

Stories in Play: Narrative Formation in Sports and Esports

by

John Yoon

A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
English

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2021

©John Yoon 2021

Examining Committee Membership

The following served on the Examining Committee for this thesis. The decision of the Examining Committee is by majority vote.

External Examiner

Richard Grusin
Professor, Department of English,
University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee

Supervisor(s)

Ken Hirschkop
Professor, Department of English,
University of Waterloo

Internal Member

Lennart Nacke
Associate professor, Stratford School
of Interaction Design and Business,
University of Waterloo

Gerald Voorhees
Associate professor, Department of
Communication Arts,
University of Waterloo

Neil Randall
Associate professor, Department of English,
University of Waterloo

Internal-external Member

Ryan Snelgrove
Associate professor, Department of Recreation and
Leisure Studies,
University of Waterloo

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Sports depend on narrative to function as media content, yet sports are difficult to narrativize because they are unpredictable. This project proposes a model for analyzing the narrative formation in sports broadcasts by tracking the live narrativization to the formulation of a final narrative. In examining narrativization, there are two inextricably linked questions that need to be answered: how does the live narrativization construct a story if the ending is unknown? And how does the narrativization balance its desires for narrative coherence and unpredictability? First, the hermeneutic circle found in the simultaneity of the live sporting event and its broadcast is solved through Hayden White's concept of historicity, where events are endowed with relevance if they contribute to a higher order narrative, and Paul Ricoeur's concepts of the episodic and configurational dimensions, which determine what the narrative events are and how they are organized. Then, the struggle between narrative control and unpredictability is addressed through the reiterative practices borrowed from open coding methodologies. Finally, these components are combined in a multi-layered narrative model based on Roland Barthes' function-action-narration schema. Then the model is applied to the National Football League (NFL) and the World Championship Series of StarCraft II (WCS) as two case studies of narrative formation in traditional sports and esports, respectively. The comparison of the narrativization reveals that while specialized to each competition, both struggle to balance the desire to craft coherent narratives and the randomness of live sports. Furthermore, an examination of the media apparatuses shows that both traditional sports and esports share the same or analogous structures of broadcasting and consumption. The dissertation proposes that if esports is to move past current conceptualizations of sports broadcasting, it must fully embrace its uniquely digital status even if it appears to violate contemporary notions of sports.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Ken Hirschkop for his help throughout the writing of this dissertation and all my committee members as well for their input. I would also like to thank the Games Institute for providing me a great place to work during my graduate school career.

Dedication

To my parents for always loving and supporting me.

And to Saina, for believing in me. I could not have done this without you.

Table of Contents

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Dedication.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Figures.....	ix
Chapter 1 Towards a New Narrative Methodology	1
1.1.....	1
1.2.....	6
1.3.....	7
1.4.....	13
1.5.....	23
1.6.....	28
1.7.....	33
1.8.....	36
1.9.....	41
Chapter 2 Case Study: The 2016 New England Patriots.....	52
2.1.....	52
2.2.....	52
2.2.1.....	70
2.2.2.....	77
2.2.3.....	81
2.3.....	84
2.4.....	86
2.5.....	98
Chapter 3 Case Study: Serral in the 2018 WCS.....	104
3.1.....	104
3.2.....	109
3.2.1.....	119
3.3.....	127
3.3.1.....	129

3.3.2.....	135
3.3.3.....	140
3.3.4.....	151
3.4.....	156
3.5.....	164
3.6.....	169
3.6.1.....	175
3.7.....	176
Chapter 4 A Comparison of Traditional and Esports Broadcasting.....	177
4.1.....	177
4.2.....	179
4.2.1.....	184
4.2.2.....	188
4.3.....	192
4.4.....	195
4.5.....	203
4.6.....	219
Chapter 5 Conclusion.....	224
5.1.....	224
5.2.....	230
Bibliography.....	247
Appendix A.....	276
Appendix B.....	277
Appendix C.....	278
Appendix D.....	279

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: A diagram of the units of narrative and their organization.....	39
Figure 1.2: An excerpt of the raw functions from Cleveland vs. Tennessee 2019 Week 1.....	42
Figure 1.3: An excerpt of the selected functions from Cleveland vs. Tennessee.....	44
Figure 1.4: An excerpt of the functional clusters from Cleveland vs. Tennessee	45
Figure 1.5: An excerpt of the first Cleveland storyline.....	46
Figure 1.6: An excerpt of the initial storyline being interrupted.....	47
Figure 1.7: An excerpt showing the narrativization’s attempts to self-correct.....	48
Figure 1.8: The narrative point of no return for Cleveland vs. Tennessee.....	50
Figure 1.9: An excerpt of final narrative for Cleveland vs. Tennessee	51
Figure 2.1: A detail irrelevant to the narrative.....	55
Figure 2.2: A partial list of raw functions for New England vs. Cleveland 2016 Week 5.....	55
Figure 2.3: Screenshot of Cleveland’s 26 starting QBs. Source: NFL/CBS	59
Figure 2.4: A partial list of selected functions for New England vs. Cleveland.....	61
Figure 2.5: An excerpt of functional clusters being constructed for New England vs. Cleveland	63
Figure 2.6: An excerpt showing narrative focus shifting rapidly based on its functional basis.....	65
Figure 2.7: Simultaneous storylines for New England vs. Cleveland.....	67
Figure 2.8: An excerpt of the initial analysis of the Patriots safety.....	69
Figure 2.9: The refined analysis of the Patriots safety.....	70
Figure 2.10: Excerpt of raw functions from Super Bowl LI.....	73
Figure 2.11: An excerpt of selected functions from Super Bowl LI.....	74
Figure 2.12: An excerpt showing the general turning point on the level of clusters for Super Bowl LI	75
Figure 2.13: An excerpt of the formation of the comeback storyline for Super Bowl LI.....	76
Figure 2.14: An excerpt showing the Patriots’ first touchdown in Super Bowl LI	78
Figure 2.15: An excerpt showing the start of the comeback storyline in Super Bowl LI	79
Figure 2.16: ESPN’s Win Probability tracker at the 9:00 mark in the fourth quarter of Super Bowl LI	80
Figure 2.17: ESPN’s Win Probability tracker at the end of Super Bowl LI. Source: ESPN	80
Figure 2.18: ESPN’s Win Probability tracker showing the point of no return in Super Bowl LI	81
Figure 2.19: A comparison of functions selected for different outcomes for Super Bowl LI.....	83
Figure 2.20: An excerpt of the broadcast weather report.....	85

Figure 2.21: Weekly vs. seasonal narratives for the 2016 New England Patriots	101
Figure 3.1: The 2018 WCS format.....	105
Figure 3.2: A comparison of the possible layers of narrative organization.....	107
Figure 3.3: The production tab shows what units, buildings, or upgrades are being made by each player in real time.....	111
Figure 3.4: A partial list of raw functions from Serral vs. MaNa 2018 WCS Austin Finals Game 6	112
Figure 3.5: An excerpt of selected game and commentary events from Serral vs. MaNa.....	114
Figure 3.6: An excerpt of functional clusters from Serral vs. MaNa	115
Figure 3.7. An excerpt of storylines from Serral vs. MaNa	117
Figure 3.8: An excerpt of the final narrative from Serral vs. MaNa	119
Figure 3.9: An excerpt of the raw functions from Serral vs. Has 2018 WCS Valencia Finals Game 2	121
Figure 3.10: An excerpt of the selected functions for Serral vs. Has.....	122
Figure 3.11: An excerpt of the functional clusters for the Serral winning vs. Has scenario.....	123
Figure 3.12: The storylines for Serral vs. Has.....	124
Figure 3.13: The final narratives for Serral vs. Has.....	125
Figure 3.14: The final narrative analyzed from the perspective of Has' win.....	126
Figure 3.15: The 2018 WCS Austin Finals series narrative.....	128
Figure 3.16. The narrative framing for Serral before the WCS Leipzig grand finals.	133
Figure 3.17: An extended model of the levels of narrative organization.....	137
Figure 3.18: An excerpt of higher order narrative integration.....	138
Figure 3.19: A diagram of external narrativization input	138
Figure 3.20: A comparison of Serral's win rates against Koreans.....	144
Figure 3.21: A comparison of Serral's win rates Neeb	144
Figure 3.22: Screenshot of the final WCS Circuit standings.....	149
Figure 3.23: Screenshot showing Serral's WCS sweep.....	152
Figure 3.24: Screenshot showing Maru's GSL sweep	152
Figure 3.25: An excerpt of raw functions from Serral vs. Stats 2018 WCS Global Finals Game 6..	157
Figure 3.26: An excerpt of the selected functions from Serral vs. Stats.....	158
Figure 3.27: An excerpt of the functional clusters from Serral vs. Stats	159
Figure 3.28: An excerpt of the storylines from Serral vs. Stats	160
Figure 3.29: A second excerpt of the storylines from Serral vs. Stats.....	161

Figure 3.30: An excerpt of the final narrative from Serral vs. Stats.....	162
Figure 3.31: An overview of Serral’s 2018 seasonal narrative.....	163
Figure 3.32: Screenshot of Serral’s introduction for the global finals.....	167
Figure 3.33: Summary of the historical narrative for StarCraft esports.....	169
Figure 3.34: Screenshot of MaNa attacking into Serral, 2018 WCS Austin finals game 3.....	172
Figure 3.35: Screenshot of MaNa killing Serral’s army	173
Figure 4.1: Screenshot of CBS EyeVision analysis against the KC Chiefs.....	187
Figure 4.2: Screenshot of another CBS EyeVision analysis.....	187
Figure 4.3: The screen at Gillette Stadium.....	189
Figure 4.4: The screens at SoFi Stadium	190
Figure 4.5: Screenshot of the main stage and screen at the 2018 WCS Global Finals.....	191
Figure 4.6: Screenshot of a typical football broadcast coverage	196
Figure 4.7: Screenshot from the 2018 WCS Global Finals	197
Figure 4.8: An excerpt of the bottom bar from the WCS Global Finals broadcast	198
Figure 4.9: An excerpt of the production tab from the WCS Global Finals broadcast	198
Figure 4.10: An excerpt of the mini-map from the from the WCS Global Finals broadcast.....	199
Figure 4.11: Screenshot from Lambo’s personal stream.....	200
Figure 4.12. A typical football statistics graphic.....	201
Figure 4.13: The units lost tab shown during SC2 broadcasts	202
Figure 4.14: A Patriots fan holding up a sign during a game.....	207
Figure 4.15: A Serral fan holding up a sign at the WCS Global Finals	207
Figure 4.16: Screenshot of the WCS Global Finals with the live chat.....	208
Figure 4.17: Tweet by Skip Bayless	209
Figure 4.18: A live tweet reaction to the Falcons’ Super Bowl loss.....	210
Figure 4.19: The original post for the Super Bowl LI live thread.....	211
Figure 4.20: An excerpt of some user comments on the Super Bowl 51 thread.	212
Figure 4.21: Excerpt of the original post for the WCS Global Finals on teamliquid.net.....	213
Figure 4.22: An excerpt of a poll and some comments from the WCS Global Finals thread.....	214
Figure 4.23: A Prediction poll for WCS Montreal.....	217
Figure 4.24: Bob Kravitz’s breaking tweet	221

Chapter 1

Towards a New Narrative Methodology

1.1

This manuscript aims to outline the process of developing a viable methodological model of narrative analysis for sports narratives. Here, sports narratives refer to the common practice and product of sports broadcasting which frames games as stories for their audiences. This exploratory project considers the problems faced in developing a sound methodology of sports narrative analysis by identifying the mechanisms through which sports are narrativized. Attempts to develop models of narrative analysis have a long history, ranging from models of plot in Aristotle's *Poetics* to the taxonomy of Russian folktales in Vladimir Propp's *The Morphology of the Folktale*. In addition to the usual challenges associated with narrative analysis, sports stories carry the added caveat that they are based on an outside reality; how a sports narrative unfolds is dependent on how that specific game unfolds. There are numerous issues that come up when analyzing sporting narratives, mainly centered on the fact that sports happen in real life and are thus not beholden to the rules of narrative. Because of the inherent chaotic nature of sporting competitions, there will be times when sporting events may not end the way they are "supposed to," or in narratively satisfactory ways. The main element of sports stories which distinguishes them from typical fiction is its direct tie to an outside reality. Unlike a purely fictional work, sports narratives are based on real events with real people in the real world and in this way, they are more closely related to historical discourse than fiction and the analysis of sports narratives benefits from the study of historiography. Therefore, changes of state in the game at hand directly inform which sports

stories can be crafted. If Team A loses to Team B, it would be illogical to write a story purporting that Team A had won, although it may be possible to craft a story arguing that Team A had lost the lead or that Team B's win was unexpected. Just as historians formulate cohesive explanations from a litany of dates and battles, sports broadcasts transform the *mélange* of plays, scores, and results into comprehensible storylines. The similarities and parallels between narrativizing historical events and sporting events will be useful as they both seek to narrativize and make sense of an outside reality.

The main theoretical struggle in analyzing sports narratives is the battle between the conditions of reality where sports happen and the desire for narrative coherence. Then in trying to “make explicit the criteria by which in fact we recognize a narrative as coherent or incoherent,” (“Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument,” Mink 187) the main research question that must be answered is how do sports narratives wrestle with the facts of reality and the desire for narrative when they are at odds with each other? This project will identify the challenges and solutions to live storytelling to produce a viable model of sports narratives then apply it to two case studies of football and StarCraft II to demonstrate the model in action. Upon identifying the relevant elements in the process of narrativizing historical events, a viable model of sports stories will be proposed. This project will identify the challenges and solutions to live storytelling to produce a viable model of sports narratives, then the model will be applied to competitive football and StarCraft II as case studies of the new model in action in traditional sports and esports, respectively.

Narratives and their usage have often been touted as ubiquitous to human experience. Many have argued that the use of narratives is a basic human impulse found in all aspects of

life. Narrativizing, then, describes a set of loose practices which weave a coherent story from a disparate set of events or phenomena. As Roland Barthes claimed, “narrative starts with the very history of mankind: there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative” (Barthes 237). Narrative possesses a universality and “like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural”. This claim to the universal dimension of narrative may be ascribed to the human desire or need to make sense of the disorder that is “life itself” as the myriad of different situations and events provided by life are narrativized by those who experience and comprehend them. The ubiquity of narratives suggests that there may be a common structure or pattern which is innate to and defines narratives. As Mieke Bal reflects on Barthes, “[d]espite their many different forms, the fact that narrative texts, recognizable as such, can be found in all cultures, all levels of society, all countries, and all periods of human history led Barthes to conclude that all of these narrative texts are based upon one common model, a model that causes the narrative to be recognizable as narrative” (Bal 11). This line of thinking is echoed by A.J. Greimas who assumed that narrative structures are “translinguistic because they are common to cultures with different natural languages” (Greimas 793).

Reconceptualizing *Homo sapiens* as “*Homo narrans*,” (Fisher xi), Walter R. Fisher calls people natural “storytellers” (4) who tell stories because “all forms of human communication need to be seen fundamentally as stories – symbolic interpretations of aspects of the world occurring in time and shaped by history, culture, and character” (xi). Narrative, then, is a tool for making sense of the world and a “concept that can enhance understanding of human communication and action whenever those phenomena occur” (20). People are

driven to use narratives as a framing device for rationalizing of the events around them because, as Hayden White argues, “so natural is the impulse to narrative, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report on the way things really happened” (White 1). With everything framed under a narrative umbrella, people “experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends” (Fisher 24). The stories that are produced then become “a meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted” (White 1) such that narration becomes “the quintessential form of customary knowledge” (Lyotard 19). Narrative is a form through which knowledge about the world can be shared.

The link between narrative and history and in turn reality may stem from the connection many have drawn between narrative and life itself, viewing stories as a way to make sense of the complexities of life. Though there is some degree of agency in that people make deliberate choice which shape the world, the presence of accidents and other chance events ensures that life is unpredictable. However, even though the “experience of life does not itself necessarily have the form of narrative, except as we give it that form by making it the subject of stories” (“Narrative Form,” Mink 186). As Ricoeur iterates, it has “always been known and often repeated that life has something to do with narrative” (“Life in Quest of Narrative,” Ricoeur 20). Others have echoed the idea, claiming that “the narratives which we live out have both an unpredictable and partially teleological character” (MacIntyre 216) and that “we experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends” (Fisher 24). It is from this link to the reality of things which the narrative capability of history stems.

Although narrative is commonly used to bring order to the experience of reality, doing so is a difficult task. The narrativization of reality can become “a problem... when we wish to give to real events the form of story” (White 4) because “real events do not offer themselves as stories that their narrativization is so difficult” and as such the “desire for the imaginary, the possible, must contest with the imperatives of the real, the actual”. The “imperatives of the real” is one of the main problems in narrativizing reality. Hayden White presents a bleak view of the relationship between narrative and reality. Because plot for him is “a structure of relationships by which the events contained in the account are endowed with a meaning by being identified as parts of an integrated whole,” (9) the reality of history will often fail to produce narratively satisfactory storylines because reality unfolds without regard for meeting the narrative desire of any historian. Although the historical story “can be completed, can be given narrative closure, [and] can be shown to have had a plot all along,” (21) ultimately for White the “plot of a historical narrative is always an embarrassment and ha[s] to be presented as ‘found’ in the events rather than put there by narrative techniques”. As Horowitz claims, “there is some widespread, if not fundamental, incommensurability between the historical and the aesthetic” (71) as if there is a mutual exclusivity between the two. Because the historian is forced to make real events try to fit in narratively, he does so at the cost of a good story. Although the historian may want reality to display “coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure,” (24) having such narrative control “can only be imaginary”. To have a coherent narrative, meaningful consequence under the desire for the imaginary must be garnered from the unpredictable consecutiveness of the imperatives of the real. In other words, the narrativization must find meaning within the randomness of reality to

construct a story. Similarly, sports narratives may strive for worthwhile plot development or satisfying endings, they too are constrained by the reality of the situation on the field. Sports narratives are like historiography in that both rely on a series of facts anchored in the real world and seek to present those realities through a cohesive structure, or plot.

This lack of narrative control is relevant for sports narratives since they too are based in reality. Like in life itself, the human desire to narrate must constantly wrestle with the inherent elements of unpredictability and chaos in sports. As sporting events are broadcast, the *mélange* of plays, scores, and results are transformed into comprehensible storylines. Although “narrative, on account of its very structure, tends to establish a confusion between consecutiveness and consequence, between time sequence and logic,” (Barthes 251) the goal of the narrativization proposed in this chapter is to precisely draw out a consequence from consecutiveness. To have a coherent narrative, meaningful consequence under the desire for the imaginary must be garnered from the unpredictable consecutiveness of the imperatives of the real. With this in mind, one of the tasks of this dissertation is to determine how recognizable narratives drawn out of sporting events.

1.2

Identifying the underlying mechanisms in the narrativization of sport requires a working definition of what constitutes a narrative and only then can the opposition between the desire for narrative coherence and the inherent volatility of sports be reconciled. There has been much debate around what constitutes a narrative. If there is “a model that causes the narrative to be recognizable as narrative,” (Bal 11) how can it be identified? What are the traits that make “narrative texts, recognizable as such”? Ultimately, “plot is what enables us to

understand narrative as narrative” (Simms 85). For this analysis, rather than focusing on narrative as being character-driven, it will focus on narrative as an organizational form or a system of event contextualization. Since sports stories are not in want of characters with players and teams that act as agents, it is out of the identifying and grouping of certain events (plays, goals, penalties, etc.) that a narrative emerges. The most basic element of a narrative, it may be argued, is its plot. The plot which rudimentarily consists of “somebody doing something” (Frye 33) is so essential that a “narrative without a plot is a logical impossibility” (Chatman 47); for a story to be is to have a plot. Through there are many required elements of plot such as “tension and resolution,” (Scholes, Phelan, and Kellogg 212) the function of plot for this analysis can be narrowed more specifically as the “dynamic, sequential element in narrative literature” (207). Thus, for this project the working definition of plot will be a higher order logic or relationship of organization of its constitutive events, and narrative being the application or the manifestation of said plot. Here, it is the “sequential” aspect of narrative which will be developed further for the narrative analysis of sports because one of the core issues is the selection and arrangement of events to form the narrative. For the rest of the analysis, the formation and the role of plot will be integral in overcoming the obstacles posed by the tension between narrative coherence and unpredictability, and real-time narrativization.

1.3

Before we can wrestle with the tension between the chaotic nature reality and the order of narrative formation, exactly *what* events are ordered and *how* they are being ordered must be answered. For Paul Ricoeur, there are two dimensions to narrative: the “configurational

dimension” of narrative of how the “plot construes [a] significant whole out of scattered events,” and the “episodic dimension” which “characterizes the story as made out events” (“The Human Experience of Time and Narrative,” Ricoeur 106). In other words, the configurational dimension describes how narrative events are organized and the episodic dimension describes what the narrative events are. For reality-based narratives, Ricoeur’s two dimensions serve as a useful framework for historical narrativization: for the episodic, how events chosen to be part of the narrative; and for the configurational, how the chosen events are construed together as a narrative. The answers to these two problems are interdependent, making finding a singular answer difficult.

First, the episodic dimension. How are certain events selected to be part of the narrative? If emplotment is to occur, there must be a selection of events that happens beforehand because logically, it would be impossible to form a narrative including every single event that happens¹. Therefore, there must be a system of selection for deciding which events in a historical sequence are selected. If the random collection of events which constitutes life, or history, is to be ordered, then there must be an “implicit *criteria* of relevance” (“Narrative Form,” Mink 187) which is used to separate the useful or relevant events, characters, and details from the irrelevant ones to construct a cohesive story.

The selection process can be attributed to a concept Hayden White calls historicality. Though simpler forms of historiography like the annals and the chronicle merely list a sequence of events, it is through narrative they can “transform into a story” (White 43).

¹ Imagine a historical account or a biography that explicitly wrote down each step taken by the subject (he moved his right leg forward, then his left leg, then his right, then his left, etc.) in a lifetime; while it would not be inaccurate, the end result would be impossibly long to write and equally as impossible to read.

Building on Ricoeur, White argues that the plot is not something “imposed by the historian on the events” (51) nor “a code drawn from the repertoire of literary models,” but something that “figures forth the ‘historicality’ of events”. The historian “finds the story already hidden in what his data are evidence for” (“Narrative Form,” Mink 188) which through emplotment can be “revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, that they do not possess as mere sequence” (White 5). White seems to suggest that an “historical event is not one that can be inserted into a story wherever the writer wishes” but must be a significant event in that it must “contribute” to “the development of a plot”. In other words, the plot is in the process of unfolding before each event and only the events which contribute to the unfolding of said plot can be said to be “endowed with historicality”. Because a plot is “a structure of relationships by which the events contained in the account are endowed with a meaning by being identified as parts of an integrated whole,” (White 9) only when events are properly contextualized as part of a larger narrative, do they have significance and relevance. What this means is that only the events which contribute to the plot are selected to be part of the narrative, or perhaps endowed with narrativity. For historical writing, then, the raw sequences of events and the narrative desire for order are in an interdependent relationship. The plot gives the historical events a narrative form but the plot is what endows the events with a historicality which makes them eligible to be considered to be a part of the plot.

