		1				
13	1	1	1		1				
14	2	1	2						
15	2	2	1						
16	3	1							
17	2	2	3			1			
18	3	1	2						
19	2	2	2		1	1			Full-spread Jr. NBA ad
20	2		1		1				
21	1		1		1	1			*Creation of Women's League
22	2	1	2						
23	3	3	1						
24	2	1	1						
25	2	3	1	1					
26	1	3	1	1					Alaska Football full-page ad
27	1	2	2	1					
28	1	2	1	1					
29	1	1		1		1			
30	2	1	2						
31	2	1	2						
	58	44	50	10	10	4	0	0	176

## Philippine STAR

[illegible]

## APPENDIX C

### Transcript of Interviews

#### Craig Burrows

*Media Officer, Philippine Azkals; Football sportswriter, social media practitioner*

1. **Do you think there is a gap in the coverage of football, particularly the United Football League, in the Philippines?**

Yes.

2. **What do you think are the implications of this gap in media coverage on the UFL and in the development of football in the country? How do you think this will affect government policy? What is needed in order to close this “gap”?**

Football is a developing sport, and in my opinion a natural one for Filipino talents, media coverage is what it needs to get the interest of the young. If the youth start playing we will see a lot more sporting glory coming to the Philippines. As for government policy, sorry as a foreigner I do not think it right that I comment on government policy. What we need to close the gap is a long term vision. We need around ten years of young people playing football in schools and for fun before we will reap the benefit of the sport at an international level. We have seen spurts in the development of football previously but they always fell back with the promotion of basketball (which is another excellent sport that I hope will continue to be equally promoted with football).

3. **Do you think there is an apparent bias towards basketball in Philippine sports media?**

Yes but an understandable one with our sporting history, however basketball was a US import whereas sipa is a domestic sport and much closer to football so if we are to take a clear look at Pinoy history we can clearly make a case that football has deeper Pinoy roots compared to basketball and as such is closer to a national game for us.

- 4. Is Philippine football worth attributing the same amount of news coverage accorded to events such as Manny Pacquiao's fights? What must be done in order to elevate Philippine football to the status of a "media event"?**

Manny Pacquiao is a Filipino phenomenon and he is international in his fame so basketball and football pale next to him and at this time in my opinion that is correct. A media event needs to be earned not demanded.

- 5. What do you think are the implications of social media on the long-term promotion and development of the UFL and Philippine football in general?**

Obviously you know a little bit about me and I hope you have observed that I mainly use social media to promote football despite being published previously in nearly all Filipino newspapers writing about football. That is my faith in social media. We need to build relationships to people so they feel connected to the sport. I am committed to using social media to continue building the game.

### **Mike Limpag**

*Sportswriter, SunStar Cebu*

- 1. Do you think there is a gap in the coverage of football, particularly the United Football League, in the Philippines? --**

There is, of course. You have to understand the dynamics of the Philippine sport scene. The PBA, for example, has a press corps and a media bureau. As press corps and media bureaus go, they share stories. Sometimes, the media bureau (PR guy) simply provides the story for the press corps. So what you have is the same story—sometimes not re-written at all—appearing in all major dailies.

The UFL doesn't have that, hence the major gap between UFL coverage and the PBA—which are, essentially, similar—a play-for-pay league.

- 2. What do you think are the implications of this gap in media coverage on the UFL and in the development of football in the country? How do you think this will affect government policy? What is needed in order to close this "gap"?**

The gap won't really affect football's development as the sport has survived, even without media coverage. And also, it wasn't traditional media that got football famous, it was the new media—social networking sites, blogs—that got everyone interested.

Government policy makers, of course, being reactionary, looks at media coverage when they decide if they help a sport. Take for example VP Binay. After Suzuki Cup 2010, he made this bold announcement that he wanted a national discussion on football. Whatever happened to that, we don't know.

To close the gap, the UFL must hold a massive promotional blitz designed to spoil sportswriters and for the masa. Sportswriting in the Philippines is just one big old-boys'-network. If you want to get in the papers, know the right people to pay. Do this as an experiment: On a given day, check all major national broadsheets for similar sports stories—often, these don't have a by-line or tagline and count them. Based on 2005 rates, that's P500 per story, P1,000 per photo plus other rates for the “first day” and “last day.” Count them all up, and you'd get, on average, P3,000 to P4,000 extra income for editors? It's the space for those sort of stories that sports like football have to compete in Philippine broadsheets.