Second, the configurational dimension. Here lies the sequential ordering that is the “configurational act,” which is the “act of the plot” that “elicit[s] a pattern from a succession [of events]”. This otherwise called the “operation of emplotment” can be broadly described as “a synthesis of heterogeneous elements” (“Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator,” Ricoeur

21) into a coherent whole. Even if the episodic dimension determines which events should be included, knowing which events they are is not enough because how they are arranged is equally important. Even if the events are chronological, chronology does not automatically mean order. Without this logic of emplotment, a series of events may be consecutive and chronological but lack a unifying factor which would make it a coherent narrative. It is not enough that there is a set of events but there also must be “an integrating dynamism that draws a unified and complete story from a variety of incidents, in other words, that transforms this variety into a unified and complete story” (*Time and Narrative Vol. II*, Ricoeur 8). For any narrative, it is “not enough for the events to be interconnected either chronologically or chronically, and subsequently to unfold, for their strategic accumulation to be referred to as a *story*” (Varotsis 334). In other words, there must be another element, a “narrative-ness” which grants the ordered sequence of events narrative cohesion and allows “the narrative to be recognizable as narrative” (Bal 11). If a narrative is said to be comprised of a multitude of sequences put together, the logic of consequence would be the factor which connects those different sequences into a single narrative. As noted earlier, plot is the “sequential element” which puts things into order to form the recognizable pattern. However, a narrative must be “more than just an enumeration of events in serial order; it must organize them into an intelligible whole” (*Time and Narrative Vol. I*, Ricoeur 65). A story is not merely a simple sequence of consecutive events but a specific “configuration [drawn] out of a simple succession”.

Ultimately, what all the above comes down to is finding a logic of consequence which grants meaning to the events. Within the sequences of what Frank Kermode called the

tick-tocks that comprise narrative sequences, in the meaning of the gaps between the *tock* ending one sequence and the *tick* starting another lies the key to narrative consequence. Though the relationship between *tick* and *tock* which comprises the first-order narrative may be logical and apparent, the relationship between a preceding *tock* and the following *tick* of the subsequent sequence may not be². So it is precisely the “interval between *tock* and *tick* represents [is] purely successive disorganized time of the sort that we need to harmonize” (Kermode 45). In other words, historical narratives do not try to explain the *intra*-sequential gaps between Kermode’s *tick* and *tock* but rather give meaning to the *inter*-sequential gaps between *tock* and *tick* through emplotment to construct the story. So if there is a viable connection between *tocks* and *ticks*, this connection is the plot, a “a synthesis of heterogeneous elements” (“Life in Quest,” Ricoeur 21) which connects discrete sequences into a logical whole. Only by going to a higher order which can envelop all the sequences to contextualize the sequences can there be a unifying logic or plot³. The mechanism through which this occurs is contextualization through plot. Because it is plot which “gives unity to an otherwise meaningless succession of one thing or another” (Mattingly 46), the mechanism through which plot grants narrative events significance is contextualization, a higher level system of organization which gives narrative events an appropriate *telos*. The narratives based on real events are the result of emplotment to make sense of and to connect seemingly

² A simple *tick-tock* relationship may be 1. Ball is hit. 2. Ball falls down. The relationship between the *tick* and the *tock* is simple, apparent, and warrants no further explanation. However, what happens if the second *tick-tock* sequence is 1. Bill runs. 2. Bill is tired? While in this second sequence the logic within is again self-explanatory, the relationship between the first sequence and the second is unclear *if* there is one at all.

³ Continuing from the previous example, the first sequence has the logic of gravity and the second has the logic of tiredness. Gravity does not explain the second sequence and tiredness does not explain the first sequence. Thus, a second-order narrative which can account for both sequences is necessary to bring them together into a single story, i.e. Bill is playing baseball and has hit a home run.

disparate sequences of action into a cohesive whole. As Ricoeur argues, a plot “serves to make *one* story out of the multiple incidents,” by coming from a “*second* point of view” outside the incidents themselves to “organiz[e] together components that are as heterogeneous as unintended circumstances” (“Life in Quest,” Ricoeur 21). When there is a higher “*second* point of view,” it gives the sequences of events a context under which each event can be said to contribute to the establishment of the plot or the furthering of the story, thus endowing them with narrative purpose or significance. For in “a narrative, events must be identified under descriptions that indicate their meaningful connections” (Koppe 106). These higher level systems may be called “grand narratives,” which are “second-order narratives which seek to narratively articulate and legitimate some concrete first-order practices or narratives” (Bernstein 102). Continuing Kermode’s metaphor, a larger story which encompasses all the *tick-tocks* is necessary to find the relationships between the *tocks* and *ticks*. It would be impossible to connect the discrete *tick-tocks* with same-order narrative logic because each sequence already has its own internal logic. For this dissertation’s analysis, of all the events that occur in a sporting event, only when there is a higher order of the plot can events be said to contribute to the plot and gain their sequences gain purpose and significance. The process of contextualization plays an important role for sports narratives because a sporting event contains numerous discrete events yet not all of them will be relevant for the plot. This disparity requires the adoption of a filtering system for relevant events and the screening occurs through contextualization and determining which events can be endowed with narrative significance through it.

The use of emplotment is especially pertinent to historiography, and thus sports narratives. As discussed above, the coherence of a narrative depends on its configurative ability, or its capability to not just list a sequence of events but to present them in such a fashion to produce a story. Both “historical and fictional narrative have something in common, and that is that they are not *simply* a list of events” (Simms 87), nor just a series of disconnected events and sequences. Although the “events of the historian’s ‘plot’ are selected from a pre-existing stock of facts, whereas the events of fictional narrative are invented by the author,” (88) just as for fictional stories, for “history to be narrative, emplotment must have an equally important place within it”. Emplotment is important for historiography because, as Louis O. Mink argues, a “historical narrative does not demonstrate the necessity of events but makes them intelligible by unfolding the story which connects their significance” (“History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension,” Mink 47). Thus, for our narrative model, Ricoeur’s episodic dimension is answered by historicity while the configurational dimension is answered by contextualization.

1.4

Now that one fundamental question of how narrativization balances the push and pull between the “desire for the imaginary” and the “imperatives of the real,” we can answer how narrativization can occur if the ending is yet to be determined. To account for the unpredictable endings, it will be suggested that the plot can only be surmised once the entirety of the sequence of events at hand has definitively finished. Because no party can know what will happen next simply because it has not happened yet, sports stories deal with an unpredictability that cannot be found in historiography. So then how do sports stories

succeed in producing compelling narratives from the same push and pull between narrative cohesion of the “desire for the imaginary” and the “imperatives of the real” found in historiography without sacrificing narrative potential? Here, the yet unknown ending brings together the issue of the two dimensions’ interdependence as this framework leads to a hermeneutic circle. We see that historicity and contextualization are two sides of the same coin. The plot decides which events are part of the narrative, but the events are needed to construct the plot. To decide which events must be chosen for the plot, the plot to some degree has to be determined because there needs to be a higher order system under which the events can be organized, i.e. contextualization, and through which the events in question can be granted narrative significance through historicity. However, if the plot is determined by the narrative events but which events become part of the narrative is determined by the plot, contextualization and historicity constitute a hermeneutic circle.

I propose the key lies in the unpredictable nature of sports. To account for the hermeneutic circle, it will be suggested that the true plot can only be surmised once the entirety of the sequence of events at hand has definitively finished. This sense of an ending is important because “meaning attaches to a story because it is going somewhere, and it is from the end-point of a story that the story and its meaning can be seen as a whole” (Simms 85). In this model, no narrativization is possible until an ending is presented because plot is a “global design” which “necessitates a comprehensive apprehension of facts” (Ryan 145) only available once the entire sequence of events is known. As such, the “very possibility of meaning plotted through time depends on the anticipated structuring force of the ending: the interminable would be the meaningless” (Brooks 283). Because it is the end of a story which

“confer[s] organization and form on the temporal structure,” (Kermode 45) when an unexpected ending is forced onto the narrative building at hand, it can wreak havoc on any semblance of narrative coherence.

Because events are not narrative until they are contextualized under a plot, there is significant room for multiple interpretations of the same event. Since the very events themselves are unpredictable, it is no surprise that the narrative being built on them is also unpredictable. It is in this transformative aspect that the flexibility of the author comes into play. Since “no given set or sequence of real events is intrinsically tragic, comic, farcical, and so on,” (White 44) it is possible that “any given set of real events can be emplotted in a number of different ways” and be “told as number of different kinds of stories”. In other words, the exact same sequence of events may be constructed as either a tragedy or a comedy through the “imposition of the structure of a given story type on the events”. With regards to plot, what this project focuses on is the mechanism(s) through which sports stories, or stories more generally, organizes a sundry mix of events into coherent plots. When defining the true plot of events and narrativizing it, different readings may “perhaps use the same concepts differently, emphasize other aspects of the text, and, consequently, produce a different textual description” (Bal 4). It is the imposition of a story structure from the outside which shapes and molds a sequence of events into a narrative. Especially for sports stories, because there are a limited number of story structures that are repeatedly used by the sports media, they constitute what can be called a folk typology of sports narratives, or story types that are not formally defined but see common usage. As will be discussed later, these folk typologies may be used to inform narrative analysis as they could be utilized as plot scaffolds for

sporting events. On the other hand, how can a plot be determined for any set of events if it is not clear which events contribute to the plot or not? And which events are relevant to the plot or not? How can events be said to be working towards a plot if the plot requires the events to be determined in the first place?

An aspect of sports stories that must be accounted for is its unpredictability. It is the unpredictability which both grants sports stories tension to make them more narratively satisfying and simultaneously hinders that very narrativization. This means that although sometimes these narrative-generating apparatuses are correct in their predictions, sometimes an upset or a surprising result forces them to hurriedly switch the plot of the game, resulting in a messy or narratively dissatisfactory storyline. The unpredictable nature of sports presents an especially difficult challenge for narrative formation and analysis because how a game ends is not predetermined, and therefore an unexpected ending can uproot a storyline which had been planted all game long. Unlike unpredictability in fiction, which is written by the author and thus intentional, in sports the unpredictability of a player dropping the ball for example, are unintentional and are true accidents. One major difference between historiography and sports stories is that while the former can only occur retrospectively and “only displays the result of the process of emplotment,” the latter happens in real-time while the events unfold and “offers a glimpse at the process itself” (Ryan 150). Because no party can know what will happen next simply because it has not happened yet, sports stories deal with an unpredictability that cannot be found in history. Though the necessity of complete retrospection to find the plot and the historicity of events have been discussed above, for sports narratives, such retrospection is not always available. Though the “laws of material

causality” that govern the action on the field “operate forward the laws of narrative... causality operate overwhelmingly backward” (Ryan 138). While it is possible to look back upon previous games or seasons to build higher levels of context, within the games themselves, the commentary and the surrounding media apparatus are forced to generate a compelling narrative as the game unfolds.

The field of sports studies has long been aware of the unpredictable nature of sport itself. However, it has seen this volatility as a positive trait as it makes for more interesting viewing by increasing suspense. Simply put, the “sporting event is unscripted and live” and “[d]ramatic things may happen at any moment” (“Media, Sports, and Society,” Wenner 15). Though it may seem counterintuitive, the “novelty and unpredictability” of sports are considered “highly desirable quality” (Rowe 31) because this “‘emergent’ quality of sport in the media helps meet the perpetual audience need for something new and different alongside what is familiar and known”. In fact, sports are called the “quintessential ‘reality TV’ in that they are unscripted and are acted out in real time by people who by their actions actually determine the outcome” (“Theorizing the Sports-Television Dream Marriage,” Real 21). The unpredictability of sports seems to be viewed as a positive factor since a constant source of excitement for sports broadcasts. The “suspense factor” (21) and is the reason why the “open-ended dramatic, narrative sequence of the event” is “[e]ssential to... live viewing of sports events”. Without the suspense, there are no “trials that the hero faces which create the drama: the tension of the match, the occasional failures on the way to victory. One of the reasons why newspapers don’t like teams that win every match is that they flatten out this narrative and drive out the tension” (Phillips 15).

Nonetheless, the unpredictability of sports is a major point of difficulty with standardizing a narrative format, as Rowe suggests “there is no ‘typical’ sports text as such, but rather a jumble of genres and subjects that can be said to fit under the rubric of sport because they have some connection (often tenuous) with its mythologies, organizations and personnel” (Rowe 97). The very “emergent” quality of sports (31) is what makes narrativizing sports both so desirable and difficult. For example, the commentary for a game may build up a storyline about how one team winning is a foregone conclusion but an unexpected upset may make that narrative completely wrong and irrelevant. The unpredictable nature of sports could turn a game’s or even an entire season’s worth of story building moot. One stunning example is the Super Bowl LI game between the New England Patriots and the Atlanta Falcons. In the 3rd quarter, the Falcons were leading by a score of 28-3. Then in a shocking turn of events, the Patriots managed to come back to tie the game and then win in overtime 34-28. Even though at one point in the 4th quarter, ESPN projected that the Falcons had a 99.3% chance of winning (“Patriots vs. Falcons Game Summary,” ESPN/Associated Press), the game had the opposite ending. The sportswriters covering the game had taken the Patriots’ loss as a given and had already drafted versions of the story saying that “Tom Brady came up short, ultimately so did the Patriots” or that “the Patriots’ defense wasn’t good enough to win a Super Bowl” and postulating on the “Three reasons why the Patriots unexpectedly lost Super Bowl LI to the Falcons” (“The Stories of Super Bowl 51,” NFL Film Presents). However, “once [the Patriots] started to put points on the board... it’s not a blowout anymore” and the sportswriters began “writing about how they start to mount a comeback”. Although a dramatic example, this game shows that it is

impossible to correctly narrativize a sporting event until it has completely finished. As White mentions, the “plot of a narrative imposes a meaning on the events that make up its story level by revealing at the end a structure that was immanent in these events all along” (White 20). Determining which sports event can be endowed with historicity can be challenging when an unexpected outcome unfolds. With a surprise victory or loss, the plot for which events had been contributing towards can become irrelevant or dispelled. At which point, other events which had not been contributing to the previous plot could be endowed with historicity as they could now be working towards the new plot. Only when looking at a complete sequence of events retrospectively, can the observer definitively come to a plot which is reflective of all the events that have occurred and will not be caught off-guard by a surprising turn of events at the end since “a given event cannot be classified separately from its context, especially the final event” (Chatman 94). Only a complete retrospective view of the entire sequence of events will lead to the most accurate/proper plot through which individual events can be granted historicity as “[k]nowledge of the outcome shapes the narrator’s selection and evaluation of the preceding states and events” (Ryan 138). This means that for our analysis, the plot or at least some semblance of it must be established first to allow for contextualization which then in turn allows relevant events to be endowed with historicity.

However, sports narratives are not completely chaotic because as much as they are obligated to follow the “imperatives of the real,” they are still governed by narrative rules. It is in between the two poles of the imperfect conditions of reality and the ideal circumstances of the fiction that sports stories are located. Within narratives, there are internal systems of

logic that guide story formation. One such device is the concept of “*narrative probability*,” the “inherent awareness” people have about “what constitutes a coherent story” (Fisher 4). In other words, what happens in a story must follow an internal logic and must make sense. This is something more than just “temporal succession” but a “*narrative causality*” (Varotsis 334). When a gap in logic exists between narrative events, the disruption can seem either like a *deus ex machina* that cheats the audience out of a satisfactory resolution or an illogical sequence altogether where one event does not commonsensically follow another. These sorts of story elements that occur with “no narrative preparation, cannot help but seem like artless interventions” (Horowitz 77). In fact, “accidents cannot survive in literature, that literature affords little or no room for acts that are both unintended and unforeseen, as accidents must be” (66). In narrative, events “must be integrated into a causal web that is far thicker and more substantial than anything we experience in everyday life,” (68) which is difficult when the task at hand is to narrativize the real life events of sports. So then, to have a functional and pleasing narrative, narratives depend on the quality of “neatness,” where the “reader of a narrative can expect to finish his reading having achieved a state of equilibrium” (Scholes, Phelan, and Kellogg 212) with the tension and resolution in balance. In an alternate but similar vein, a narrative must be in some sense teleological, in that narrative events or actions must be geared towards establishing a plot. Because to “tell and comprehend stories is to operate within a system of probabilistic rules in which events are preferentially (but not absolutely or inevitably) viewed as goal-directed actions,” (Herman 28) “narrative crucially involves coding what happens in mentally projected storyworlds as sequences of deliberate,

goal-oriented behaviours” (39). Narratives can then be said to have an internal logic that guides their events within towards a logical end.

Though the ending is “unpredictable,” it still must be logically sound. A mystery novel might end with the promised ending of the apprehension of the murderer. Still, the identity of the murderer might be unexpected, thus maintaining the balance between tension and resolution. Similarly, sports maintain the balance of tension and resolution by having the predictable outcome of producing a winner and the unpredictable outcome of not knowing in advance who will win. The coherence of a narrative is also reflected in its ability to be followed by the audience since it is possible to “obtain an understanding of [a] composition by means of the act of *following* a story” (“Life in Quest,” Ricoeur 21). To “understand what a story is, is to know what it is to *follow* a story... to know what in general are the features of a story which make it followable” (“History and Fiction,” Mink 46). The story must exhibit an internal sense of logic where it is probable or understandably likely that one event should follow another. The audience can “follow understandingly what [they] could not predict or infer,” following the game knowing one of the two teams will win though not knowing which one. To comprehend a story, then, is to “operate within a system of probabilistic rules in which events are preferentially (but not absolutely or inevitably) viewed as goal-directed actions – these actions in turn forming part of a larger sequence of actions within a storyworld” (Herman 28). While fiction has the rules of logical probability, sports have their rules of play. The audience may follow the match without knowing who will win because of the events within are made probable through the “contingent relations” of the rules. While which team wins is a promised, yet unpredictable, conclusion, the actual playing of the match

abides by the rules of the sport and thus provides a logical framework which contextualizes each action, allowing the audience to follow what is happening without the ability “predict or infer” how it will end. Which is why when commentators are “lousy at analysis” and “insist that the “storylines... announced at the beginning of the game were playing out on the field even when they did not,” (Oriard 28) the audience can quickly notice that there is a discrepancy between what the reality of the situation is and what the narrative being constructed is.

Furthermore, the idea of “*weak narrativity*” is relevant. It is the “literary strategy of conveying an *illusion* of narrative sequence, linearity, causality, closure... while at the same time frustrating the reader’s trust in the emergence of a coherent narrative” (Tammi 30). Much like the commentators who try to keep up multiple storylines afloat for as long as possible, it is the practice of trying to maximize tension through the delay of a reveal of coherence. It is the quality of narrative where “reading a text you see an emerging narrative, and at the same time you do not”. This followability is crucial in the presentation of sports events because followability is a marker of a narrative’s internal logic. Following a story as it unfolds is no different than following a match of a sport unfold. Just as the reader of a story does not know how it will end, the viewers of a sporting event also do not know how it will end; yet both are partaking in a process of narrativization in the meantime. In this regard, following a story is “not significantly different from following a game in progress, such as a cricket match, and understanding the features which make it followable”. When the story or sporting event starts, “as in being a spectator at a match, there must be a quickly established sense of a promised although unpredictable outcome,” a logical dance of tension and

resolution. Once the promise of a satisfying conclusion has been made, through “[s]urprises and contingencies,” both stories and games, enable their audiences to “follow a series of events across their contingent relations and to understand them as leading to a yet unrevealed conclusion without however necessitating that conclusion”. In other words, working through the “suspense factor,” the audience knows that the story or game will end and goes through the events as tension builds up to the aforementioned promised ending, though they do not know what exactly that ending will look like.

1.5

In sports studies, some approaches attempt to draw a parallel between traditional fiction and sports stories or carry over the themes, structures, and language associated with more literary forms of fiction to storytelling in sports. For some, the reason for building “a dramatic storyline” is to “keep the fans interested in the game and the sponsors inclined to make investments” (Congalton 184) which grants true “sports status”. While there are some who see the practical considerations for narrativizing sports, others see a deep, ontological similarity between the transmission of fiction and sport. Some scholars see a natural affinity between sports and stories. A common view on the narrative nature of sports is that as “highly dramatic events, sports share much in common with fictional narratives” (Raney 77). Sports are often seen as “symbolic actions” (Guttmann 12) and the crowds and audiences watching “often responds to the contest as if it were an allegory,” as if the match unfolding in front of them is a drama. Yet there has been a surprising dearth of research into why it is that sports are perceived as “dramatic” or how they are so dramatized.

The ontological similarity between fiction and sport may be reflected in the nearly inseparable nature of sport and the media which facilitates it. Some have delved into this relationship, claiming that a sport and its narration are one and the same as sports becomes “increasingly indistinguishable from the *sports media*” (Rowe 2) such that the fusion of the two can be labeled as a separate entity of what Lawrence Wenner calls “mediasport”. Between sport and media, “one is literally unthinkable without the other (literally because it is almost impossible now to ‘imagine’ sport without the mind’s eye conjuring up replay, slow motion, and multi-perspectival images, accompanied by the inner voice of phantom sports commentators)” (13). In competitive eating, for example, storytelling is seen as such an integral part of (traditional) sports which the unorthodox competition tries to imitate as the “crafting of characters and scripts provides a means for competitive eating to perform as a legitimate, professional sport” (Congalton 184). In addition, the elements of storytelling and performance found in sports like the use of “form and structure, the language, and the spectacle” of the sporting event “not only enhance the drama of competition but also enable the identification of this sport with more traditional sports and explain why fans flock to see their favorite competitive eaters perform their feats,” whether that be scoring a touchdown or eating hotdogs (175).

Specifically when it comes to sports broadcasting, the medium of television is ideal because “the structure of a sporting event is essentially narrative, with a beginning, plot complications, and resolution, it feeds television’s insatiable hunger for narrative,” or in more narratological terms, the “sports event is the plot and the television presentation is the narration” (“Theorizing,” Real 30). Furthermore, Real claims that a typical sports broadcast

engenders the “three stages of the narrative hermeneutic code identified by Barthes... enigma, delay, resolution”. As such, sports events can be said to have a “dramatic plot structure built into them” (31). This line of argument is taken even further with football because the very structure of the sport, with discrete downs marking the beginning and end of each play acting as narrative functions, is conducive to narrativization. The so-called “minidrama of each first down attempt and the natural break between each play” not only keeps the “viewers’ attention riveted to the screen” but also allows room for narrativization by “creat[ing] space to speculate about what might happen next” (Jay 97). Even on the larger level of television broadcasting, compared to another sport like baseball, football is more suited to narrativization because “the narrow focus upon the batter distorts the Gestalt of the game more than a narrow focus upon the football’s ball carrier” (Guttmann 98). In fact, for “many viewers, football made more sense on the small screen than at the stadium” (Jay 97). Thinking about football under this lens makes “[e]very play... a separate story around which announcers could weave a cohesive narrative”. Because even though the raw materials of the game may have been chaotic, the narrativized product that the viewer sees presents at least some semblance of a story.

While some characteristics or rule sets of certain sports may be more conducive to external narrativization, the act of narrativization is ultimately an external process imposed onto the inherently non-narrative act of sport. For professional football especially, its media apparatus has been keen on its narrativizing. From the “moment that newspapers began extensively covering the games in the 1880s, the media elaborated on them,” (Oriard 27) tapping into these frameworks to package football for a wider audience. Starting in the

1960's, with the rise of televised football, broadcasters "became increasingly self-conscious and intentional about doing this" and consciously employed "'storylines' to guide the commentary". From the beginning of televised sports, and even in print and radio, broadcasters have noted the importance of building narratives to not only draw in fans but to make sense of what was happening out on the field. The National Football League "realized early on that football's meaning is pliable" (Vogan 2). Through its internal media division, NFL Films, its "dramatized productions gives the sport meaning and shape how it is imagined" (4). Professional football has taken the idea about how "any given set of real events can be emplotted in a number of different ways" and can be "told as number of different kinds of stories" (White 44) to its practical extremes. For the NFL and NFL Films, the games played out on the field are just the raw materials which they could transform to tell the stories they want to tell. In recording and presenting highlights, the point was to tell "stories about pro football in a self-consciously epic mode" (Oriard 16). The use of narration and "romantic, melodramatic, epic, mythic" storylines was meant to add a "show business" aspect to football for "enhancing the game's storytelling ability, not reducing but amplifying football's epic or mythic power" (26) and as will be discussed later, employed story typologies to frame the games as well.

The broadcast narrativizes the sport so that when "actual sports action, when caught on screen, is invested with the quality of dramatic fiction" (Rowe 159). The various elements of the broadcast, the commentary, the camera movement, and its very structure come together to tell the story of the sporting event such that the "sports event is the plot and the television presentation is the narration" (Real 30). When it came to sports coverage, the

“networks discovered early on that sports contests could not be covered simply as actualities” (Sullivan 138) as if they were rudimentary news reports, or to invoke the earlier discussions of White, mere annals or chronicles which only list a sequence of events. Instead, the networks used “cameras and narration to transform the signifying material of the live event from sport to entertainment,” transforming it into a story through which its events gained significance through their corresponding historicalities. The role of the camera was to “lend plot to what is an unpredictable, unscripted story by enhancing the imagery” while the commentary contributed to this “transformation by identifying and personalizing the contestants as characters and creating a story around their actions on the field of play”. Former NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle also encouraged commentators to “to think of themselves as part of the show, so that ‘people would be interested regardless of the game or the score’” (Jay 112). Then working in tandem with each other and assuming that “conflict drives drama, broadcast TV uses camera coverage and commentary as tools to identify, focus on, and interpret key moments of conflict”. These are the basic mechanisms through which sports events are narrativized in broadcast.

However, the narrativization of football, and sport more generally, also includes not only what happened on the field but the context in which it occurred. Operating in the same way as the concept of contextualization discussed earlier, the higher level narrative of a season or a franchise’s history can serve as the larger storyline under which individual games are narrativized. Within the ecosystem of the broadcast, there is the media discourse “before, during and after sports events... variously about prediction, judging what has been predicted against what is actually unfolding, and then reflecting on and seeking to find explanations for

what has transpired” (Rowe 31). These may include things such as interviews, pregame predictions, and retrospectives on past players or teams. Furthermore, within the broadcast itself and especially the commentary may, and frequently do, draw from the “deep reservoir of historical facts and mythologies, a well from which players, announcers, and fans can pull up great performances and powerful narratives” (“Theorizing,” Real 24). Just as how for Ricoeur, White, and Barthes, a higher level of organization is required to contextualize and make sense of the individual events underneath whether that be temporality, history, or narration, sports stories rely on an outside level of context to effectively narrativize individual games and plays.

1.6

The “followability” of sports narratives may also be a byproduct of using what may be called “standard” storylines common to the industry, or the aforementioned folk typologies.

Practically speaking, sports narratives are not completely original stories created from the ground up every time but are usually a superimposition of a commonly used trope or a structure onto a match. Some scholars believe that *all* stories are based on a few limited archetypical stories, though they may disagree on the exact number of said archetypes, such as Northrop Frye’s assertion that “the romantic, the tragic, the comic, and the ironic or satiric” are “narrative categories of literature broader than, or logically prior to, the ordinary literary genres” (Frye 162). The use of established types of stories to tell new ones, or rather narrativize new material and events as reiterations of the same kinds of stories may be a result of the human need for narrativization, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter. It is “not just narrative but thinking itself relies on ‘parabolic projections’ of precisely this sort,

whereby a source story (say, about actions) is projected onto a target story (about events or processes) to help make the latter more intelligible and tractable” (Herman 28) by “configur[ing] the game by activating a script on the basis of some events” (Ryan 145). The familiar form of stories provides a scaffold onto which the messy jumble of real life events can be ordered and understood. Because “our entire responses to all sorts of things are guided and organized by a limited number of standard narrative structures,” to understand real life events is a “matter or emplotment in a narrow, specifiable sense” (Hogan 5).

When it comes to sports narratives specifically, though there are disagreements on the total number of typologies, it is taken to be a truism that there are some reoccurring stories that can be told. For sports narratives, the variety of possible typologies is limited because a competitive sports environment is not conducive to every kind of narrative. For example, the voyage as a typology does not fit well into a football game. However, sports narrative typologies may be seen as sports specific adaptations of basic plots. Just as Vladimir Propp envisioned many interchangeable characters filling out the necessary roles, there may be sports specific elements filling out the necessary roles for these universal typologies. Although they may have different names, there are clear overlaps and parallels between competing models of sports narrative typologies applicable to many if not all competitive sports settings. Some have identified the “scripts, or scenarios, which define standard game-plots” like “the Incredible Come-From-Behind Victory, the Fatal Error, the Heroic Feat, the Lucky Break Victory, the Unlikely Hero, the Inevitable Collapse, Overcoming Bad Luck, Persistence That Pays Off” (Ryan 145) while others have identified them as the “traditional-rivals story, the bitter-enemies story, the wounded-hero story, the Cinderella or Ugly

Duckling story, the son-challenging-the-father story (former assistant versus wily mentor)” (Oriard 26). The superimposition of typologies seems to simplify narrative analysis because the typology used dictates the presence and absence of certain elements. For example, the comeback story necessitates that the winning team be at a disadvantaged position until the end, otherwise it does not fit the definition of a comeback story. This severe imposition of conditions may mean that the act of narrativization may not always succeed due to the “imperative of the real”. Though it may seem like a comeback story is unfolding, if the team in question is unable to win, the story will be incomplete and failed.

The impulse to structure sporting events as distinct and easily recognizable stories has been long common in professional football and is intertwined with these sports “folk typologies”. The NFL, its media arm NFL Films, and the sports media at large have utilized the technique of superimposing stories onto games, knowing full well the power of a good story to draw in audiences and shape the image of the game. From the early days of football, “networks discovered early on that sports contests could not be covered simply as actualities” (Sullivan 138) and that they needed stories to guide them. Even before television and radio, in print media recognizable storylines such as “traditional-rivals story, the bitter-enemies story, the wounded-hero story, the Cinderella or Ugly Duckling story, the son-challenging-the-father story (former assistant versus wily mentor)” (Oriard 26) were used, and “from the moment that newspapers began extensively covering the games in the 1880s, the media elaborated on them” (27). The NFL quickly realized that “football’s meaning is pliable” (Vogan 2) since any story could be emplotted onto the events happening out on the field. With the advent of NFL Film, its “dramatized productions [gave] the sport meaning and

shape how it is imagined” (4). The filmic productions often contained elements of the “romantic, melodramatic, epic, mythic, usually with playful and humorous interludes” (Oriard 16). For example, “the son-challenging-the-father story (former assistant versus wily mentor)” was put to use when the New England Patriots faced off against the Tennessee Titans in the 2020 AFC championship game. When Mike Vrabel, now as head coach of the Titans, won against his former coach Bill Belichick, the football media was eager to portray the win as the student becoming the teacher, especially with the wily “Belichick -esque” tactic of running down the play clock with false start penalties to ensure a win and “beat Belichick at his own game” (“Mike Vrabel recalls,” NBC Sports). Even for specific players, these story types can be applied. Tom Brady “has been defined by competing narratives for years” (Leibovich 54). First the “familiar against-the-odds construct” is now a “fairy tale and anti-underdog,” the player everyone loves to hate. Sportswriters and broadcasters “became increasingly self-conscious and intentional” about using “‘storylines’ to guide the commentary” (Oriard 27). “Every play was a separate story around which announcers could weave a cohesive narrative” (Jay 97) and eventually the sport and its narrativization became so intertwined that for even unconventional competitions, the “crafting of characters and scripts provides a means for [the sport] to perform as a legitimate, professional sport” (Congalton 184). These story types, such as rivalries and the Cinderella story, “unsurprisingly, are versions of the oldest and most-represented narratives in the Western World” (Oriard 27). Though not exhaustive these are the narratives that are often repeated in sports storytelling. Using these common story types to make sense of sporting events might be because narrative “describe a set of ideas (or discourses) constructed from the myths and

legends that have shaped our cultures and communities, which then help us to construct the way we think about the world” (Phillips 7).

For sports, the unpredictable series of events is often given meaning through the use of the higher order narrative structure in the form of story types. The use of these folk typologies may be seen as the “parabolic projections” of narrative (Herman 28) where “a source story... is projected onto a target story... to help make the latter more intelligible and traceable”. In this regard, the happenings on the field are projected onto standard storylines to make the sporting event comprehensible. The actions happening out on the field are co-opted into a recognizable storyline which then contextualize the events, like how historicity is endowed on upon historical events, to give order and coherence to the sporting event. Just as a story is “more than just an enumeration of events in serial order” but “an intelligible whole,” (*Time and Narrative Vol. I*, Ricoeur 65) sports typologies are scaffolds onto which the events of the sporting event are built on to give a recognizable form to the inherently non-narrative phenomena. In the case of historical discourse, because when “narrative serves to transform into a story a list of historical events that would otherwise only be a chronicle,” the “events, agents, and agencies” within must be “encoded as story elements” (White 43). This means that they “must be characterized as “the kinds of events, agents, agencies, and so on, that can be apprehended as elements of specific story types”. Doing so “directs the reader’s attention to a secondary referent, different in kind from the events that make up the primary referent, namely the plot structures of the various story types cultivated in a given culture”. For White, the comprehension of discourse relies on the reader recognizing the narrative at hand being told though “a specific kind of story – for example, as an epic, romance, tragedy,

comedy, or farce”. Comprehension, then, is “nothing other than the recognition of the form of the narrative”. White goes on further to argue that because narratives being constructed as “tragic, comic, farcical, and so on” can only be done so through the “imposition of the structure of a given story type on the events,” ultimately it is the very “choice of the story type and its imposition upon the events that endow them with meaning” (44). The events that constitute the narrative is at first meaningless but gain significance only through their contextualization within a recognizable story structure which endows them with meaning within. As echoed by Paul Ricoeur and others, a grand second-order narrative is required to give meaning to the incoherent hodgepodge of events.

1.7

In analyzing real sports events, the desire for establishing a coherent narrative must compete against the unpredictability of sports. This incompatibility makes determining an intelligible storyline difficult as no one, not even the commentators building the story in real time, knows what will happen until the game has officially ended. Yet, these stories are not created in a vacuum. They are usually contextualized as manifestations of higher order storylines which endows select events with narrative significance. They would be Barthesian “nuclei” in the story. The main task at hand for narratively analyzing sporting events is to identify the main storyline, only then can the specific events which make up the functions of that narrative be *retroactively* be identified. Here, the necessary rereading of the events can be contextualized through the practice of open coding, a qualitative data analysis where “raw research data are first systematically analyzed and categorized” into “usable theoretical or conceptual chunks” (Price) where a text is analyzed. Certain keywords or events are noted so

that a larger pattern can be made recognizable from the overall view. However, open coding sporting events is difficult because of their unpredictable nature. Although one standard open coding practice involves setting up key categories before the analysis, because it is unknown which events will occur until the sporting event has concluded, it is not feasible to have a code key set up prior. Thus, the analysis can only be done while keeping in mind very general events that *could* be made significant such as touchdowns and other scoring events and then identifying the relevant events *retroactively* after the dominant storyline has been found.

The real-time nature of sports narrativization forces the temporary and simultaneous adoption of multiple potential storylines on the part of the analyzer. Because of the “imperatives of the real,” it is possible for the game to shift to a completely different narrative anytime and the story cannot be made certain until the game has finished. Of all the storylines that are at least partially formed, some may “rise to the highest level of prominence, becoming the theme(s) of the macro-structure; some would sink to lower levels; some would survive in a modified version... and a few might disappear altogether” (Ryan 148). The potential for narrative failure is a crucial element of sports narratives. Because no one, including the commentators who narrativize the game, can see into the future, whatever storyline is being pushed at any given time may fail if the events on the field do not comply. In stark contrast to Barthes, who said that in narrative “there are no wasted units,” (Barthes 245) in sports narratives, plenty is wasted as in “the text of the broadcast, the potentially plot-functional elements form only a subset of the total information” (Ryan 149). Thus, when analyzing the narrativization of sport, potentially competing storylines must be kept in mind,

keeping track of the events that may be co-opted into any of the storylines. Only when the game is finished and the storyline decided that the contributing events can be identified. This leads into a discussion of the potential methodology for analyzing sports narratives.

So far, it has been shown that the entirety of the sporting event must be known, which necessitates a rereading approach where subsequent reading keeps track of potential historicity, and it also has been shown that events require contextualization from a higher system of organization. Barthes' model provides the most apt framework which can accommodate these features. Barthes' framework of narrative analysis outlined in his essay "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" serves as a scaffold for constructing a new viable model of narrative that incorporates the reiterative process necessary in analyzing live sporting broadcasts. Broadly speaking, Barthes provides three levels of narrative: functions, actions, and narration. Functions are the smallest unit of narrative and they can be pieced together to form larger sequences of action, and these actions are made sensible under the system of narration. Crucially, each level must be integrated, or contextualized, by the level above to make sense. While Barthes goes into detail about the types of functions, such as cardinal functions/nuclei which determine the plot and indices which describe and fill in the gaps, what is important for the new model is the layered structure. The form, not content, of Barthes' schema which begins with the foundational units of narrative and successively integrates them into towards larger units until a narrative is established is the backbone of the proposed model. By borrowing the core concept of integrated layers, the new model is flexible enough to include more than the three layers identified by Barthes yet the layered approach provides enough rigidity and independence to

each layer to allow re-reading and reiteration at each level. Each level of narrative serves as the higher order of contextualization for the level below, thus building a layered system of contextualize meaning making. In other words, the narrativization is identified by building on successive levels of narrative organization. This layered approach is necessary because each layer is contextualized, and thus made meaningful, by the layer above.

1.8

Based on the theoretical background discussed so far, a sound methodology for sports narrative analysis should adhere to the following conditions:

1. It must at first be chronological.
2. It should keep multiple prospective narratives open to possibility during the unfolding of the events, thus any possibly relevant events must be noted.
3. It must abstain from determining a narrative until the sporting event has concluded.
This narrative can be identified with a sports narrative typology.
4. Only after the overarching narrative has been determined, can the relevant events retrospectively be endowed with significance and be part of the narrative.
5. Once both the narrative(s) and its/(their) events are determined, their analysis should come to one of three conclusions: the identification of a single narrative, the identification of multiple competing narratives where one is established over the others, or the failure to produce a coherent story through narrativization.

Yet here is the difficult part. Because the overarching narrative cannot be determined until the sporting event has concluded and only then retrospectively, the game in question must be analyzed *at least twice*. Once to establish a general sense of the entirety of the

sporting event, and then again to highlight all the potentially significant events and their corresponding potential storylines, to review and re-categorize or re-identify the events as those that contribute to the main story, assuming that there is a successful narrative. Furthermore, the repeated process is an analytical convenience. In real application, the proposing of narrative and the selecting and rewriting of narratives would occur to some extent simultaneously.

Within this guideline, a reiterative reinterpretation is crucial in determining which events are to be endowed with “historicality” (White 5) to be a part of the final narrative in the analysis outside the broadcast. While the narrativization of the broadcast happens in real time, the analysis of that narrativization happens retrospectively and requires constant re/interpretation. Though the narrativization may seem natural in the sense that it logically arises out of the events it draws from, this chapter seeks to examine the interpretive decisions that must be made towards “determining” the narrative in the *post hoc* analysis.

As discussed earlier, the methodology for carrying out the narrative analysis was open coding based on a modified Barthesian tripartite model while considering the episodic and configurational aspects of the final narrative. In other words, the narrativization is identified by building on successive levels of narrative organization. This layered approach is necessary because each layer is contextualized, and thus made meaningful, by the layer above. From the **broadcast** of all the audiovisual elements aired, the analysis begins by establishing the base level of **raw functions**, the more-or-less complete selection of the elements of the broadcast comprising the foundational layer of the narrativization. Raw functions are imbued with an assumption of narrative relevancy as opposed to **noise** or obvious irrelevant elements

such as ads for other TV shows on the broadcasting network that have nothing to do with the game at hand. Not everything that happens can be realistically included, as established by Seymour Chatman, “[n]arrative events have not only a logic of connection, but a logic of *hierarchy*” and some are simply “more important than others” (Chatman 54). Raw functions are divided into two types: **game events** which are the actual play on the field and **commentary events** which include the commentary, replays, highlights, and onscreen graphics. While it is the case that the commentary events cannot exist independently without the game events. Thus, in a sense a narrativizing layer above them because both event types are part of the broadcast they will be treated as being on the same level of functions. From here **true functions**, or functions which were deemed to have a significant impact on the narrative formation, or have “historicality,” were marked as such. While **pseudo-functions**, or narratively irrelevant functions were ignored. Based on true functions, loose groupings of narrative focus were identified as **true functional clusters** if they contributed to the higher level of storylines. While the **pseudo-functional clusters**, the groupings of functions which do not contribute to storylines, were ignored. Building on true functional clusters, even longer stretches of distinct storylines were formed. **True storylines** are akin to functional sequences of functional clusters which contribute to the final narrative, while **pseudo-storylines** are sequences that do not work towards the final narrative. Lastly, the **final narrative** is the accurate narrative produced from the entire broadcast comprised of the true storylines.

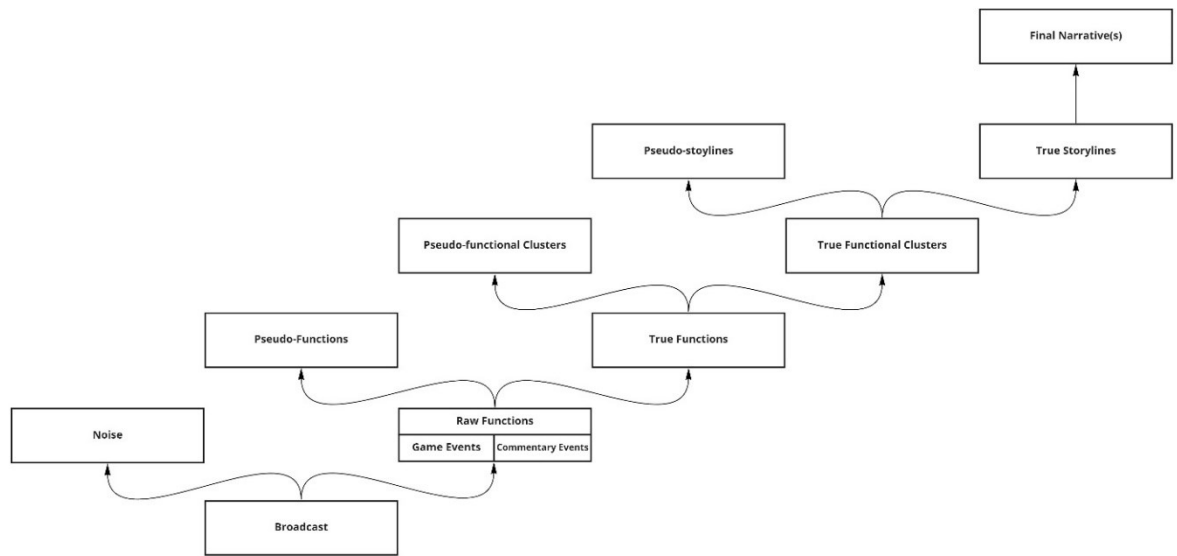


Figure 1.1: A diagram of the units of narrative and their organization

At each step between the levels of narrative identification, from the broadcast to the functions, from the functions to the functional clusters, from the functional clusters to storylines, and from the storylines to the final narrative, there is an interpretive act of narrative sense-making must be made to successfully unify the narrativization at each level to make it possible to narrativize the next. The classification of narrative elements as pseudo or true may raise questions about whether sports narratives should or could be read on the axis of truth/falsity. It may be more useful to conceptualize it as being true based on the progress of the sporting event up to that point. If a team is in the lead in the beginning, it is logical that the broadcast will build a narrative favouring that team. But if the game ends in an upset and that team loses, the narrativization will shift accordingly. Looking at this hypothetical example, it is not that the broadcast was “false” at the start, but that it was as true as it could get based on the events of the game that had happened so far.

However, there is a concurrent battle for meaning making between two interpretive forces: the reflexive narrativization of the broadcast and the *post hoc* narrative analysis. The real-time self-narrativization of the broadcast done through primarily the commentary is done with no foreknowledge of the end and thus leads to the formulation of both pseudo and inevitably some true narrative units. While sitting at a slightly higher level of narrative plane than the actual play on the field, the commentary and its tools are treated as an inextricable intertwined aspect of the play in the broadcasts. Without the complete picture to properly contextualize each level of narration towards the final narrative, it frequently confuses “consecutiveness and consequence, between time sequence and logic” (Barthes 251), forming pseudo-narrative units based on only chronology or towards incorrect narratives, and not towards their contribution to higher orders of true narrative organization, thus forming clusters and storylines unable to “function as a simple term in another, broader sequence” (254).

On the other hand, the *post hoc* narrative analysis is done with the knowledge of the completed broadcast. Essentially, the repeated interpretation emplots the “interval between *tock* and *tick*,” the “purely successive disorganized time of the sort that we need to harmonize” (Kermode 45) by establishing what Guttman fleetingly calls the “Gestalt of the game” (Guttman 98). In some respects, this multi-level interpretation occurs simultaneously with and is a workaround to the hermeneutic circle. Within the reiterative analysis of the narrativization, each level of interpretation and Gestalt building makes sense of the events working towards an end not yet definite, while interpreting the events based off the incomplete information of the previous iterations’ indefinite narrative.

1.9

Using the conditions outlined above, an NFL game between the Cleveland Browns and the Tennessee Titans in week 1 of the 2019-2020 season was analyzed. The approach takes each play as a Barthesian function since football is conducive to being broken down into blocks of plays of “each first down attempt and the natural break between each play,” (Jay 97) then using the commentators and the broadcast (camera, graphics, etc.), the analysis constructs larger sequences of narrative action which extends over multiple functions, then the sequences are pieced together into even larger swathes of story lines, of which three develop as the game goes on. Once the game ends, the competing storylines were compared and an overarching narrative for the entire game is established. For the game in question, the narrative was one of the Browns being unable to live up to their expectations and losing the game due to their numerous penalties; put into a sports “folk typology,” it might be called “The Throw,” where a team in an advantageous position loses the game due to unnecessary errors or dip in performance. The archetype of “The Throw” necessitates certain structuring of events, as will be discussed later.