The UFL can pay their publicity or wait until sports editors realize there is a demand for football stories.

### **3. Do you think there is an apparent bias towards basketball in Philippine sports media?**

Of course there is. Sports editors and sports writers, represent your average Pinoy sports fan—and they are interested in—1.) basketball, boxing, billiards and that odd hot chick. That there are few sportswriters who love football is but a picture of the Philippine sports scene, there are a few football fans.

### **4. Is Philippine football worth attributing the same amount of news coverage accorded to events such as Manny Pacquiao's fights? What must be done in order to elevate Philippine football to the status of a “media event”?**

No and I hope it will be. Football getting a Manny Pacquiao level coverage in the country would only mean one thing—they made the World Cup and that's a long way from now.

As to Pacquiao, in 2003, when he fought Barrera—the fight that really got him in the world scene—the bout, and this is something only serious fans know, was aired live, over a government channel and it hardly led to a ratings surge. The same hold true for his next fight. But when he started winning all this bouts, while as an underdog, he got noticed and Pinoy sports fans—not just boxing fans—started paying attention.

For the Azkals, it's simple. They have to win and keep winning.

**5. What do you think are the implications of social media on the long-term promotion and development of the UFL and Philippine football in general?**

It was an online forum that came up with the Azkals name, and Facebook and twitter that made everybody aware when the team was leading Vietnam, 1-0, in the Suzuki Cup. Social media will play a key role in the UFL and Philippine football development and it is the fault of traditional media.

Over the years, pre-Suzuki Cup, football didn't get much of an attention from traditional media, so fans came up with forums, blogs, websites for football and right now, as has been proven too many times already, content from forums, blogs and websites (some fan-generated) are more relevant than what traditional media come up.

Take the case of a *Manila Standard* columnist—who wrote in his column about (I forgot the name) one player getting sent out in an Azkal game and social media ripped him apart because the player he mentioned never even played. Social media will play a key role, but it will be traditional media—TV especially—that will determine if Philippine football gain massive masa support.

**Coco Torre**

*Head of Marketing, United Football League Philippines*

**1. Do you think there is a gap in the coverage of football, particularly the United Football League, in the Philippines?**

Yes.



**2. What do you think are the implications of this gap in media coverage on the UFL and in the development of football in the country? How do you think this will affect government policy? What is needed in order to close this “gap”?**

Basketball has been the main sport that Filipinos follow it is natural to expect healthier coverage for this sport. With the sudden rise of football however, media has been fair enough to recognize the potential in this sport and thus gives due recognition. We cannot undermine basketball and the accomplished league which is PBA in the country. It still stands as the most developed league and deserves its respect from the media. Football however is thriving and soon enough will be at par in terms of media coverage. All in due time.

An example is through broadcasters AKTV, the UFL is now just 1 episode short from PBA. PBA is aired 3 times a week and the UFL, from 1 episode a day is now aired 2 times a week. This is a big leap for football and an indicator that the gap is nearing to a close.

**3. Do you think there is an apparent bias towards basketball in Philippine sports media?**

Bias is a strong word. I would say there is none. It may be that more of the press covers basketball but in terms of broadcast, I would say football has been well exposed in the Philippines especially through free TV.

**4. Is Philippine football worth attributing the same amount of news coverage accorded to events such as Manny Pacquiao’s fights? What must be done in order to elevate Philippine football to the status of a “media event”?**

The amount of news coverage has a reason behind, particularly on the weight of its interest. When the Philippine football had not accomplished much, they were not under the radar of the press. With a huge accomplishment however such as beating Vietnam 2-0 then definitely it deserves a wealth of exposure. The coverage as I see it is an equitable wherein the greater the achievement, the bigger the exposure- just like the volcanoes or the rowing team. Philippine Football should surpass the people's expectations to gain more exposure in the media, thus becoming a media event.

**5. What do you think are the implications of social media on the long-term promotion and development of the UFL and Philippine football in general?**

Philippines is a social media capital of the world, it's a very helpful tool in terms of getting stories out there. With the growth of this technology, there is no doubt the UFL and Philippine football will benefit from this phenomenon.