First, a list of raw functions is produced from the initial reading of the broadcast. From the beginning to the end of the game, plays, commentary, and broadcast elements such as statistics graphics are itemized in chronological order. However, just as not every step can be recounted in a historical work, there is already a need for interpretive action at this point in the analysis. Because there are a large number of short flashes of information conveyed on screen, if there are off-topic conversation between the commentators or there are some statistics or graphics too irrelevant or unimportant, they are left out even before the raw

functions are compiled using the “implicit *criteria* of relevance” (“Narrative Form,” Mink 187). The entire analysis can be seen in the appendix (Appendix A).

Functions			
Pregame predictions on CLE win			
OBJ recovering from injury			
1st Quarter			
CLE receiving			
1st & 10, almost intercepted			
2nd & 10, pass to Higgins			
1st & 10, run by Landry			
1st & 10, run by Chubb			
Comm, this offense is dynamic			
1st & 10, pass to OBJ			
1st & 10, run by OBJ			
Flag, unnecessary roughness, -15 yards			
1st & 25, pass to OBJ			
2nd & 23, pass to Higgins			
1st & goal, run by Hilliard, TD			
Conversion unsuccessful			
Comm, great opening drive, no 3rd down			
TEN receiving			
Flag, illegal block			
1st & 10, pass to Walker			
Flag, roughing the passer, def -15 yards			
1st & 10, no gain			
2nd & 10, pass to Brown, 47 yards			
1st & 10, rush by Henry			
2nd & 11, TEN TO			
2nd & 11, pass to Brown			
3rd & 9, incomplete			
4th & 9, FG attempt successful			
Comm, John Dorsey, GM deserves credit			
CLE receiving			
Flag, illegal block			
1st & 10, pass to OBJ			
2nd & 2, sacked			

Figure 1.2: An excerpt of the raw functions from Cleveland vs. Tennessee 2019 Week 1

With the base level of raw functions in place and the end result known, the analysis can move on to identifying the functions which are endowed with historicity and ultimately contribute to the final narrative. The second time around, because the narrative towards which each function must contribute is clearer, it is much easier to identify which plays should constitute narrative functions. When the game is reviewed and re-analyzed under the framework of the Cleveland’s mounting penalties, the resulting selection of plays is identified as true functions which contribute to the plot, of which there are two kinds. Yellow

is used for game events like changes in score and so-called “big plays,” where even if no change in score occurs, it can be seen to have a noticeable impact on the game at the time of its occurrence. Green is used for commentary events or noticeable moments of commentary or broadcast where explicit moments of narrativization occur. It also includes non-verbal aspects of the broadcast which acts as narration such as the camera work and graphic displays that are shown on screen for the viewers. Although the earlier penalties in the first quarter would not be highlighted if the initially hopeful storyline of Cleveland’s new prospects continued, once the overarching narrative for the game was determined to be about how Cleveland threw the game with its penalties, these earlier infractions became endowed with narrative significance. Now, these penalties are the first seeds of a larger story to come and they can be seen to “contribute to the plot,” in what can be seen as an *additive* mode of narrative building. Thus in the final analysis of the game’s narrative, the previously unimportant penalties are highlighted from the beginning of the game to show that Cleveland’s penalties have been accumulating from the start. As stated earlier, because at this point what the dominant narrative will be is unclear, any and all events that could potentially contribute to possible narratives are highlighted.

Functions		
Pregame predictions on CLE win		
OBJ recovering from injury		
1st Quarter		
CLE receiving		
1st & 10, almost intercepted		
2nd & 10, pass to Higgins		
1st & 10, run by Landry		
1st & 10, run by Chubb		
Comm, this offense is dynamic		
1st & 10, pass to OBJ		
1st & 10, run by OBJ		
Flag, unnecessary roughness, -15 yards		
1st & 25, pass to OBJ		
2nd & 23, pass to Higgins		
1st & goal, run by Hilliard, TD		
Conversion unsuccessful		
Comm, great opening drive, no 3rd down		
TEN receiving		
Flag, illegal block		
1st & 10, pass to Walker		
Flag, roughing the passer, def -15 yards		
1st & 10, no gain		
2nd & 10, pass to Brown, 47 yards		
1st & 10, rush by Henry		
2nd & 11, TEN TO		
2nd & 11, pass to Brown		
3rd & 9, incomplete		
4th & 9, FG attempt successful		
Comm, John Dorsey, GM deserves credit		
CLE receiving		
Flag, illegal block		
1st & 10, pass to OBJ		
2nd & 2, sacked		

Figure 1.3: An excerpt of the selected functions from Cleveland vs. Tennessee

Next, groupings of potentially significant events are used to generate higher level sequences of narration in the form of functional clusters. During the analysis process, based on the highlighted events, points of narrative potential are established which could be used to build higher level storylines. As figure 1.4 shows, the clusters punctuated by moments of narrativization via commentary or changes of score are summarized into narrative bits which reflect the state of narrativization at that point. For example, the game starts with the narrative potential that “CLE will win” and after a good start with three 1st downs, combined

with the commentators remarking that the offense is dynamic, the cluster of events forms the second narrative bit of “CLE showing promise”. Then after a big pass to Higgins and a touchdown by Hilliard, the commentators note that Cleveland has had a great opening drive with no 3rd downs, creating the moment narrativization of “CLE has great opening drive”.

Functions	Clusters
Pregame predictions on CLE win	Begins with expectation that CLE will win
OBJ recovering from injury	
1st Quarter	
CLE receiving	
1st & 10, almost intercepted	
2nd & 10, pass to Higgins	
1st & 10, run by Landry	
1st & 10, run by Chubb	
Comm, this offense is dynamic	CLE shows promise
1st & 10, pass to OBJ	
1st & 10, run by OBJ	
Flag, unnecessary roughness, -15 yards	
1st & 25, pass to OBJ	
2nd & 23, pass to Higgins	
1st & goal, run by Hilliard, TD	
Conversion unsuccessful	
Comm, great opening drive, no 3rd down	CLE has great opening drive
TEN receiving	
Flag, illegal block	
1st & 10, pass to Walker	
Flag, roughing the passer, def -15 yards	
1st & 10, no gain	
2nd & 10, pass to Brown, 47 yards	
1st & 10, rush by Henry	
2nd & 11, TEN TO	
2nd & 11, pass to Brown	
3rd & 9, incomplete	
4th & 9, FG attempt successful	
Comm, John Dorsey, GM deserves credit	Rebuilding CLE, a new team
CLE receiving	
Flag, illegal block	
1st & 10, pass to OBJ	
2nd & 2, sacked	

Figure 1.4: An excerpt of the functional clusters from Cleveland vs. Tennessee

On the next level up, the functional clusters are pieced together to form storylines. As seen in fig. 1.5, combined with the high expectations placed on the team before the season began and the impressive performance of the opening drive, a coherent storyline of “CLE is a

new team,” which incorporates the sequences, can be established. Here we see the act of narrativization take place in real time. Building off of the pre-season hype about the new players and coach, Odell Beckham Jr., Baker Mayfield, and Freddy Kitchens, the good performance by the Cleveland Browns in the first and a part of the second quarter of the game the broadcast constructs the coherent storyline that Cleveland has built a new and effective team. In this example below, all of the shown clusters are true because they directly contribute to the storyline. To recap, narrative functions make up larger sequences of functional clusters which in turn make up even larger storylines that present a cohesive, though potentially incomplete, narrative thread which connects the elements beneath.

Functions	Clusters	Storylines:
Pregame predictions on CLE win	Begins with expectation that CLE will win	CLE is a new team
OBJ recovering from injury		High expectations
1st Quarter		New coach, players
CLE receiving		OBJ, Kitchens, Mayfield
1st & 10, almost intercepted		
2nd & 10, pass to Higgins		
1st & 10, run by Landry		
1st & 10, run by Chubb		
Comm, this offense is dynamic	CLE shows promise	
1st & 10, pass to OBJ		
1st & 10, run by OBJ		
Flag, unnecessary roughness, -15 yards		
1st & 25, pass to OBJ		
2nd & 23, pass to Higgins		
1st & goal, run by Hilliard, TD		
Conversion unsuccessful		
Comm, great opening drive, no 3rd down	CLE has great opening drive	Opening drive reinforces idea of CLE winning
TEN receiving		
Flag, illegal block		
1st & 10, pass to Walker		
Flag, roughing the passer, def -15 yards		
1st & 10, no gain		
2nd & 10, pass to Brown, 47 yards		
1st & 10, rush by Henry		
2nd & 11, TEN TO		
2nd & 11, pass to Brown		
3rd & 9, incomplete		
4th & 9, FG attempt successful		
Comm, John Dorsey, GM deserves credit	Rebuilding CLE, a new team	
CLE receiving		
Flag, illegal block		
1st & 10, pass to OBJ		
2nd & 2, sacked		

Figure 1.5: An excerpt of the first Cleveland storyline

However, as often is the case, the “imperative of the real” gets in the way of constructing a smooth narrative. In the Cleveland vs. Tennessee game, the tide turns and the story shifts to how the accruing penalties are hurting Cleveland. As shown in figure 1.6, as the first storyline about Cleveland’s impressive form comes to an end a different storyline is established about the team’s seemingly endless penalties. The penalties which were largely ignored in the beginning of the game can no longer be set aside and soon become the focal point of the game. These penalties from the start of the game are like seeds yet to germinated by the shift in storyline. At the moment of the narrative pivot, the commentators plant the seed of penalties, warning how they could hurt Cleveland. As the game goes on and the functions in the form of penalties keep coming, inevitably the only resulting narration is about how penalties will cost Cleveland the game. This stretch of narrativization includes narrative sequences which establish that Cleveland is an undisciplined mess with over -100 penalty yards before the first half, culminating in the statement that the penalties will be the reason Cleveland loses the game.

Comm, new defense by CLE, system is a go	The new CLE is different	CLE defense is good too	
2nd & 9, pass to Walker			
1st & 10, run by Henry			
2nd & 7, incomplete			
Flag, holding, roughing, -15 yards			
Comm, how you lose is by sloppy penalties	Early seeds of penalties in game	Penalties have stacked up, CLE needs to be careful	New storyline: CLE and penalties
1st & 10, run by Henry			CLE starts racking up penalties, could lead to loss
2nd & 4, incomplete			
Flag, neutral zone, -5 yards			
1st & goal, rush by Henry			
2nd & goal, rush by Henry, TD			
Conversion successful			
Comm, 37 yard drive aided by 4 CLE penalties	CLE penalties are converting into points		CLE penalties are hurting them on the field
Comm, CLE looks tired	CLE frustrated by giving up penalties		
CLE receiving			
1st & 10, run by Chubb			
2nd & 1, incomplete			
3rd & 1, incomplete			
4th & 1, punt			
Comm, CLE disappointed to not get first down			
TEN ball			
1st & 10, run by Henry			

Figure 1.6: An excerpt of the initial storyline being interrupted

Based on the new storyline of Cleveland and its penalties, a third potential storyline is brought forth, running concurrently with the second one. As shown in figure 1.7, on a self-reflective mode, the narrativization turns to its own predictions from the start of the game and starts a new storyline of “Reversal of Expectation”. Comparing the initial expectations and the impressive start of the Cleveland Browns against their shabby performance at the time of narrativization, the storyline that the expectations placed on Cleveland was misplaced is constructed through functions and sequences such as their inability to get a 1st down in the second quarter and their offense being constantly interrupted by their own penalties, eventually almost setting a franchise record for the most penalties in a single game.

<p>Comm. how you lose is by sloppy penalties</p> <p>1st & 10, run by Henry</p> <p>2nd & 4, incomplete</p> <p>Flag, neutral zone, -5 yards</p> <p>1st & goal, rush by Henry</p> <p>2nd & goal, rush by Henry, TD</p> <p>Conversion successful</p>	<p>Early seeds of penalties in game</p>	<p>Penalties have stacked up, CLE needs to be careful</p>	<p>CLE starts racking up penalties, could lead to loss</p>
<p>Comm. 87 yard drive aided by 4 CLE penalties</p> <p>Comm. CLE looks tired</p> <p>CLE receiving</p> <p>1st & 10, run by Chubb</p> <p>2nd & 1, incomplete</p> <p>3rd & 1, incomplete</p> <p>4th & 1, punt</p> <p>Comm, CLE disappointed to not get first down</p> <p>TEN ball</p> <p>1st & 10, run by Henry</p> <p>1st & 10, almost sacked</p> <p>2nd & 10, pass to Smith</p>	<p>CLE penalties are converting into points</p> <p>CLE frustrated by giving up penalties</p>		<p>CLE penalties are hurting them on the field</p>
<p>3rd & 3, pass to Humphries</p> <p>Comm. 91sts for TEN, 0 for CLE in quarter</p> <p>1st & 10, run by Henry</p> <p>Comm. this is a TEN game right now, it started off as a CLE game</p> <p>2nd & 2, sacked</p> <p>3rd & 11, incomplete</p> <p>4th & 11, punt</p> <p>CLE ball</p> <p>1st & 10, run by Chubb</p> <p>Comm. only 26 yards since opening drive</p> <p>Flag, unsportmanship, -15 yards</p> <p>Comm. would be upset, need to calm down, no more fouls, 5 personals</p> <p>Robinson ejected</p>	<p>CLE unable to perform</p> <p>TEN is in control, CLE underperforming after 1st quarter</p> <p>CLE struggling after start of game</p> <p>CLE needs to gain control of penalties</p>		<p>No 1st downs in 2nd quarter</p> <p>Penalties are costing CLE the game</p> <p>CLE can't move ball with penalties</p> <p>CLE needs to regroup and focus before it's too late</p>
			<p>New storyline: Reversal of expectation</p> <p>Perhaps part of penalties storyline?/Concurrent storyline?</p> <p>No 1sts in 2nd quarter</p> <p>CLE not performing after opening drive</p> <p>CLE underperforming</p>

Figure 1.7: An excerpt showing the narrativization’s attempts to self-correct

The introduction of this third storyline presents two important facets of narrative analysis. First, it shows that narrativization is a real-time process where even the broadcast does not know how things will turn out, showing the power of the “imperative of the real”. Although it went against all of the media hype going into the game, once Cleveland started underperforming, the broadcast had no choice but to backpedal on its own predictions and

present the opposite narrative as it happened. Second, the third storyline emphasizes the messy, congruent, and simultaneous nature of real-time narrative analysis. The “Reversal of Expectation” storyline not only runs concurrently with the second storyline but is also a byproduct of it. Without the penalties that make up the second storyline, there would not be the reversal storyline either. As discussed earlier, clarity can only be found in a repeat viewing because of the muddled nature of real-time narrative analysis.

As for the rest of the analysis, we can see in figure 1.8 that the broadcast juggles all three potential storylines until the end and no one storyline runs completed from beginning to end. However, as the game approaches its end the narrative possibilities close and we reach the point of no return for narrative variability (fig. 1.8). At this point in the game, based on the difference in score and the amount of time remaining, it simply becomes impossible for the game’s outcome to change. At this point, Cleveland losing the game is a forgone conclusion and the narration shifts away from speculating about which team will win and towards reflecting about the misplaced expectations and the impact of the numerous penalties. Here, not only the narration builds this narrative but so does the camera by panning to exasperated and disappointed shots of the Cleveland fans in the crowd, the broadcast emphasizes the poor performance by the Browns.

4th Quarter			
1st & 10, incomplete			
Flag, holding, -10 yards			
Comm, most penalties since 1995			
1st & 20, run by Chubb			
2nd & 14, interception			
TEN ball			
1st & 10, run by Henry			
Comm, CLE has to play safe, don't try to win game in one throw	CLE has a chance, needs to play safe	CLE must play safe to come back	
3rd & 4, run by Mariota			
Flag, holding, -5 yards			
1st & 10, pass to Walker, TD			
Conversion successful			
CLE receiving			
Comm, Browns much improved team, but haven't played together	CLE better but worse than expectations	Better, but needs time to work as a team Undercut preseason hype	
1st & 10, run by Chubb			
2nd & 4, pass to Landry for no gain			
3rd & 4, interception			
TEN ball			
1st & 10, run by Henry			
2nd & 3, run by Henry			
Comm, First Monday always biggest over reaction			
If you're a CLE fan, the hype going into this	Acknowledge hype leading into the match	Downplay previous hype	Point of no return for narrative variability: Downplay previous hype
1st & 10, run by Henry			
1st & goal			
TEN TO			
Crowd shouts of fans looking disappointed	CLE leads a disappointing performance, contrast with hype		Disappointed fans
1st & goal, pass to Walker, TD			
Conversion successful			
CLE receiving			
Comm, the city is anxious, no season opener win since 2001	CLE under pressure to win opener and perform to expectations		Difficult to live up to overblown expectations
Difficult when you have pressure in the preseason			
1st & 10, incomplete			
2nd & 10, incomplete			
3rd & 10, incomplete			
Flag, pass interference			
1st & 10, incomplete			
Flag, holding, -10 yards			
Comm, 11 penalties, most since 1951	CLE almost setting records for penalties		CLE almost setting new record for penalties

Figure 1.8: The narrative point of no return for Cleveland vs. Tennessee

Based on the storylines that are constructed however, a cohesive, completed overarching final narrative can be established: Cleveland could not live up to expectations and threw the game away with penalties. Here, it should be noted that within the context of the final narrative, the “Reversal of expectations” storyline is found to be a pseudo-storyline because of its minor role and redundancy with the penalties storyline and is ultimately subsumed under the narrative thread of the accruing penalties. The final narrative of the game, then, is Cleveland starting the game with big expectations and an impressive start only for undisciplined penalties to accrue and cost them the game. With this retrospective narrative arc in mind, re-analyzing the events of the game yields the following results.

Functions	Clusters	Storylines:	Final narrative:
Pregame predictions on CLE win	Begins with expectation that CLE will win	CLE is a new team	CLE couldn't live up hype and threw the game away with penalties
OBI recovering from injury		High expectations	
1st Quarter		New coach, players	
CLE receiving		OBI, Kitchens, Mayfield	
1st & 10, almost intercepted			
2nd & 10, pass to Higgins			
1st & 10, run by Landry			
1st & 10, run by Chucho			
Summary: offense is dynamic	CLE shows promise		
1st & 10, pass to OBI			
1st & 10, run by OBI			
Flag, unnecessary roughness, -15 yards			
1st & 25, pass to OBI			
3rd & 10, pass to Higgins			
1st & goal, run by Hilliard, TD			
Conversion unsuccessful			
Summary: hot opening drive, no 3rd down	CLE has great opening drive	Opening drive reinforces idea of CLE winning	
TEN receiving			
Flag, illegal block			
1st & 10, pass to Walker			
Flag, roughing the passer, def -15 yards			
1st & 10, no gain			
2nd & 10, pass to Brown, 47 yards			
1st & 10, rush by Henry			

Figure 1.9: An excerpt of final narrative for Cleveland vs. Tennessee

Then two sequences make up the storyline as seen in figure 1.9. First the “Rise” of the protagonist team in the opening drive and up to halfway through the second quarter of the game, through which Cleveland manages to establish a lead despite the already numerous penalties, and secondly the “Fall” following the pivot to the “throw” of the game where Cleveland’s penalties steadily and significantly hinder the team’s performance. The steady current of penalties throughout the game not only shows the additive nature of the story formation in the game but also serves as the common thread linking both parts of the narrative. Looking at the game typologically, in a Proppian fashion, the plays and players of the game can be seen as the interchangeable parts of the elements that constitute the storyline of “The Throw”. If “The Throw” can be codified, it has a particular order of required events, namely that the team in question must be in a winning position at the start but through some change of fortune must lose. Although the term “to throw” has traditionally meant losing a game on purpose, it has also come to describe games where one team loses a lead in a spectacular fashion. Typologically speaking, Cleveland fills the role of the eventual loser team. The re-analyzed functions, narration, and storylines are directly contributing to the overarching narrative of Cleveland throwing the game away with penalties.

Chapter 2

Case Study: The 2016 New England Patriots

2.1

The goal of this chapter is to show the process of narrativization in action, both on the level of individual games and the season. To illustrate this narrative analysis in action, the New England Patriots' 2016 season will be analyzed in detail. That specific year holds a great deal of narrative interest and potential as they began their season with their star quarterback Tom Brady suspended for four games due to the "Deflategate" scandal, broke a litany of records for both the franchise and the league, and won the Super Bowl through a dramatic comeback in what some call the greatest Super Bowl game ever played (Clayton, Wesseling). Thus, two types of narrative analysis will be carried out in this chapter. First, individual games will be analyzed in detail to show how narrativization occurs on the level of games and second, the arc of the entire season will be analyzed to show the narrativization on that level. Individual games will be analyzed using the process of open coding and grounded theory outlined in the previous chapter, although only a few will be discussed in detail for the sake of length. While the individual game analysis will be mostly insular and focus on the actual contents of the broadcast, the seasonal arc analysis will primarily utilize extra-game materials from the sports media.

2.2

For the individual game analyses, the first game that will be examined will be the week 5 game against the Cleveland Browns. This game was played on October 9th and broadcasted on CBS Sports with commentators Greg Gumbel and Trent Green. To properly analyze the

game, some background should be given for both teams. First, due to the previous season's "Deflategate" scandal where balls were found to be under-inflated in the AFC championship game against the Indianapolis Colts, New England quarterback Tom Brady was given a four-game suspension (Hirschhorn). Though he appealed the sentencing, the appeal was eventually unsuccessful and Brady was forced to carry out his suspension in to the 2016 season, forcing him to miss the first four games of the 16 game regular season ("suspension appeal," NFL). Thus this game against the Browns marked Brady's return from suspension and his season debut. With the built-up anticipation around Brady, there was plenty of focus on the game, making it a good candidate for narrative analysis. Second, the Browns have had a revolving door of quarterbacks with 24 different players starting the position for the franchise between 1999 and the beginning of the 2016 season (McManamon). The team's quarterback woes take on an almost comical turn as all four of the Browns' quarterbacks were injured game week 5 and the week 5 game ends with both Cody Kessler and Charlie Whitehurst who played that position leaving the game injured (D'Andrea).

The following section outlines the methodology used, examining how the different levels of the narrativization were identified and used to build the next level of narrativization. First, the analysis of narrative formation begins with a list of raw functions of both game and commentary events which will serve as the foundation of the narrative. The objective here is to identify, label, and group the audio, visual, and audiovisual elements within the broadcast like the film of individual plays, commentary, edited segments like replays and highlights, and statistics graphics which eventually will make up the dominant storyline for the game at hand, if one can be found. In addition, football proves to be particularly apt sport for

breaking down into discrete events because the plays and the gaps between them act as connected, yet independent, units of action and commentary.

However, not every single audio/visual element was included, though an effort was made to include as much as possible. Even at this base level, a certain amount of interpretive room is necessary to exclude some elements of the broadcast from being even potentially being considered as functions as irrelevant noise. Because of the frequency, speed, and sheer volume of the information presented during a broadcast it is unfeasible and illogical to include literally everything as there are plenty of elements which are simply not relevant. For example, commentators wishing production staff members happy birthday were excluded as well as obscure or esoteric statistics that have no impact on the game (fig. 2.1). These elements are so irrelevant to the narrative that they may be considered as noise. While these statistics do provide a plethora of information about the various aspects of player, team, and league performances, becoming indexical in the Barthesian sense, not all are relevant to the narrative formation in action. This means that even before identifying which functions are true or pseudo, an even earlier preliminary act of interpretation must occur to minimize the narrative noise entering the analysis. For example, in the week 5 game between the Patriots and the Browns, a chyron at the bottom notes the Patriots' record of regular season wins after a loss. While the stat may be interesting to some, it is undoubtedly overshadowed by the dominant storylines of the Browns' implosion through penalties and Tom Brady's first game returning from his Deflategate suspension.



Figure 2.1: A detail irrelevant to the narrative. Credit: NFL/CBS

So, after the first reading of the broadcast, the basic chronology of the game’s events can be established. A small excerpt of the level of raw functions is shown below (fig. 2.2).

The fully analyzed broadcast is attached to the appendix (Appendix B).

Functions:					
Pregame broadcast:					
NE: Brady's return after Deflategate, Brady experienced, Gronk back					
CLE: QB carousel, Kessler starting, looking for first win					
First quarter					
CLE receiving					
Comm, rookie QB Kessler making 3rd start					
CLE ball					
1st & 10, rush by Crowell					
2nd & 7, rush by Crowell					
3rd & 5, incomplete					
4th & 5, punt					
Comm, and onto the field comes #12					
Broadcast, mix of cheers and jeers					
Graphic, 17th season with NE, franchise record					

Figure 2.2: A partial list of raw functions for New England vs. Cleveland 2016 Week 5

Out of the list of raw functions, the true functions are identified by seeing which functions establish what Ricoeur called “the episodic dimension” by determining which functions endowed with “historicality” contribute to “the development of a plot” (White 5). Because real-time narrativization is always incomplete, the determination of the narrative is impossible on the first reading before the result is known and requires a re-reading of the

data. As mentioned earlier, because of the hermeneutic circle inherent with this analysis, a preliminary idea of the final narrative must be ascertained and used as the narrative end point to anchor the process. While time-consuming, the iterative process is necessary for accurately identifying the correct final narrative. Relying on the iterative nature of the analysis, each successive reading should result in better identifying the correct narrative. With the knowledge of the ending, a holistic view of the broadcast allows the additive functions of the narrative to be identified since through retrospection even the functions that may seem unimportant at first can be seen contributing to the final narrative(s) and thus gain narrative significance.

On the other hand, the “configurational dimension” of sports narratives, or the sequential ordering of events which “elicit[s] a pattern from a succession [of events]” (“Human Experience,” Ricoeur 106), is enacted through the interpretive acts. To reiterate, the “Gestalt of the game” (Guttman 98) which connects the selected functions constituting the episodic dimension is the configurational dimension. The “configurational act” (“Human Experience,” Ricoeur 106) is the interpretive act which connects the pieces within each level of narrativization and ultimately generates the final narrative. This is the “eliciting a pattern from a succession”; it takes what is merely a list of events and garners a meaningful relationship between them in the form a narrative.

The initial inspection of the broadcast to determine the most likely final narrative provides two instead: Tom Brady’s return and the Cleveland Browns’ quarterback troubles. While the narrative set up going into the game would obviously be Brady’s return, due to the “imperative of the real,” the unpredictable nature of reality meant rather than a clear cut and

dried narrative, there were arguably two separate narratives which are ultimately constructed. With the commentators touching on Brady's "Deflategate" suspension and his experience as a seasoned veteran, the narrative seeds are being planted to account for all possibilities. It is easy to imagine that if the Patriots win, the stage is set to frame the result as Brady's brilliance while a loss would be attributed to Brady missing the first four games. The pregame chatter and the "mix of cheers and jeers" (fig. 2.2) heard when Brady first takes the field sets the stage for Brady's central role in the story of the game. In between the plays, the broadcast continues to build on Brady's return, filling in the viewers on Brady's training during his suspension and his preseason games. Sideline reporter Jay Feely reports near the end of the first period that during his suspension Brady worked with his personal trainer for "four hours everyday they were on the field throwing in pads with contact he had a former Dartmouth receiver running routes with him"⁴. Greg Gumbel adds to Brady's preparedness by saying that "the preseason was very valuable for Tom Brady because he at least got some contact and he played 52 snaps in the preseason"⁵. Even when backup quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo takes the field near the end of the game, the broadcast remains focused on Brady, not Garoppolo. The broadcast instead shows highlights showcasing Brady from earlier in the game, and the commentator Trent Green remarks that his skills, his "footwork" and "accuracy" is all still there⁶. The broadcast even ends with the commentary that "this day belongs to that man, Tom Brady".

⁴ NFL, Week 5, 0:26:45 – 0:26:51

⁵ Ibid., 0:28:06 – 0:28:08

⁶ Ibid., "to come in and be in the rhythm he was in, his footwork, his accuracy, the throws down the field, the underneath, getting the protections in the right order, just all those things were dialed in from the first series, the first three series of the game," 2:17:02 – 2:17:14

The broadcast also pursues the other major narrative thread of Cleveland's quarterback issues. From the beginning, the commentating sets the scene by emphasizing the quarterback injuries plaguing the Cleveland Browns with what they call the "quarterback carousel"⁷. Even though rookie QB Cody Kessler starts the game for Cleveland, he is briefly replaced by Pryor later in the first quarter, with the broadcast highlighting the Browns' problems with the position by showing the quarterbacks who have been injured so far (fig. 2.2, "Broadcast, CLE QBs out with injuries"). The messiness of the whole situation is exacerbated, as backup quarterback Whitehurst mistakenly walks onto the field and off, embodying the confused state of the Cleveland quarterbacks (fig. 2.2, "Whitehurst in and out"). Even before halftime, Cleveland's bad luck with their quarterbacks becomes like a joke, with commentator Greg Gumbel quipping that "the fact is if you have ever thrown a football, you might qualify to play quarterback for the Cleveland Browns"⁸. As the game continues, it becomes a recurring mantra that with four different quarterbacks already this season, Cleveland needs offensive help. The broadcast shows that Cleveland has had 26 different starting quarterbacks since 1999 (fig. 2.3), giving a historical context for this problem. Then in the fourth quarter when Whitehurst is injured, as Trent Green says that "this is a sick joke that another quarterback is going down"⁹. With yet another injured quarterback, Cleveland's quarterback carousel is a major narrative woven throughout the broadcast by both the narrative framing and the imperatives of the real.

⁷ NFL, Week 5, 0:2:14

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:08:34–1:08:42

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:13:23–2:13:26



Figure 2.3: Screenshot of Cleveland’s 26 starting QBs. Source: NFL/CBS

In the next step of narrative analysis, keeping in mind the two main narratives of the highly anticipated return of Tom Brady (fig. 2.2, “Brady’s return after Deflategate”) and the Cleveland Browns’ quarterback issues (fig. 2.2, “QB carousel”), true functions with historicity were identified and highlighted, with game events being highlighted in yellow and commentary events highlighted in green.

Here, the aforementioned interpretive acts of Gestalt making will be explained by showing why certain functions were said to be true and endowed with historicity over others. For example, when Brady takes the field for the first time during the game. The commentators note that Brady is making his way onto the field as New England takes possession for the first time (fig. 2.4, “Comm, and onto the field comes #12”). The broadcast then switches to the camera showing the crowd, a mix of Cleveland and New England fans,

booing and cheering in response (fig. 2.4, “Broadcast, mix of cheers and jeers”). Then a graphic which shows Brady’s franchise record of 17 seasons with the Patriots is shown on screen (fig. 2.4, “Graphic, 17th season with NE, franchise record”). Of this sequence of three events, only the first two are highlighted as being important because they contribute directly into the storyline of Brady’s return while the third function about his 17th season does not. For the Cleveland storyline, the commentators’ remarks about Browns’ rookie quarterback Cody Kessler making his third start of the season was included as a function with historicity because it directly contributes to the narrative of Cleveland’s quarterback troubles. Another aspect of the interpretive act is its prerogative to exclude things from the final narrative like the brief moments about Brady’s synergy with the rest of the Patriots, the lackluster offense of the Browns, and the fleeting hope of a possible Cleveland comeback. As can be seen even in this short extract (fig. 2.4), contrary to what Barthes may argue, there are many game and commentary events that are deemed unimportant to the final narrative and are relegated as pseudo-functions. For example, the entirety of the first Cleveland possession which ends in a punt is seen as narratively irrelevant to either of the final storylines.

Functions:						
Pregame broadcast:						
NE: Brady's return after Deflategate, Brady experienced, Gronk back						
CLE: QB carousel, Kessler starting, looking for first win						
First quarter						
CLE receiving						
Comm, rookie QB Kessler making 3rd start						
CLE ball						
1st & 10, rush by Crowell						
2nd & 7, rush by Crowell						
3rd & 5, incomplete						
4th & 5, punt						
Comm, and onto the field comes #12						
Broadcast, mix of cheers and jeers						
Graphic, 17th season with NE, franchise record						

Figure 2.4: A partial list of selected functions for New England vs. Cleveland

Although the decisions to mark any function as true may seem suspect because the final narrative(s) are not yet definite, some amount of interpretation had to be made and some **interpretive risk** taken under the assumption that the included events will eventually build towards a fruitful formation of a narrative. Here, interpretive risk refers to the unsure demarcation of the pseudo- and true units of narrative structure that must be made by the interpreter at each narrative level before going on the next one. Following this approach to the end of the broadcast, the selected true functions shown below (fig. 2.5) center around Brady’s return to play and his fantastic performance and Cleveland’s revolving door of quarterbacks, confirming the validity of the initially determined narratives. Within the selection of relevant functions, even though the majority of functions are omitted for being unrelated to the final narratives, within the interpretive act, the “Gestalt of the game” closes the gaps created by the omitted functions to build towards a coherent narrative. In a sense, the gaps of omission are the “interval between *tock* and *tick*” (Kermode 45) which are

abridged by the “Gestalt of the game” (Guttman 98) through the final narrative’s chronology, its logic or “narrative probability” (Fisher 4).

Once the true functions have been determined, larger swathes of narration in the form of functional clusters can be identified. Using the true functions as the baseline an interpretive act must occur to decide where different series of functions can be said to form coherent enough series to become functional clusters. Functional clusters are essentially the foci of the narrative, comprised of a series of any number of true functions and the logical relationship which binds them, and must be identified. And just as before, the functional clusters must be divided into pseudo- and true counterparts depending on their contribution to the final narrative(s). Because of the fluid nature of the narrativization, the irregular, interrupted, and alternating stretches of narrative cohesion are marked as separate units of narration to facilitate the building of the final narrative(s). The chaotic nature of the narrativization means that the analyst must make some interpretive decisions about which sequence of functions can be said to constitute a cluster and to draw the boundaries where one cluster ends and another begins, constantly building the “Gestalt of the game” (Guttman 98). Here, an example of how the functional clusters are identified will be explained in detail. The excerpt below (fig. 2.5) shows a portion of the game at the end of the first quarter.

	Comm, Brady so far accurate				
13-7	2nd & goal, pass to Bennett, TD				
	Comm, Brady first TD pass of season				Brady's first TD pass
14-7	Conversion successful				
	CLE receiving				
	CLE ball				
	Broadcast, TD replay				
	1st & 10, rush by Johnson				
16-7	2nd & 12, safety				
	Broadcast, CLE QBs out with injuries				CLE's QB troubles
	NE receiving				
	NE ball				
	1st & 10, rush by Blount				
	2nd & 6, pass to Hogan				
	3rd & 1, pass to Hogan				
	Comm, good first quarter for NE				Brady and NE doing well
	Second Quarter				
	1st & 10, rush by Blount				
	2nd & 8, pass to Hogan				
	1st & goal, rush by Blount				
	2nd & goal, pass to Edelman				
22-7	3rd & goal, pass to Bennett, TD				
23-7	Conversion successful				
	Comm, Brady 3 drives, 3 TDs				Brady playing well
	Graphic, 13/15, 185 yds				

Figure 2.5: An excerpt of functional clusters being constructed for New England vs. Cleveland. The context here is that Brady has thrown his first touchdown pass of the season. From the selected functions only, it is possible to reconstruct a summary of the events in a “configurational act”. This chain of events begins with the commentators discussing Brady’s accuracy so far in the game (fig. 2.5, “Comm, Brady so far accurate”). Then immediately after, Brady completes a pass to Michael Bennett for a touchdown (“2nd & goal, pass to Bennett, TD”), which brings commentary about its being Brady’s first touchdown pass of the season (“Comm, Brady first TD pass of season”). Even when Cleveland gains possession of the ball, the broadcast cuts to a replay of the previous touchdown (“Broadcast, TD replay”). In a stark contrast to Brady, the broadcast shows a graphic of all the Cleveland quarterbacks out with injuries (“Broadcast, CLE QBs out with injuries”). As the first quarter draws to a close, the commentators remark on it having been a good quarter for Brady and the Patriots

(“Comm, good first quarter for NE”). The Patriots’ second quarter possession begins with a huge pass to Chris Hogan (“2nd & 8, pass to Hogan”) and ends with another successful touchdown pass to Bennett (“3rd & goal, pass to Bennett, TD”). The commentators note that Brady has three touchdowns in three drives (“Comm, Brady 3 drives, 3 TDs”) and a graphic is shown indicating that so far, Brady has completed 13/15 passes for a total of 185 yards in a little over a quarter of play (“Graphic, 13/15, 185 yds”). Out of all these events, a basic sense of narration building can be garnered. Even though there is a change in possession and the gap in between quarters, an identifiable narrative stream can be found in Brady’s performance.

Within this short segment, it is possible to identify different moments of distinct narrative focus and thus clusters based on the true functions and the final narratives. Brady’s first touchdown pass after his return is unsurprisingly noted as a functional cluster (fig. 2.5, “Brady’s first TD pass”). Then the reference to Cleveland’s quarterback carousel is marked as another under the assumption that it will further contribute to the final narrative (“Cleveland’s QB troubles”). The next moment (“Brady and NE doing well”) is marked based on the commentary and the Patriots’ performance in that moment. Lastly, the narrative focus on Brady (“Brady playing well”) is identified based on the immediately preceding performance, the commentary (“Brady 3 drives, 3 TDs”) and the statistics highlight (“Graphic, 13/15, 185 yds”). While identified chunks of narration may not have clearly demarcated boundaries since in it is near impossible to pinpoint the exact function where one ends and another begins, with some of them closely related to each other, under some interpretive discretion it is possible to group the lower level functions into longer stretches of

distinct functional clusters to show where the narration does shift. Though the demarcation of functional clusters is not an exact science, the determination of this layer is an intermediary step in identifying more concrete strands of distinct storylines.

While it may be tempting to equate this level to Barthes’ level of narrative sequence, “a logical string of nuclei, linked together by a solidarity relation” (Barthes 253), because the functional clusters are often overlapping, frequently come in and out of focus, and chronologically include many irrelevant functions, it is not accurate to do so. Since the occurrence of the events are chaotic, some clusters may be short and comprised of a single commentary event while others may be longer and be sustained over a series of related functions.

Comm, CLE already on 4th QB of season					CLE rotating four for QBs
4th & 5, punt					
Broadcast, welcome back Brady					Brady's return
Comm, if you've ever thrown a football, you could play for CLE					CLE QB problems
NE ball					
1st & 10, pass to Edelman					
Broadcast, CLE QBs, Kessler, Pryor, Whitehurst					CLE QBs
2nd & 6, rush by White					
1st & 10, pass to Amendola					
2nd & 3, run by White					
Graphic, Brady already matched NE single game QB high, 264 yds					Brady already surpassing backup QBs

Figure 2.6: An excerpt showing narrative focus shifting rapidly based on its functional basis. In the example above (fig. 2.6) taken from late in the second quarter, the constant back and forth between Cleveland’s unstable quarterback roster and Brady’s return performance results in the narrative focus jumping back and forth correspondingly.

Once the functional clusters have been identified, they can be consolidated into larger storylines through another level of interpretive Gestalt building. Because the narrative is still

unorganized with the narrative focus overlapping and/or phasing in and out, when the various clusters are pieced together some moments may be subsumed into others, be excluded, or be categorized under multiple storylines with many storyline unfolding simultaneously. It is in this step that the pseudo-functional clusters will be separated from the true ones. The example below (fig. 2.7) shows three storylines simultaneously. The storylines are demarcated based on the identified narrative foci and with some reference to the state of the game. The storylines are a way to extend and fill in the gaps left by the clusters. For example, the orange representing Cleveland's trouble with quarterbacks is extended beyond the initial narrative foci of "CLE QB injury" and "QB problem" based on the reality of the game as reflected in the base level of functions. The storylines also show that elements of narrative are open to interpretation as the similar storylines of Brady's return from suspension and Brady's good performance overlap, alternate, and draw from some of the same functions and narration. Because the broadcast is both beholden to the real events occurring independently and is capable of continuing past events through replays and highlights, multiple storylines each beginning and ending at different points can overlap. The replays and highlights which "reach into the past" as what Genette calls an "anachrony," or more specifically, "analepses" (Genette 48). Within the context of the broadcast, the game events comprise the narrative present and the temporal baseline as the "first narrative" (49) while these commentary events are "with respect to the narrative into which it is inserted – onto which it is grafted – a narrative that is temporally second, subordinate to the first in a sort of narrative syntax" (48). Within Genette's typology, replays and highlights would be classified as "internal" (50) or "repeating analepses" (54). While Genette warns that internal analepses present "an obvious

risk of redundancy or collision” (50), within the broadcast, the redundancy is actually the goal. As the broadcast “openly... explicitly, retraces its own path” (54), it self-narrativizes by repeating and thus emphasizing certain events over others to build a narrative framework.

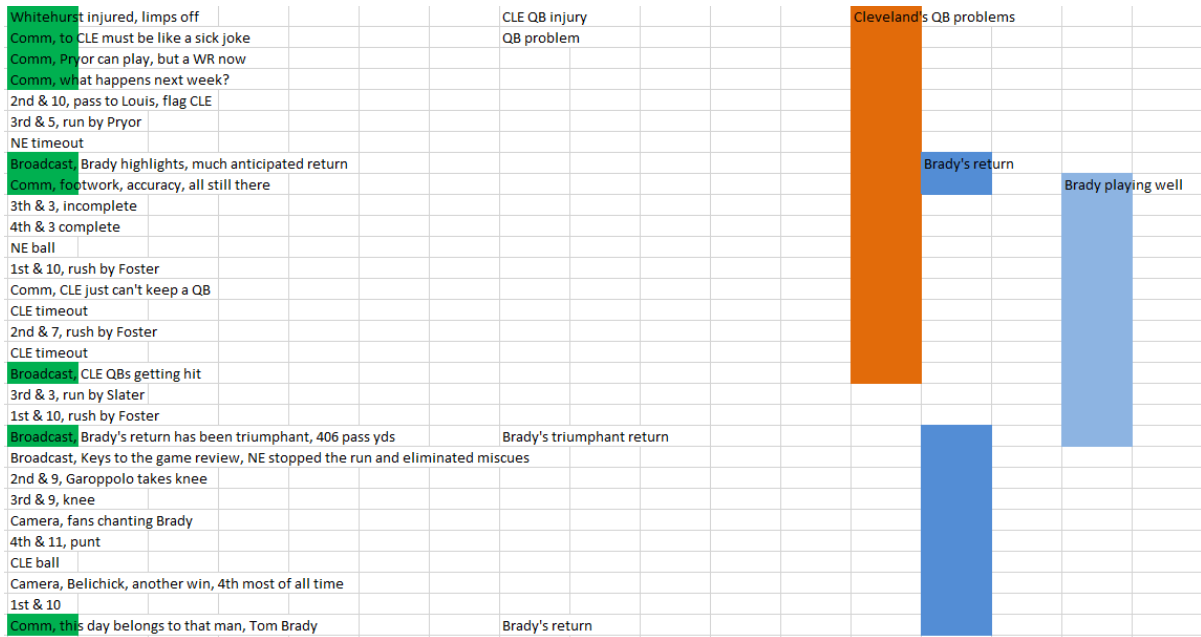


Figure 2.7: Simultaneous storylines for New England vs. Cleveland

In the last level of narrative analysis, the established storylines are combined into the final narratives in the last act of interpretive sense-making. The identified storylines are consolidated into the master narratives for the broadcast by finding the simplest way of coherently weaving together as many of the storylines as possible. Similar to the level of clusters, the final act of narrative refinement is undertaken by separating the pseudo-storylines from the true ones, as the former are either subsumed under more relevant storylines or simply excluded. In this process, the frequency and length of how much the broadcast dwells on a particular storyline to develop it is a useful metric for deciding on its narrative importance and role within the final narrative. When the storylines are gathered for

this game, the two initially presumed storylines are validated. First, the Cleveland narrative is a constant throughout the game. Second, the Tom Brady narrative is told in two parts: the anticipation of his return and his surprisingly good performance. All the previously identified storylines were interpreted as being a part of these three narrative threads as even the fact and storyline of the Patriots winning is subsumed under the storyline of Brady winning his first game back.

However, an interesting narrative turn to note is the safety scored by the Patriots late in the first quarter. The way that the broadcast handles the safety demonstrates the gap between game events and commentary events and their roles in the narrativization. Up until this point in the game, the Browns have matched the Patriots opening drive touchdown with one of their own and is comfortably trailing the Patriots 14-7 still in the first quarter. While Cleveland is behind, by no means are they a lost cause at this point. However, when the Patriots manage to score a safety it can be seen as the crucial turning point in the game: the Patriots widen their lead almost immediately after scoring their second touchdown, the Browns lose possession of the ball after only two downs, and the quarterback Kessler is injured during play. Strictly in terms of game events, the safety proves to be an impactful one (though it must be said that with the final score being 33-13 for the Patriots, it is entirely reasonable that the two-points provided by the safety might not have affected the final outcome of the game). Yet the broadcast does not focus and build on this moment as a narratively impactful one, which it certainly could have done. While the Kessler injury does prompt a montage of injured Cleveland quarterbacks and allow that storyline to develop further, the safety is not contextualized as a narratively important event. While strictly in

terms of game events, the safety is an important moment, the commentary events do not grant it the same status and thus in the higher levels of narrative organization, the safety is but a footnote. While at the time of its occurrence, it is somewhat of a noteworthy event, the lack of its repetition or references to it during the rest of the broadcast signals that it will not contribute to the higher levels of narrative organization. With the final narratives being Brady's return and Cleveland's quarterback issues, the two points and the change of possession are pseudo-functions because Brady was not even on the field for that while the commentary events around Kessler's injury can remain true functions. Thus this serves as an example of narrative failure at the level of the cluster as the grouping of functions corresponding to the safety is re-labeled as a pseudo-functional cluster from a true one.

13-7	2nd & goal, pass to Bennett, TD			
	Comm, Brady first TD pass of season			
14-7	Conversion successful			
	CLE receiving			
	CLE ball			
	Broadcast, TD replay			
	1st & 10, rush by Johnson			
16-7	2nd & 12, safety			
	Broadcast, safety replay			
	Broadcast, Kessler hurt shoulder			
	Broadcast, montage of CLE QBs out with injuries			
	NE receiving			
	NE ball			

Figure 2.8: An excerpt of the initial analysis of the Patriots safety

13-7	2nd & goal, pass to Bennett, TD			
	Comm, Brady first TD pass of season			
14-7	Conversion successful			
	CLE receiving			
	CLE ball			
	Broadcast, TD replay			
	1st & 10, rush by Johnson			
16-7	2nd & 12, safety			
	Broadcast, safety replay			
	Broadcast, Kessler hurt shoulder			
	Broadcast, montage of CLE QBs out with injuries			
	NE receiving			
	NE ball			

Figure 2.9: The refined analysis of the Patriots safety

Through the example of the week 5 game between the Patriots and the Browns, the process through which a narrative analysis on a football game was completed in detail. From the raw listing of all the game events which constituted the basis of the functions for the narrative to the establishment of the final storylines, an attempt was made to illuminate the interpretive and analytical decisions made at each step.

2.2.1

As mentioned before, the “imperatives of the real” are a key component in the narrativization analysis and this section will examine how the real-time narrativization that occurs must account for the unpredictability of the game. Super Bowl LI serves as an example of narrativization where the predicted real-time story building is interrupted by the “imperatives of the real” and forced to become something else entirely. Often touted as one of the best, if not the best, Super Bowl games ever played, this game is full of surprises as the Patriots

come back from a 28-3 deficit to secure the win (Clayton, Wesseling). The original setup for the Patriots narrative, should they win, was about how they were a championship caliber team and about this Super Bowl appearance as actor Ving Rhames narrates in his introduction to the team, their “Drive for 5 [championships]¹⁰”. Also, based on the events of the game until the third quarter, the broadcast was logically pursuing its narrative of the Falcons’ win. The forced change in narrativization is best showcased by the NFL Films video “The Stories of Super Bowl 51 That Were Never Told” (NFL Films) about the sports writers who had to change their stories as the game unfolded. Like the commentators, the writers craft their stories in real time as the finished piece must be published soon after the game ends. In the video, sportswriters Jim McBride, Doug Kyed, Ben Volin, and Terence Moore talk about the running stories they were writing about the Patriots’ seemingly guaranteed loss to the Falcons and how they were forced to rewrite their stories once the comeback began. Up until the third quarter, the writers were writing pieces titled “Three reasons why the Patriots unexpectedly lost Super Bowl LI to the Falcons¹¹” and “Instant Analysis from the Patriots’ loss to the Falcons¹²” that were lamenting how “Tom Brady came up short, ultimately so did the Patriots¹³” and that “the Patriots’ defense wasn’t good enough to win a Super Bowl¹⁴”. However, what was originally going to be an “obit[uary] to a dream season¹⁵” started to turn as the Patriots began to score. As the Patriots climb out of their 28-3

¹⁰ NFL, Super Bowl LI, 0:14:50

¹¹ NFL Films, “The Stories of Super Bowl 51 That Were Never Told,” 3:54– 3:58

¹² Ibid., 4:00 – 4:02

¹³ Ibid., 4:51 – 4:55

¹⁴ Ibid., 4:32 – 4:34

¹⁵ Ibid., 2:26

deficit, the game can no longer be called a “blowout” and the story shifts to how they “start to mount a comeback¹⁶,” the sports journalists are forced into “writing something different¹⁷” according to terms dictated by reality. The sportswriters comparing what they were going to write against what was eventually published shows the differences in what the dominant narrative for the game was supposed to be.

As the sports writers discovered above, there was a stark difference between the expected narrative and the actual resulting narrative. While retrospectively it is obvious that the narrative structure for this game will be that of a surprise ending, in the real-time narrativization, the initial narrative set up and the majority of the broadcast that follows is much simpler. Before the game begins, the broadcast establishes two potential final narratives for either team winning: the New England Patriots and Tom Brady as a modern football dynasty and the Atlanta Falcons as the underdogs vying for their first Super Bowl win. With these two seeds planted, regardless of which team wins, the broadcast has laid the initial groundwork for whichever team’s narrative will sprout and flourish. However, because the manner in which New England managed to win was something completely unaccounted for by the broadcast, in a perfect example of the “imperatives of the real” in action, the narrativization which was occurring had to radically shift from the narrative of the Falcons securing their first Super Bowl win to Brady and the Patriots staging a near impossible comeback.

¹⁶ NFL Films, “Stories,” 2:34 – 2:40

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:51

As with the week 5 game against Cleveland, the analysis begins with a complete listing of the game’s events, the plays, commentary, graphic, highlights, replays, and more, to establish the raw pool of functions from which the episodic dimension of the narrative can emerge (fig. 2.10). The entirety of the analyzed game can be seen in the appendix (Appendix C).

	Fourth Quarter			
	4th & 25, punt			
	Comm, Miscues for NE, fumble, drops, pick6, FG			
	NE ball			
	1st & 10, pass to Mitchell			
	Comm, Brady hasn't been as sharp			
	1st & 10, pass to Mitchell			
	2nd & 3, rush by White			
	1st & 10, incomplete			
	Comm, only 33 offensive snaps for ATL, unheard of			
	2nd & 10, pass to Mitchell			
	1st & 10, pass to White			
	2nd & 1, incomplete			
	3rd & 1, pass to Bennett			
	Comm, there is life for NE			
	1st & goal, sacked by Jarrett			
	2nd & goal, pass to White, no gain			
	3rd & goal, sacked by Jarrett			
12-28	FG attempt successful			
	Broadcast, Brady Under Pressure			
	ATL receiving			
	Camera, Josh McDaniels disappointed			
	Graphics, Next Gen Stats, only 3 incompletions			
	Graphics, Ball Control, NE > ATL			
	ATL ball			
	1st & 10, rush by Coleman			
	2nd & 2, rush by Coleman			
	Coleman down, clock stopped			
	3rd & 1, sack, fumble, NE recovery			
	Comm, first ATL turnover in post season			
	NE ball			
	1st & 10, sacked			
	2nd & 15, pass to White			
	3rd & 11, pass to Mitchell			
	1st & 10, pass to Amendola			
18-28	2nd & 3, pass to Amendola, TD			
	Comm, Brady tells the world they're going for 2			
20-28	2-point attempt successful, pass to White			
	Comm, ATL led this game 28-0, then 28-3 at half			
	ATL receiving			
	Broadcast, Amendola TD replay			

Figure 2.10: Excerpt of raw functions from Super Bowl LI

The examination of the game’s functions reveals the unlikely comeback staged by Brady and the Patriots. Selecting the functions with historicity results in the highlights shown below (fig. 2.11).

	Fourth Quarter			
	4th & 25, punt			
	Comm, M	scues for NE, fumble, drops, pick6, FG		
	NE ball			
	1st & 10, pass to Mitchell			
	Comm, Brady hasn't been as sharp			
	1st & 10, pass to Mitchell			
	2nd & 3, rush by White			
	1st & 10, incomplete			
	Comm, only 33 offensive snaps for ATL, unheard of			
	2nd & 10, pass to Mitchell			
	1st & 10, pass to White			
	2nd & 1, incomplete			
	3rd & 1, pass to Bennett			
	Comm, there is life for NE			
	1st & goal, sacked by Jarrett			
	2nd & goal, pass to White, no gain			
	3rd & goal, sacked by Jarrett			
12-28	FG attempt successful			
	Broadcast, Brady Under Pressure			
	ATL receiving			
	Camera, Josh McDaniels disappointed			
	Graphics, Next Gen Stats, only 3 incompletions			
	Graphics, Ball Control, NE > ATL			
	ATL ball			
	1st & 10, rush by Coleman			
	2nd & 2, rush by Coleman			
	Coleman down, clock stopped			
	3rd & 1, sack, fumble, NE recovery			
	Comm, first ATL turnover in post season			
	NE ball			
	1st & 10, sacked			
	2nd & 15, pass to White			
	3rd & 11, pass to Mitchell			
	1st & 10, pass to Amendola			
18-28	2nd & 3, pass to Amendola, TD			
	Comm, Brady tells the world they're going for 2			
20-28	2-point attempt successful, pass to White			
	Comm, ATL led this game 28-0, then 28-3 at half			
	ATL receiving			
	Broadcast, Amendola TD replay			

Figure 2.11: An excerpt of selected functions from Super Bowl LI

Working from the highlighted functions, a preliminary configurational act shows the expected trajectory of the narrativization through the narrative foci: “NE trailing, expected that they would be in lead,” “NE's biggest deficit in SB,” “NE playing off,” “ATL has upset

expectations,” “NE could potentially comeback,” “ATL could lose lead,” “Brady looking for the comeback,” “Tied game, Brady GOAT,” “Historical comeback,” and “Brady wins, sets record” (fig. 2.12). The progression of narrated foci reveals the upset of expectation followed by the Patriots’ comeback win. Also, it is important to note that because the previous analysis was done after the game, it was done with the successful comeback in mind. Thus the initial failures of the Patriots were not seen as a pathway towards loss but framed as the narrative prerequisite to a comeback: a temporary state of losing.

	Fourth Quarter		
	4th & 25, punt		
	Comm, M	scues for NE, fumble, drops, pick6, FG	NE playing off, lots of mishaps
	NE ball		
	1st & 10, pass to Mitchell		
	Comm, B	Brady hasn't been as sharp	
	1st & 10, pass to Mitchell		
	2nd & 3, rush by White		
	1st & 10, incomplete		
	Comm, o	nly 33 offensive snaps for ATL, unheard of	ATL short on time for offense
	2nd & 10, pass to Mitchell		
	1st & 10, pass to White		
	2nd & 1, incomplete		
	3rd & 1, pass to Bennett		
	Comm, t	here is life for NE	NE could potentially comeback
	1st & goal, sacked by Jarrett		
	2nd & goal, pass to White, no gain		
	3rd & goal, sacked by Jarrett		
12-28	FG attempt successful		
	Broadcast, Brady Under Pressure		
	ATL receiving		
	Camera, Josh McDaniels disappointed		
	Graphics, Next Gen Stats, only 3 incompletions		
	Graphics, B	all Control, NE > ATL	NE controlling ball
	ATL ball		
	1st & 10, rush by Coleman		
	2nd & 2, rush by Coleman		
	Coleman down, clock stopped		
	3rd & 1, s	ack, fumble, NE recovery	
	Comm, f	irst ATL turnover in post season	
	NE ball		
	1st & 10, sacked		
	2nd & 15, pass to White		
	3rd & 11, pass to Mitchell		
	1st & 10, pass to Amendola		
18-28	2nd & 3, p	ass to Amendola, TD	
	Comm, B	rady tells the world they're going for 2	
20-28	2-point attempt successful, pass to White		
	Comm, A	TL led this game 28-0, then 28-3 at half	NE catching up
	ATL receiving		
	Broadcast, Amendola TD replay		

Figure 2.12: An excerpt showing the general turning point on the level of clusters for Super Bowl LI

From the identified moments of narration, the storylines can be constructed. The identification of the individual storylines the next level up shows a similar structure. The smaller storylines which ultimately add up to the comeback story, can be seen (fig. 2.13). As the game goes on, the two main competing storylines become Atlanta’s better-than-expected performance and New England’s mishaps. However, near the start of the fourth quarter when the comeback begins, it becomes the sole focus of the narrative, until the focus shifts for a little bit to Tom Brady’s status as the greatest of all time until the end of the broadcast.



Figure 2.13: An excerpt of the formation of the comeback storyline for Super Bowl LI

From the shorter storylines, the final narrative for the game can be built which has a three act comedic structure: first, the Patriots come in as the expected winners (“NE comes in as the favourite”) only to fall behind (“NE in deficit, playing a little bit off”), but ultimately comes back to win it against all odds (“Led by Brady, NE musters historical comeback and wins”).

The final completed storyline for the game can be shown as follows: “NE comes in as the

favourite,” “NE in deficit, playing unexpectedly worse,” and then “Led by Brady, NE musters historical comeback”. By the end of the game, a clear narrative of the Patriots’ comeback victory, cementing Brady’s status as the greatest quarterback of all time, has been established.

2.2.2

While the previous section showed that there was a difference between the expected and actual narratives, it may be worthwhile to explore the point at which under the “imperatives of the real” a narrative critical mass is reached and the narrativization is forced to change. In his interview with Brady after the Super Bowl, sportswriter Peter King review the key events leading up to the comeback victory. King starts with “8:31 left in the third quarter” when “Atlanta had just gone up 28-3” which Brady agrees is “a good place [to start]” (“Brady in Montana,” King) and touch on a number of key moments like the “sack/fumble of Matt Ryan by Dont’a Hightower” in the fourth quarter, Julian Edelman’s improbable catch (Vrentas), and even Matthew Slater calling the coin flip for overtime. It is important to note that in their review of the game there is no one definitive moment the comeback can be attributed to, but through a combination of these events and more the game’s and the game’s narrative pendulum has swung the other way. The delay in the shifting of the narrative is evident when New England scores their first touchdown, starting to close on the infamous 28-3 deficit. As seen in figure 2.11, the narrative does not immediately adopt the comeback storyline since the Patriots are still lagging far behind even with a touchdown. The narrativization does not entertain notions of a comeback but is still focused on New England’s mistakes like the missed conversion and being flagged for an onside kick. Only later, as the Patriots show

some life by moving down the field for an eventual field goal, does the broadcast start acknowledging the possibility of a New England comeback (fig. 2.15). Looking at the beginnings of the New England comeback, as the score gets closer and closer to being tied, the reality of an Atlanta loss becomes more tenable. This opens the possibility of reframing the entirety of the game up to this point not as the Falcons dominating but as the Patriots underperforming. Because narrative meaning is derived from a second, higher order of organization (Bernstein 102), a new way of organizing the events under a different final narrative end allows for the same events to be endowed with a different historicality . Although gradual and like other parts of the narrativization, difficult to ascertain clear boundaries, when there is a certain critical mass of narrative potential such that a different narrative becomes viable or logically preferable, the new narrative becomes the organizational sense-making apparatus.

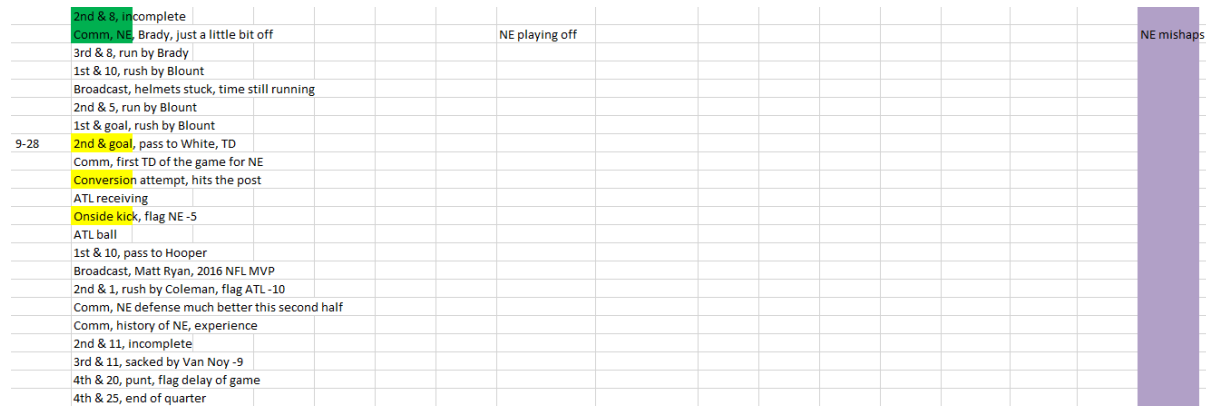


Figure 2.14: An excerpt showing the Patriots' first touchdown in Super Bowl LI

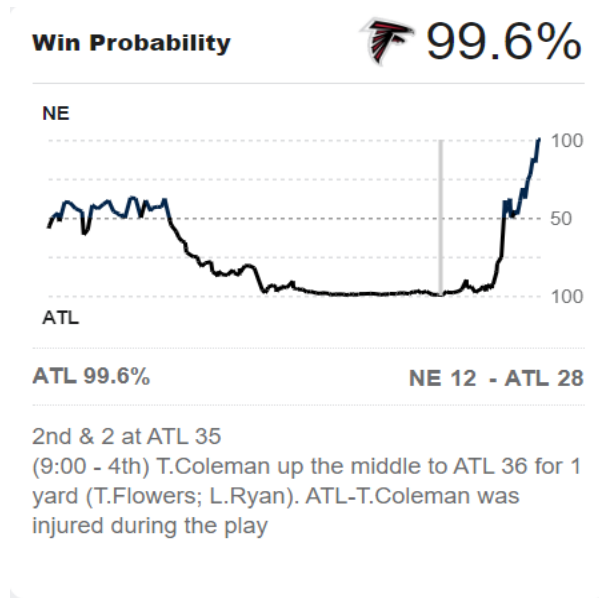


Figure 2.16: ESPN's Win Probability tracker at the 9:00 mark in the fourth quarter of Super Bowl LI. Source: ESPN

but once the overtime starts, the graph shows a dramatic reversal as it flips to a 100% Patriots victory (fig. 2.17).



Figure 2.17: ESPN's Win Probability tracker at the end of Super Bowl LI. Source: ESPN

The probability tracker puts the infamous Edelman catch as the inflection point for the game (fig. 2.18), as after that play the probability to win starts to swing rapidly towards the Patriots.



Figure 2.18: ESPN's Win Probability tracker showing the point of no return in Super Bowl LI.

Source: ESPN

2.2.3

It may be an interesting exercise to see what the narrativization would have looked like if the Patriots did not mount their comeback. It may be a fruitful endeavor to compare the narrative formed during the game and a narrative formed in retrospect for the same game. Assuming the comeback never happened and re-reading the game with an Atlanta win in mind reveals a vastly different narrativization. In this imaginary scenario, analyzing the game as if the Falcons would continue to their win would show the differences in the narratively significant functions and thus clusters and storylines, revealing what would have been the narrative of the game. A glimpse of what could have been is seen in “The Stories of Super Bowl 51”

segment, when Jim McBride reveals that originally he wrote “the Falcons actually gave a preview of things to come in their first offensive scrimmage when Devonta Freeman gassed them for 37 yards¹⁸”. Under the assumption of a Falcons’ win, even their very first offensive play is contextualized as the narrative starting point for their victory. In the excerpt of the second quarter below, the right side shows the functions selected for the actual outcome and the left shows the functions selected if Atlanta had won instead (fig. 2.19).

¹⁸ NFL Films, “Stories,” 4:18 – 4:23

	Second Quarter				Second Quarter			
	3rd & 1, pass to Edelman				3rd & 1, pass to Edelman			
	1st & 10, rush by Blount, flag, fumble				1st & 10, rush by Blount, flag, fumble			
	ATL ball				ATL ball			
	1st & 10, pass to Jones				1st & 10, pass to Jones			
	Comm, Jones an amazing athlete				Comm, Jones an amazing athlete			
	1st & 10, pass to Jones				1st & 10, pass to Jones			
	1st & 10, run by Freeman				1st & 10, run by Freeman			
	1st & 10, rush by Freeman				1st & 10, rush by Freeman			
	NE Timeout				NE Timeout			
0-6	2nd & 1, rush by Freeman, TD				2nd & 1, rush by Freeman, TD			
0-7	Conversion successful				Conversion successful			
	NE receiving				NE receiving			
	Comm, first time NE trailing since week 12				Comm, first time NE trailing since week 12			
	1st & 10, incomplete				1st & 10, incomplete			
	2nd & 10, rush by Lewis				2nd & 10, rush by Lewis			
	Broadcast, NE first 3 possessions: punt, punt, fumble				Broadcast, NE first 3 possessions: punt, punt, fumble			
	3rd & 7, pass to White				3rd & 7, pass to White			
	4th & 3, punt				4th & 3, punt			
	Graphic, NE leading in ball control				Graphic, NE leading in ball control			
	ATL ball				ATL ball			
	1st & 10, pass to Gabriel				1st & 10, pass to Gabriel			
	1st & 10, pass to Julio Jones				1st & 10, pass to Julio Jones			
	1st & 10, rush by Coleman				1st & 10, rush by Coleman			
	Broadcast, Ryan 6/6 96 yards				Broadcast, Ryan 6/6 96 yards			
	2nd & 9, incomplete				2nd & 9, incomplete			
0-13	3rd & 9, pass to Hooper, TD				3rd & 9, pass to Hooper, TD			
	Flag, NE				Flag, NE			
	FG attempt, flag NE -5				FG attempt, flag NE -5			
0-14	FG attempt successful				Conversion successful			
	NE receiving				NE receiving			
	Comm, biggest deficit for Brady-Belichick SB				Comm, biggest deficit for Brady-Belichick SB			
	1st & 10, pass to Bennett				1st & 10, pass to Bennett			
	Comm, no team has come back from a 2 TD deficit in a SB				Comm, no team has come back from a 2 TD deficit in a SB			
	1st & 10, incomplete				1st & 10, incomplete			
	2nd & 10, incomplete				2nd & 10, incomplete			
	Broadcast, Under Pressure, Brady 16 dropbacks, 2 sacks				Broadcast, Under Pressure, Brady 16 dropbacks, 2 sacks			
	3rd & 10, pass to White, Flag ATL -5				3rd & 10, pass to White, Flag ATL -5			
	1st & 10, rush by Blount				1st & 10, rush by Blount			
	Comm, when NE lost Gronk, lost great player				Comm, when NE lost Gronk, lost great player			
	2nd & 10, rush by White				2nd & 10, rush by White			
	3rd & 3, incomplete, Flag ATL -5				3rd & 3, incomplete, Flag ATL -5			
	1st & 10, rush by Devlin				1st & 10, rush by Devlin			
	2nd & 9, incomplete				2nd & 9, incomplete			
	ATL timeout				ATL timeout			
	Broadcast, Largest Comebacks SB History, 10 points				Broadcast, Largest Comebacks SB History, 10 points			
	3rd & 9, incomplete, Flag ATL -5				3rd & 9, incomplete, Flag ATL -5			
	1st & 10, rush by Blount				1st & 10, rush by Blount			
	Broadcast, Rushing Yards: NE 27, ATL 86				Broadcast, Rushing Yards: NE 27, ATL 86			
	2nd & 10, pass to Bennett				2nd & 10, pass to Bennett			
	1st & 10, rush by Lewis				1st & 10, rush by Lewis			
	2nd & 7, rush by Lewis				2nd & 7, rush by Lewis			
0-20	3rd & 6, intercepted, pick6 by Alford				3rd & 6, intercepted, pick6 by Alford			
0-21	FG attempt successful				FG attempt successful			
	Comm, 2nd year head coach Quinn up by 21				Comm, 2nd year head coach Quinn up by 21			

Figure 2.19: A comparison of functions selected for different outcomes for Super Bowl LI. Based on the pretend narrative of the Falcons' win, the narrative through which historicity is endowed is different and thus the resulting functions and storylines even though they are from the same event are different. The lead the Atlanta Falcons hold for most of the game is reframed as a part of their dominant win over the Patriots and what was the beginning of their comeback is recontextualized as a failed attempt instead.

2.3

In addition to the examples of narrative analysis completed so far, it may also be of use to see an example of narrativization which can be said to have failed. Here, the term “failed” is used to denote the cases in which the narrativization of the broadcast leads to an unfulfilling or unresolved or otherwise incomplete narrative or where the narrativization is incorrect with regards to the reality out on the field. While Barthes has claimed that “there are no wasted units, and there never can be any, however long, loose, or tenuous the threads which link them to one of the levels of story” (Barthes 245), when the story being told is beholden to an outside reality, plenty can be wasted. It may be the case that the narrative being pushed may be unexpectedly upended by the results or that the commentary being put forth may be at odds with the reality of the game resulting in “lousy” analysis (Oriard 28). In any case, narrative failure refers to narrativizations which do not accurately reflect its subject matter or because of the disconnect to reality results in “unfruitful” narrativization that has no viable resolution.

Although earlier in this chapter, the frequency and length the broadcast dwells on a particular storyline was deemed to be a useful metric for the storyline’s overall role in the final narrative, this is not always true. Regardless of how much effort has been invested into a narrative angle, if the conditions of reality do not follow suit, it must be abandoned. One such example is the Patriots’ week 11 game against the San Francisco 49ers. One prominent storyline that was pursued was the effects of the rain on the game and serves as an example of narrativization which fails at the level of the storyline in the narrative structure schema, before ultimately failing. Although until near the end of the game, the narrative units

pertaining to the adverse effects of the weather were perhaps barely, but still technically labeled as true, able to build on itself up to the level of the storyline, once the storyline does not pan out, the storyline and all the narrative units beneath it must be labeled as pseudo and relegated aside. The weather as a factor becomes a storyline with the Patriots' first possession of the game with the commentators talking about the rain and how that may be detrimental to play.



Figure 2.20: An excerpt of the broadcast weather report. Source: NFL/CBS

The narrativization seems to be planting the seeds of the rain storyline so that if and when a player does slip and fumbles the ball, the broadcast will be prepared to build a narrative around it. Throughout the entire broadcast, the commentators repeatedly mention the rain and the adverse effects the weather can have on the playing field and the players. Multiple references are made about the weather and questions are posed about the potential effects of the rain on the “running game¹⁹,” or the quarterbacks’ grip on the football²⁰, and how

¹⁹ NFL, Week 11, “When you just brought up the fact that there’s rain conditions today, and what’s gonna happen with the running game,” 0:08:07 – 0:08:11

²⁰ Ibid., “It really affects the football, I mentioned the amount of weight that it adds to the football, it changes the grips for the quarterbacks,” 0:58:03 – 0:58:09

according to Greg Gumbel, how “the weather can be the great equalizer on the field²¹”. The references to the rain or the weather affecting some aspect of the game is made by the commentators, the sideline reporter, and even the cameras that show the drizzling between breaks. However, with no turnovers or mistakes caused by the rainy conditions, it is finally acknowledged late in the fourth quarter by commentator Trent Green even though he that there “were gonna have multiple, multiple turnovers²²,” that the rain seemed to have “not much of an effect” on the game²³. While the broadcast heavily invested into the rain storyline because there was no corresponding result in the actual game, this particular narrativization ends up failing.

2.4

Another aspect of sports narrativization that cannot be ignored is the narrativization over the course of multiple games. This may happen on the level of a season, a franchise, the league, or the sport itself. For the sake of the scope of this project, only the narrative over the course of a single season will be examined. This section will identify the narrative of the New England Patriots’ 2016 season then examine its formation and explore its relationship to the individual games. Rather than garnering the narrative from the primary text of the games themselves like with the individual game narratives, the seasonal narrative was derived from articles and analyses from sports journalism including national columns Monday Morning

²¹ Ibid., “We’ve seen in an awful lot of cases the weather can be the great equalizer on the field sometimes,” 0:08:51 - 0:08:56

²² Ibid., “I thought we were gonna have multiple, multiple turnovers,” 2:00:34 – 2:00:37

²³ Ibid., “I thought maybe you were gonna say how much of an effect the rain will have on the football today, we have no turnovers on the day, so clearly not much of an effect,” 2:00:22 – 2:00:30

Quarterback (MMQB), Snap Decisions, and ESPN's game overviews, and articles from the local newspapers. Since sports are inextricably linked to the media that transmit it through "replay, slow motion, and multi-perspectival images, accompanied by the inner voice of phantom sports commentators" (Rowe 13), an analogue can be found for sports journalism which actively crafts narratives based on the results and shape public perception.

While the season is made up of these individual games, the story of the season is not necessarily the sum of the stories of these individual games. There is no straightforward 1:1 relationship between the narratives at the level of games and at the level of the season where one might imagine the games to be the functions to the season's narrative. While some detail or element may play a critical role within the context of a single game, they may be completely forgotten in the story of the season. Naturally, the seasonal narrative utilizes more long-term narrative elements like Brady's career which spans many years and are not bogged down by the minutiae of details on the level of individual games. In a sense, the seasonal narrative is twice removed from the functions of any given game. If the narratives of individual games are the "*second* point of view" which "serves to make *one* story out of the multiple incidents" by "organizing together components that are as heterogeneous as unintended circumstances," ("Life in Quest," Ricoeur 21) the seasonal narrative which organizes the individual games is a third point of view and a third-order plot. The distance between the base level of functions and higher order plot makes it more difficult to perform the same real-time narrativization analysis done on individual games for two reasons. First, many sources of narrativization are written/published after the game has concluded and second, for the aforementioned reasons it is difficult to produce a definite list of functions as

was done with individual games. While it may be tempting to conceptualize the relationship between individual games and the season as analogous to the relationship between Barthesian functions and actions, the same sort of narrative logic does not carry over. Other than the chronology and the brute logical relation that winning leads to the playoffs, there is no tangible narrative relation between the games and the season. As will be discussed later, the narratives established within individual games do not contribute to the seasonal narrative in a way similar to how functional sequences provide the base material for the narrative organization on the level of actions.

The initial overview of the season lends itself to breaking down the narrativization along storylines yet at the same time, there are clearly different phases or sections in the season's chronology. The season's narrative, because it is an amalgamation of second-hand media, is probably a mixture of both. In terms of the storylines, the overall narrative for the season is perhaps best summarized by the short video by NFL Media Originals reviewing the 2016 New England Patriots (Patriots 2016 Season in Review). The storyline is clear: the odds were stacked against Brady and the Patriots, but with Belichick's brilliant coaching and Brady's record breaking performance, the Patriots were able to take full advantage of their roster and ultimately win the Super Bowl. Using this narrative as the baseline, the main narrative threads are Brady's suspension, Belichick's coaching, and the record-breaking performances by both coach and quarterback. The season can be divided into three sections: the first four games without Brady, the rest of the season, and then the Super Bowl. Under this three-segment framework, the general narrative direction was identified at each week of

the season to chart the evolution of the narrative. Thus, the seasonal narrativization will unpack the various storylines that are picked up as the season unfolds.

The only consistent storyline throughout the season was Tom Brady. From the very start, it was clear that Tom Brady would be the focal point of the Patriots' 2016 season. Beginning the season with a four-game suspension, Brady's suspension became a driving force in how not only his performance, but the Patriots' performance, would be contextualized over the course of the season. It is easy to imagine that whether the season would turn out to be good or bad, the Deflategate suspension would play a role. If it was good, the story would be about how Brady overcame his critics and proved himself once more; if it was bad, the story would be about how the suspension wreaked havoc on Brady's mental game and threw things off sync. Depending on what the final narrative would be, the demarcation of pseudo- and true narrative units would correspondingly change. As the season went on and it became clear that the Patriots would do well, the overarching narrative became one of Brady's vindication through his so-called "Revenge Tour" as he led the Patriots to win the Super Bowl and set a plethora of new records along the way.

Even from the preseason, it was the Brady and his absence which set the tone for the Patriots' season. Initially, there were some doubts as to whether the Patriots could do well without Brady. Peter King initially predicted a Pittsburgh win over Green Bay for Super Bowl LI, while noting that "New England's a tempting pick, because of intense motivation and a manageable schedule, as well as the fact that the Patriots are still really good" ("Super Bowl 51 Predictions," King). Without Brady, the Patriots seemed good but not championship material as Don Banks predicted that New England would finish 1st in the AFC East but

ultimately lose to Pittsburgh in the AFC Championship (“Snap Judgements Week 1,” Banks). The first major storyline that developed in the first four games without Brady were a constant comparison of the backup quarterbacks Jimmy Garoppolo and Jacoby Brissett against him, whose return was eagerly anticipated. The most prominent story of the season opener was the Patriots’ win against the Cardinals “without Tom Brady and Rob Gronkowski and their two tackles, with a quarterback who’d never played” (“2016 NFL Week 1,” King). Even though it was Garoppolo who played in the game, it was Brady’s absence which dominated the narrative. The highest praise for Garoppolo was being compared to Brady: “Jimmy Garoppolo did just what Tom Brady always seems to do... [l]ead the New England Patriots to a late score and victory” (“Patriots vs. Cardinals Game Summary,” ESPN/Associated Press) and that he was “very Brady-like with his distribution, hitting seven different receivers” (McBride 1). By the second week, the narrative was already set on Brady’s return. Even though it is acknowledged that “Garoppolo has proven he deserves a shot to be an NFL starter” (“Storybook Start for Bradford,” King), the focus is on the “[t]wo more weeks” until “Tom Terrific returns” (“Snap Judgements: Steelers Jump Ahead,” Banks). When Garoppolo is injured and the Patriots are forced to rely on their third-string quarterback Jacoby Brissett, the stage had been “all set up for Brady to play the ultimate returning hero in Week 5 and restore order to the team’s depleted quarterback depth chart, in even grander fashion than he was already expected to”. Even if New England lost the next two games until Brady’s return, the media was already predicting that the Patriots would be the “overwhelming favorites to win the AFC East if Brady Takes over” (“Storybook,” King). In week 3 as Brissett took another win for New England, the attention remained on Brady’s looming return. Although

the Patriots would lose to the Bills the following week, the loss was quickly written off as a result of a “sloppy, Tom Brady-less New England” (“Bills vs. Patriots Game Summary,” ESPN/Associated Press) but also as irrelevant since the “Patriots seem to go 12-4 every season and claim the AFC East, so winning three of their first four games puts them on perfect track for the same-old, same-old” (“Snap Judgements: Falcons, Rams have statement wins,” Banks) and when “Brady returns to the lineup the conquering hero, this week’s futility will probably be but a faint memory”.

The week 5 game against the Cleveland Browns marked a definite turning point in the story of the Patriots season and the second segment of the season’s narrative. Not only was this Brady’s return after the Deflategate suspension, his exceptional performance and win solidified the storyline of Brady and Belichick breaking the records. A better than expected return to form, “Brady look[ed] like Brady” (“Snap Judgements Week 1,” Banks) and “like a cog in a machine, picked up right where he left off” (“Tom Brady is Back,” King) and “threw for 406 yards... and three touchdowns in the 33-13 blowout of the reeling Browns,” (“Snap Judgements Week 5,” Banks) giving him at “39 years, 2 months and 6 days old, coming off his four-game Deflategate suspension and playing for the first time in 37 weeks... one of the best games of his 256-game career” (“Tom,” King). Also with this win, “[Belichick] became the fourth coach in history to win 250 games,” and this would not be the last record either Brady or Belichick would break this season.

From this point on, the narrative focuses on the Patriots’ and Brady’s performance. Although there are different stories that are elaborated each week against their opponents, they are like self-contained bottle episodes in the larger picture of the entire season. For

example, the game against the Seattle Seahawks was touted as the Super Bowl XLIX rematch and the Patriots' loss was deemed "poetic justice" ("Best Sunday of '16," King). However, even though the "Seattle-New England is the best rivalry in football" and that a "Seattle-New England Super Bowl is a distinct possibility," this is all but forgotten by the following week. As the Patriots keep mostly winning and Brady continues to perform beyond expectation with "three touchdown passes and went over 5,000 completions for his career" ("Bengals vs. Patriots Game Summary," ESPN/Associated Press) in his home field debut, the sports media adjusted their initial predictions and picked the Patriots as the favourite to win the AFC East and make another Super Bowl appearance. Even though Don Banks "had New England losing at Pittsburgh this season in the AFC Championship Game," he "can't really see that outcome unfolding quite so clearly as of late October. It's still the Patriots' world, and the rest of the AFC just lives in it" ("Snap Judgements Week 7," Banks). The Patriots' wins "left little doubt as to where the balance of power in the AFC sits as the season reaches its halfway point" ("Patriots vs. Steelers Game Summary," ESPN/Associated Press). With their win against the Buffalo Bills, the press cannot help but praise Brady and the Patriots. Not only did they set "an NFL record-tying 26 career wins against Buffalo" ("Snap Judgements Week 8," Banks), even though "the Patriots may have been vulnerable" as Brady "came off his four-game suspension Oct. 9 having not played a football game in nine months" ("Week 8," King), Brady's win ensured that "[n]o AFC East foe in *16 seasons* has swept Brady and the Patriots in the season series". With such performance, Peter King can only say that "Tom Brady is not human".

As the season nears its end, the storyline of the records being broken picks up steam as Brady, Belichick, and the Patriots seemingly tie, break or set a different one on a weekly basis. The narrative seeds were planted in advance as far back as week 2 are picked up again after 11 weeks, when the win against the New York Jets in week 12 continues this storyline as the “200th win of Brady’s regular- and post-season career, tying him with Peyton Manning for the most by a quarterback in NFL history” (“Denver-KC Thriller,” King) and also marked the “500th win in franchise history for the Patriots, the first original AFL franchise to reach the mark” (“Patriots vs. Jets Game Summary,” ESPN/Associated Press). The next week, with another win “Brady became the league’s leader in victories among QBs, earning his 201st by throwing for 269 yards and a touchdown” (“Rams vs. Patriots Game Summary,” ESPN/Associated Press) and is picked as the favourite to win the AFC (“Playoffs are Coming,” King). The following week, “Brady threw for 406 yards and three touchdowns, becoming the fourth NFL quarterback with at least 450 career touchdown passes” (“Ravens vs. Patriots Game Summary,” ESPN/Associated Press). After winning their game against the Denver Broncos next, “New England, 12-2, clinched a first-round bye for an NFL-record seventh straight year” (“Playoff Scenarios,” King) and “is in the driver’s seat for the top seed in the AFC” (“Week 15 Snap Judgements,” Banks). Then as the regular season draws to a close, this narrative strand picks up steam with the discussions of the MVP award. Additionally, by “going 3-1 with the second and third quarterbacks playing, then going 10-1 with Brady back” (“Holiday Weekend,” King), a case is made for Belichick being coach of the year as he “earned his 200th victory in New England, making him the fifth coach in NFL history to reach the milestone with one team” (“Jets vs. Patriots Game Summary,”

ESPN/Associated Press). For Brady, even though he missed the first four games of the season, “[s]ome football observers, like the esteemed Rich Eisen of NFL Network, have already declared the MVP race over, handing it to Brady” (“Holiday,” King). By the last week of the regular season, Don Banks presciently predicts that the MVP race is “now down to either Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan or Patriots quarterback Tom Brady” (“Week 17 Snap Judgements,” Banks). Even though it is “incredible” that “Brady has created a contest for the MVP after missing the first four games” (“Week 17,” King). With the last win of the regular season, Brady “set the league record for best TD-to-interception ratio (28-2)” and “New England became the ninth team since 1972 to go undefeated on the road during the regular season” (“Patriots vs. Dolphins Game Summary 17). The same narrative thread continues into the postseason. Even in the divisional playoffs, the Patriots continue to break records by “going to their record sixth consecutive AFC title game” (“NFL Divisional Round Playoffs Snap Judgements,” Banks) and attempting to make a record breaking ninth Super Bowl appearance and the “14th playoff appearance for the Belichick/Brady Patriots” (“Wildcard Weekend,” King).

As the Patriots win the AFC Championship and advance to the Super Bowl, the storylines specific to the biggest game of the year start to formulate around three distinct lines. First, the Patriots’ appearance at the Super Bowl is framed in part as the continuation and culmination of the record breaking. Back with the week 2 victory, Belichick tied “Curly Lambeau for fourth place on the regular-season wins list with 226” (“Texans vs. Patriots Game Summary,” ESPN/Associated Press) and making him the fourth most winningest coach in the NFL. With this narrative seed planted, throughout the season whenever Brady,

Belichick, or the Patriots set a new record, this narrative thread weaved back in focus and gathered momentum until it reached its peak at the Super Bowl. So, it was unsurprising that the Patriots would make another appearance to the Super Bowl since “New England has simply dominated the NFL the past decade and a half, making seven Super Bowl trips and picking up more hardware (four championships) than any other league franchise in that span” (“NFL Conference Title Round Snap Judgements,” Banks). For Belichick as well, this would be his “seventh appearance in a Super Bowl will be a record for a head coach” (“Steelers vs. Patriots Game Summary,” ESPN/Associated Press) and together, “Belichick and Brady have won 24 playoff games together, most in league history by a head coach and starting quarterback. No other coach-QB duo has even participated in that many postseason games together. Brady’s 24 playoff wins are the most by a starting quarterback in league history”.

Second, the thread of the “Tom Brady Revenge Tour” is kept up as the “Tom Brady redemption tour” (“Steelers vs. Patriots,” ESPN/Associated Press) heads to the Super Bowl after “beginning the 2016 season suspended for four games for his role in the “Deflategate” scandal, the New England quarterback relentlessly carried the Patriots to an unprecedented ninth appearance in the title game, and his seventh”.

And lastly, there is a deliberate effort to set the stage as a showdown between the Patriots and the Falcons, with each team as the inverse of the other. The “appetizing Falcons-Patriots matchup” provides a stark contrast between the two teams on multiple fronts. On one side, the “Falcons are a mostly young, ascending team, with exciting playmakers and a quarterback in Matt Ryan” (“NFL Conference,” Banks) while on the other, the experienced “Patriots are a methodical winning machine... with the game’s preeminent quarterback and

Boston icon, Tom Brady”; the Falcons pit their explosive “offense that averaged almost 34 points per game in the regular season (and 40 in the playoffs) against a Patriots’ defense that allowed “less than 16 points a game in the regular season, and only an average of 16.5 in the playoffs”; while “Ryan and Falcons head coach Dan Quinn trying to crack that winner’s circle for the first time,” “Brady and Patriots head coach Bill Belichick gunning for their league record fifth ring together”.

When the season finally culminates in the Super Bowl in the most unexpected comeback as analyzed earlier, other than the shock of the game itself, the two main narratives that are pushed are 1) Tom Brady is the greatest quarterback who has ever lived and 2) Brady/Belichick/New England has set/broken/tied every record they possibly could. While ostensibly winning a football game is a team effort, the focus was all on Brady. Brady’s performance that night was so spectacular, it seemed to have decided who the greatest quarterback of all time is: “No more calls, we have a winner. The debate is over. Settled. Put to rest. If you still want to argue about who’s the best quarterback in NFL history, you obviously missed everything past halftime Sunday night, when New England’s Tom Brady rendered the question moot in spectacular fashion” (“Super Bowl Snap Judgements,” Banks). It was Brady who “would not let New England lose. Not this game. Not this year. Not when it was this personal, and not when it all meant so much more than ever before” and this win officially marked the end of the “Patriots’ Revenge Tour, two years in the making”. Even when trailing Atlanta 28-3 in the third quarter, “New England never panicked because of one man: Tom Brady” (“Patriots Win SB 51,” King). Though down by 25 points, the Patriots “turned the game around by sheer force of will – Brady’s will”. With this win, the media is

“running out of ways to deify Brady” and “it can’t be too hard to think that Tom Brady is the best quarterback of our lives”.

In pulling off the Super Bowl comeback, which was yet another record broken by the Patriots (“Super Bowl Snap Judgements,” Banks) for making up “more than a 10-point deficit to win a Super Bowl” (“Patriots vs. Falcons Game Summary,” ESPN/Associated Press), the Brady/Belichick duo broke a plethora of others. With this Super Bowl win, “Belichick’s fifth Super Bowl title as a head coach cemented his status as the greatest coach of the Super Bowl era and gives him a strong case as the best in the NFL’s 97-year history” (“Patriots Win,” King). All in all, after the game “the NFL distributed a list of new Super Bowl records that took up nearly three-quarters of a page. There were 24 in all, the majority related in one way or another to the quarterback” (“Patriots vs. Falcons,” ESPN/Associated Press).

So the narrative for the season seems like a redemption arc for Tom Brady. Though suspended from the first four games, he returned with a vengeance and lead his team to victory in the greatest Super Bowl game ever played, smashing a plethora of records along the way. However, as the season progresses from the three sections of Brady’s suspended games, the games after his return, and the Super Bowl, various narrative strands shift in and out of focus. Thus it is difficult to pinpoint the exact boundaries of the storylines that constitute the Patriots’ 2016 season and if any storyline should be included if at all. For example, while Garoppolo and Brissett were a huge focal point as potential Brady 2.0’s just as Tom Brady was a backup to Drew Bledsoe, by the midpoint of the season, and certainly by the Super Bowl, they were completely forgotten. On the other hand, the storyline of the

Patriots breaking records is briefly mentioned early in the season and gradually becomes more pertinent and is a significant aspect of the Super Bowl storyline. The story that is told is an amalgamation of the different media covering the league. As these multitudes of outlets in the NFL media ecosystem plant certain narrative seeds, some may wither away and die like the storyline of the backup quarterbacks, and some may be taken up by the ecosystem as a whole, like the framing of the season as Brady's revenge tour.

2.5

The discrepancies between the final seasonal narrative and its narrativization may be due to its disconnect to the individual game narratives and its editorialized, paratextual sources. These two factors seem to work with each other as the disconnect from the individual games leaves the seasonal narrative almost as a blank slate, leaving it open to some degree of editorialization, although all of this is still beholden to the "imperatives of the real". While for Barthes there are different principles of organization at each level of narrative, the disconnect between the individual game narratives and the seasonal narrative is so great that the connection between the two are at best tenuous. Thus, even if there are two distinct organizational principles between the narrative levels, that difference cannot overcome the disconnect between the individual game and seasonal narratives.

The relationship between the narrative of the season and the individual game is worth exploring. While it was noted in the previous chapter that "the structure of a sporting event is essentially narrative, with a beginning, plot complications, and resolution, it feeds television's insatiable hunger for narrative," ("Theorizing," Real 30) the narrativization becomes more muddled when extended over multiple sporting events. While it may be

tempting to think about the seasonal arc as being constituted of the smaller “episodes” of the individual games, the narrativization of the season is incompatibly different from the narrativization on the level of the game. It is not so simple as to say that the individual games serve as the episodic dimension to the seasonal narrative such that the latter may be a sum of the former. In his study of professional wrestling, Petten argues that “the wrestling narrative has a very complex narrative format that operates through hierarchies to maintain its historically longitudinal continuum in the seamless fashion it does from week to week, month to month, year to year, era to era” (Petten 438). Wrestling has no deliberately authored end, yet it must continually be narrativized. Similarly, it is not as if football has a definitive narrative end in the future when the sport will conclude itself; it and its narrativization will continue. In this way, “the true complexity of the wrestling narrative is its longitudinal temporal schema – its persistent and unclosing narrative structure” (439). The mechanism for continuation, the “*historical narrative*” (441), forms the “transitional circuitry that connects one chapter of wrestling’s narrative to another... mark[ing] the close of one period and the beginning of another in wrestling’s seamless, never-ending epic”. Within the continuing saga, Petten contends that there are branching plotlines (439) and a “vast stock of characters and character types” (438) through which the smaller segments of the narrative can coalesce. This structure appears to have a direct analogue in how within the “seamless, never-ending epic” of professional football, the use of stock narratives and characters like the “traditional-rivals story, the bitter-enemies story, the wounded-hero story, the Cinderella or Ugly Duckling story, the son-challenging-the-father story” (Oriard 26) divide the continual narrative of football into different periods, or more commonly referred to in sports, dynasties.

Although on paper, football should narrativize itself in an analogous manner to wrestling with the weekly “episodes” building towards a grand narrative, the seasonal storyline seems to mold itself more on the commentary happening outside of the games and seems set on being self-fulfilling prophecies instead. Since the sports media has the benefit of hindsight, at least until where they are in the season, it functions in a weekly cycle of reframing and re-editorializing past games and coverage to fit its narrative(s). Thus, the episodic dimension of the seasonal narrative is not comprised of the actual narratives built during the broadcasts but the editorialized idea of what the season was like. In terms of the editorializing of the seasonal narrative, there are noticeable omissions and forced narrativization at work. As mentioned before, a notable omission is the backup quarterbacks who played the first four games of the season. Although it was the main narrative focus at the time, the backup quarterbacks who gave the Patriots a 3-1 record before Brady returned are forgotten. The speculation about Garoppolo becoming to Brady what Brady was to Bledsoe is all but left behind.

One notable aspect of the seasonal narrative worth examining is the story of Brady’s “Revenge Tour”. While based on what actually happened and how Brady acted it is not at all clear that “revenge” was a motivating factor, the resulting narrativization frames his victory as such. The narrative seeds for the “Revenge Tour” can be seen planted when it is reported that Brady “took out some of the built-up frustration on the Browns” (“Patriots vs. Browns,” ESPN/Associated Press). However, in his MMQB column, Peter King notes that Brady and Belichick kept his return “pretty unemotional” (“Tom,” King) and that “[a]ll week in practice, it was all football. No vengeance. Same thing Sunday on the field in Cleveland”.

King explicitly addresses the assumptions about Brady’s anger, remarking that “[f]or all the talk about how volcanic Brady would be Sunday, he wasn’t. For all the stick-it-to-Goodell expectations in New England, he didn’t” and that in fact it was the opposite as “Brady seemed determined to show that his week wasn’t about him, and his manner during the blowout of the Browns confirmed that”. Although the “Revenge Tour” narrative does remain, it is noteworthy to see the narrative framing around the events in action. The entire narrative thread of the “Tom Brady Revenge Tour” seems to be mostly a fiction imposing an intention of revenge against the commissioner and the league in an example of “folk typology” discussed in the previous chapter. While it may not be completely truthful, it is understandable that the narrative of the star quarterback who gets his revenge on the league is a much better story than the star quarterback keeps his cool and does his job. With such omissions and forced narrativization at work, there is no clear cause-and-effect relationship between the narratives established for the individual games and the narrative for the season.



Figure 2.21: Weekly vs. seasonal narratives for the 2016 New England Patriots

As shown in the figure above (fig. 2.21), there is no direct correlation between the narrative of the games and the narrative of the season. The seasonal narrative does not build

upon the narrative of the individual games. Even the order of opponents played could be completely reorganized and it would have no impact on the seasonal narrativization. Unlike the functions which ultimately led to the identified narrative within individual games, the analogous relationship cannot be found for the games to the season. While there is the brute logic of winning games to advance to the playoffs for example, such connections are narratively weak and does not constitute meaningful narrative building. Although there is some adherence to the three chronological sections, it may be simply the “imperatives of the real”; if the backup quarterbacks are not playing after the first four games, it makes no sense to have a storyline about them in week 5. So the “purely successive disorganized time” between the *tocks* and the *ticks* (Kermode 45) which was already difficult harmonize is exacerbated at the level of the season. Perhaps this is the reason why the Gestalt forming apparatus of sports journalism must resort to deliberate omissions and “insist that the ‘storylines’ ... announced at the beginning of the game were playing out on the field even when they did not,” (Oriard 28). Also, “Brady’s Revenge Tour” may be a result of the “parabolic projection” (Herman 28) where “a source story (say, about actions) is projected onto a target story (about events or processes) to help make the latter more intelligible and tractable”. As briefly alluded earlier, by using a “folk typology” of the popular narrative framework of the revenge story, the seasonal narrative may be attempting to project its “purely successive disorganized time” onto the time-tested mold of the revenge story as an easy narrative device. With such omissions and suspect storylines, it may be useful to use the concept of “weak narrativity,” the “literary strategy of conveying an *illusion* of narrative sequence, linearity, causality, closure... while at the same time frustrating the reader’s trust

in the emergence of a coherent narrative” (Tammi 30). However, the seasonal narrative is still dictated by the “imperatives of the real”; Brady does come back from suspension and win the Super Bowl, breaking a plethora of records in the process. Thus, the seasonal arc may be at a place in between weak narrativity and what could conceptually be called strong narrativity, or reality. While the seasonal arc may be weak on some of its “narrative sequence, linearity, causality, closure,” it is still a coherent narrative grounded in reality.

In the narrativization analysis of individual games because they are self-contained and can be done drawing on the primary text of the games themselves, the methodology of successively building on multiple layers of narrative is possible. Although there is a need for interpretation from the selection of relevant functions to the cohesive organization of larger storylines, by keeping in mind potential narrative ends it is possible to work towards a self-correcting identification of the narrativization at work. On the level of the seasonal narrative however, the narrativization is a third-order organization built on the already published second-order narrativization of the sports media. As such, the seasonal narrative cannot be garnered through the addition of the narratives of the games that constitute the season. Instead, the narrativization must organize and find the consensus in the media and seek to cohesively re-organize the media byproducts of the actual games to determine the narrative.

Chapter 3

Case Study: Serral in the 2018 WCS

3.1

The aim of this chapter is to apply the narrativization analysis to StarCraft 2 esports. Like the previous chapter's examination of the narrativization of football, this chapter will utilize the same reiterative analysis to reveal how the esports competition is narrativized both on the levels of individual games and the season. Because the previous chapter has already provided a finely detailed analysis of narrativization, this chapter will additionally examine the narrativization through the compounding of its narrative levels. Similar to the previous chapter, the analysis will include various paratextual sources such as interviews and various media coverage.

Released in 2010, StarCraft II (hereafter SC2) is the long-awaited sequel to Blizzard Entertainment's popular real-time strategy (RTS) game StarCraft, originally released in 1998 with the expansion Brood War released in 1999. A military strategy game, the objective is to gather resources and build an army to destroy the opponent's bases. The player can choose from one of three "races" to play, each with their own advantages and disadvantages in a "more elaborate version of 'rock-paper-scissors' dynamic" (Cheung and Ha 764): the Zerg, an insectoid alien species which relies on cheap and mass-produced units; the Protoss, an advanced alien race with expensive but more powerful units; and Terran, humans with a more flexible technology and unit compositions. Typically, matches are played 1 vs. 1 in a best-of-3 format with the matching extending to best-of-5s or -7s in the playoffs and finals,

respectively. Most tournaments begin with a round-robin group stage with the winners moving onto an elimination-style upper bracket, culminating in the finals.

The analysis will be applied to the 2018 World Championship Series (WCS), a yearlong circuit system with multiple tournaments and a point-based qualification system for the global finals at the end of the year. The WCS is further divided regionally so that Korean players play only in the Korean tournaments while players from the rest of the world, commonly called “foreigners,” compete in a series of international tournaments in the circuit.



Figure 3.1: The 2018 WCS format. Source: Blizzard

For the application of the theoretical framework, the 2018 WCS year was chosen because it was the first time a foreigner, Joona “Serral” Sotala, won the title of World Champion. As

the term foreigner itself implies, the center of StarCraft has long been considered to be Korea and against all conventional wisdom, Serral managed to not only sweep all WCS Circuit events but also win the Global Finals (IEM Katowice). Like with Brady's return from suspension and comeback Super Bowl win, the subverted expectations of the 2018 WCS year provides an interesting framework for the narrativization. To limit the sheer number of games which would have to be analyzed, the detailed narrativization analysis was applied to only the final match of the major tournaments. Not only are the finals the most narratively important match of each tournament, the broadcast and commentary frequently recap what happened earlier during the tournament, making it possible to garner a more contextualized picture of the tournament's progress as a whole. Then each tournament was put together to produce the overall narrative for the year. While specific games will be analyzed in detail through the open coding method, this chapter will further explore the higher orders of narrativization built on the narrativization of individual games.

While the analysis of individual games will be mostly analogous to the analysis of football games from the previous chapter, SC2 esports drastically differs in its organization by having a more layered hierarchical structure and thus more successive levels of narrative. First, while for football there is a single league (NFL) with a single season under which there are individual games, in the WCS system there are multiple regions with multiple tournaments with their own internal structures making up the entirety of the WCS. Second, a match between two players is played at the very least as a best-of-3 with the upper brackets and finals of tournaments being played as best-of-5's or best-of-7's, meaning that a single match is comprised of multiple separate games. Then there are in effect two additional levels

of narrative organization in the WCS not found in the NFL: the series of games within a single best-of-X match and the linking of the multiple tournaments. Thus, a method to organize the narrative layers within the WCS system is needed.

This layered structure leads to at least **four** additional levels of narrativization just from the organization of the league alone: the best-of-X match, the tournament, the circuit, and the year as a whole. While relative, the narrative on the level of the year or the player may be called higher order narratives. With external narrativization, additional narratives may be found by drawing from the historical context of the esports, and will be analyzed later in this chapter.

	SC2	Football
Narrative layer	Game	Game
	Match	
	Tournament	
	Circuit/region	
	Year	Season
	Player	Team/player
	Esport	Sport

Figure 3.2: A comparison of the possible layers of narrative organization

In the forthcoming analyses the match, which would be at the very least a best-of-3, will be the basic narrative center. While a single game within a best-of-X can have a cogent narrative, organized play considers the match to be the smallest viable unit of competition with the games within to be dependent portions of that meaningful unit. It is established industry practice that since there can be some unlucky/randomized elements to the game, a minimum of a best-of-3 is needed as a true test of skill. While the narrative of each individual game is important, because the match is a best-of-X format, the complete narrative of a

single match is a multi-game arc bridging over multiple games. Quite frequently, the commentators will use the outcomes of the earlier games to inform their commentary and narrativization of subsequent games in a single series. In addition, there are multiple tournaments which are narratively threaded together to form a unified storyline for the year. However, as the shifting of the narrative center from a single to multiple games suggests, the narrative organization must take into account a variable scaling of narrative scope and thus narrative units as “[s]ome would rise to the highest level of prominence, becoming the theme(s) of the macro-structure; some would sink to lower levels; some would survive in a modified version... and a few might disappear altogether” (Ryan 148). Some games, which were the final narratives at lower levels (e.g. games) may become pseudo-functions at higher levels (e.g. tournaments). With changes in scope, the context from which narrative units draw their meaning changes, thus which events constitute narrative events also change and the calculus which differentiates the pseudo- from the true narrative units must accordingly adapt.

While the process of identifying the narrativization will remain the same, there are key differences between football and SC2. Unlike football, which as previously noted is conveniently separated into a series of “discontinuous action” (“Super Bowl Football Versus World Cup Soccer,” Real 189) with a “natural break between each play” (Jay 97) in the form of discretely marked plays bookended by the snap and the whistle, the gameplay of SC2 is fluid. In SC2 there are porous boundaries not only as to where an event might end but what might even constitute an event. For example, a player may poise to attack but could end up not actually attacking at all, so that on paper it looks as though nothing has happened even

though the posturing and the threat of an attack may have indelibly altered the course of the game. Furthermore, unlike in football where there are definitively timed quarters, in SC2 the progression of the game is only loosely identified as early-, mid-, or late-game. The fluidity extends to the focus of action. Unlike in football where there is only one focus of action surrounding the ball, there can be and there usually are multiple fronts of action in SC2 juggled simultaneously by the broadcast as it attempts to establish the most accurate narrative focus. The multiple fronts mean that the broadcast must work to construct and maintain the “Gestalt of the game” (Guttman 98) by at the very least implicitly establishing and following a “logic of *hierarchy*” (Chatman 53) which imbues whatever is shown on screen more narrative import over what was not. Additionally, without a scoring mechanic, it is not always obvious who has the advantage or even what is going on without the commentary. While there are map scores within a best-of-X series, within the games themselves there are no ways to score points, although players certainly can be in positions of advantage or disadvantage. Thus, the broadcasting plays a much more prominent role in narrativizing the game. While there are cases where it is obvious who the winner will be, the fluidity of the game places a bigger onus on the broadcast and the commentary to both explain the game and weave a coherent narrative.

3.2

As an example of the open coding analysis on the game level, the deciding game 6 of the best-of-7 finals of WCS Austin, the second major tournament of the year, between Serral and the Polish player Grzegorz “MaNa” Komincz will be analyzed. Although the general hierarchical structure of building from raw functions to the final narrative remains the same,

there are key differences especially on the levels of differentiating functions due to the mechanical differences between the games. Just as before, the narrativization analysis begins with the identification of the raw functions. However, the issues stemming from the fluidity of SC2 makes the simple identification of events difficult. In football, the ball and the immediate action surrounding it serve as the focal point and thus what can be considered as a narrative function. But in SC2 not only can there be multiple concurrent foci as the action may happen anywhere on the map, but many key actions also have delayed effects. For example, a player may respond to the other by researching a specific upgrade or building a specific unit, but it takes a non-negligible amount of time for these to be completed. Thus, even if both the action and its consequence are part of a single sequence, they may be separated in what Barthes calls “dystaxy,” an interruption of a sequence of functions by functions from another sequence (Barthes 266). Here, it may be of use to clarify that the causal relationship at hand here is not readily found in a more direct and sequential sport like football where one play must end before the next begins. The causal relationship here is not akin to a field goal in the 3rd quarter which can be seen retroactively as the start of a comeback in the 4th, but is more immediate like the throwing and catching of a single pass. So the broadcast, and especially the commentary, must bridge both the spatial and temporal gaps in the action that happen on the map and simply explain more and make the cause-and-effect relationships explicit. To account for this, the raw functions also include explanatory elements of the broadcast like the production tab (fig. 3.3) which shows what units/buildings/upgrades are being made for both players at any time and helps narrow the temporal gaps.



Figure 3.3: The production tab shows what units, buildings, or upgrades are being made by each player in real time. Source: Blizzard/DreamHack

Thus, the base level of raw functions must consider how the broadcast and especially the commentary wrangles the spatial and temporal dystasy that exist between the events of the broadcast. One solution is to have a more frequent and more pronounced inclusion of the commentary events in the identification of raw functions as the commentary explaining the game events often overlap and overshadow the very game events they explicate. For example, at the beginning of the game when MaNa scouts Serral first, it is identified as a commentary event rather than a game event (fig. 3.5) because the commentary explanation for its significance overshadows the mere act of moving the Probe and the added inclusion of it as a separate game event would ultimately be redundant. These decisions imbue the analysis with interpretive risk from the very start. Although in the schema for the open coding approach, the identification of the game and commentary events is done as a part of determining the true functions, here the identification may be done to avoid redundancy on the level of the raw functions.

With the considerations about the commentary in mind, the list of raw functions can be produced from game 6 between Serral and MaNa. After the initial viewing of the game, the prevailing narrative, other than the general praising of Serral's superior abilities, is one of

how Serral’s constant harassment crippled MaNa’s economy leading to Serral’s eventual victory. Throughout the game, Serral consistently denies MaNa’s expansions and kills his workers so that as the game goes on, the economic damage compounds until it reaches a critical point. With a rough idea of this final narrative, the events of the broadcast can be itemized into raw functions.

Functions:			
Player intros			
Comm, fortunate scout for MaNa, 4 player map			
Comm, want game 7			
MaNa, SG opening			
Comm, least popular map			
Serral, scouts Stargate			
MaNa, Phoenix production			
MaNa, Adept harass			
MaNa, Oracle production			
MaNa, second SG started			
Comm, Serral doesn't want to expand close to MaNa			
Comm, double SG is good			
Comm, double SG destabilizes Serral, force errors			
Serral, Roach Warren started			
MaNa, double Phoenix production			
MaNa, loses Probe before making 3rd			
Serral, +1 Missile Attack started			
Serral, Roach production			
Serral, Roach speed upgrade started			
MaNa, Twilight Council and Forge started			
MaNa, takes 3rd close to Serral			
MaNa, picks off Roaches mid map			
Comm, Serral making Zerglings again, will MaNa learn?			
MaNa, +1 attack and Charge started			
Comm, MaNa please get a Shield Battery			
Comm, if he holds we'll have game 7			
MaNa, cancels 3rd			
Comm, gets cancel but loses most of army			
Serral, Zergling pressure at natural wall			
Comm, MaNa can hold			
Comm, Serral has Hydra den coming up			
MaNa, Robotics Facility started			
Serral, +2 missile attack started			
MaNa, 3rd Nexus started			
Serral, Zergling attack at 3rd, forces cancel			
Serral, Lurker Den started			
MaNa, Templar Archives started			

Figure 3.4: A partial list of raw functions from Serral vs. MaNa 2018 WCS Austin Finals Game 6

From here, the raw functions can be categorized into true and pseudo functions, with the two types of true functions, the game events highlighted in yellow and the commentary events in green. Keeping in mind that Serral wins this game by slowly wearing down MaNa's economy, the reiterative process can sort the true from the irrelevant pseudo functions. At this stage, some events such as the commentators pointing out that MaNa was lucky in his scouting ("fortunate scout for MaNa") are included because they might contribute meaningfully to the narrative. The events more directly tied to the economic harassment ("Serral, Zergling attack at 3rd, forces cancel") are sure to be included.

Functions:				
Player intros				
Comm, fortunate scout for MaNa, 4 player map				
Comm, want game 7				
MaNa, SG opening				
Comm, least popular map				
Serral, scouts Stargate				
MaNa, Phoenix production				
MaNa, Adept harass				
MaNa, Oracle production				
MaNa, second SG started				
Comm, Serral doesn't want to expand close to MaNa				
Comm, double SG is good				
Comm, double SG destabilizes Serral, force errors				
Serral, Roach Warren started				
MaNa, double Phoenix production				
MaNa, loses Probe before making 3rd				
Serral, +1 Missile Attack started				
Serral, Roach production				
Serral, Roach speed upgrade started				
MaNa, Twilight Council and Forge started				
MaNa, takes 3rd close to Serral				
MaNa, picks off Roaches mid map				
Comm, Serral making Zerglings again, will MaNa learn?				
MaNa, +1 attack and Charge started				
Comm, MaNa please get a Shield Battery				
Comm, if he holds we'll have game 7				
MaNa, cancels 3rd				
Comm, gets cancel but loses most of army				
Serral, Zergling pressure at natural wall				
Comm, MaNa can hold				
Comm, Serral has Hydra den coming up				
MaNa, Robotics Facility started				
Serral, +2 missile attack started				
MaNa, 3rd Nexus started				
Serral, Zergling attack at 3rd, forces cancel				
Serral, Lurker Den started				
MaNa, Templar Archives started				

Figure 3.5: An excerpt of selected game and commentary events from Serral vs. MaNa

Once the true functions have been identified, they are put into functional clusters where each named cluster represents the loose grouping of the functions beneath until the next cluster begins. However, the delayed cause-and-effect nature of SC2 again poses a problem. While directly consequential events such as one player attacking into another can be easily grouped together, events which have clear but delayed consequences are harder to

connect because of the large temporal gaps between them. Thus, clusters were primarily marked based on the temporal proximities of their constituent functions with the intention of showing the causal relationship between the linked clusters on the level of the storyline, which connects multiple clusters anyway. For example, the initial group of events about MaNa's opening strategy makes for a clear cut cluster. In the end, this approach did not seem to lead to noticeably different results from the previous approach used with football.

Functions:	Clusters:
Player intros	
Comm, fortunate scout for MaNa, 4 player map	MaNa has good start
Comm, want game 7	
MaNa, SG opening	
Comm, least popular map	
Serral, scouts SG	SG play for MaNa
MaNa, Phoenix production	
MaNa, Adept harass	
MaNa, Oracle production	
MaNa, econd SG started	Committing to double SG
Comm, Serral doesn't want to expand close to MaNa	
Comm, double SG is good	
Comm, double SG destabilizes Serral, force errors	Double SG could force game 7
Serral, Roach Warren started	
MaNa, double Phoenix production	
MaNa, loses Probe before making 3rd	Serral slows MaNa's economy
Serral, +1 Missile Attack started	
Serral, Roach production	
Serral, Roach speed started	
MaNa, TC and Forge started	
MaNa, takes 3rd close to Serral	
MaNa, picks off Roaches mid map	
Comm, Serral making Zerglings again, will MaNa learn?	Serral preparing for counterattacks
MaNa, +1 attack and Charge started	
Comm, MaNa please get a Shield Battery	
Comm, if he holds we'll have game 7	
MaNa, cancels 3rd	MaNa unable to expand
Comm, gets cancel but loses most of army	
Serral, Ling pressure at natural wall	
Comm, MaNa can hold	
Comm, Serral has Hydra den coming up	
MaNa, Robo Facility started	
Serral, +2 missile attack started	
MaNa, 3rd Nexus started	
Serral, Ling attack at 3rd, forces cancel	Serral limiting MaNa's economy
Serral, Lurker Den started	
MaNa, Templar Archives started	
Comm, starting to look bad for MaNa, still no 3rd	MaNa's economy falling behind

Figure 3.6: An excerpt of functional clusters from Serral vs. MaNa

Once the functional clusters have been identified, they can be sorted into true and pseudo clusters with the benefit of hindsight to construct the varying storylines. The narratively irrelevant pseudo-clusters are either ignored or subsumed under the true clusters to build the appropriate storylines. On the functional cluster level, the recurring pattern of grouping related to Serral inflicting economic damage (“Serral slows MaNa’s economy, MaNa unable to expand”) is revealed. Since these clusters obviously contribute towards the Gestalt of what the final narrative will be they are considered to be true clusters and form the “Serral stops MaNa’s economy” storyline. On the other hand, the cluster about MaNa’s opening strategy (“SG play for MaNa”) is ultimately irrelevant and is deemed a pseudo-cluster and subsumed under the “Potential for game 7” storyline, which will eventually be a pseudo-storyline anyway since game 7 never happens.

Functions:	Clusters:	Storylines:
Player intros		
Comm, fortunate scout for MaNa, 4 player map	MaNa has good start	Potential for game 7
Comm, want game 7		
MaNa, SG opening		MaNa plays the same
Comm, least popular map		
Serral, scouts SG	SG play for MaNa	
MaNa, Phoenix production		
MaNa, Adept harass		
MaNa, Oracle production		
MaNa, econd SG started	Committing to double SG	
Comm, Serral doesn't want to expand close to MaNa		
Comm, double SG is good		
Comm, double SG destabilizes Serral, force errors	Double SG could force game 7	
Serral, Roach Warren started		
MaNa, double Phoenix production		
MaNa, loses Probe before making 3rd	Serral slows MaNa's economy	Serral stops MaNa's economy
Serral, +1 Missile Attack started		
Serral, Roach production		
Serral, Roach speed started		
MaNa, TC and Forge started		
MaNa, takes 3rd close to Serral		
MaNa, picks off Roaches mid map		
Comm, Serral making Zerglings again, will MaNa learn?	Serral preparing for counterattacks	MaNa defends
MaNa, +1 attack and Charge started		
Comm, MaNa please get a Shield Battery		
Comm, if he holds we'll have game 7		
MaNa, cancels 3rd	MaNa unable to expand	
Comm, gets cancel but loses most of army		
Serral, Ling pressure at natural wall		
Comm, MaNa can hold		
Comm, Serral has Hydra den coming up		
MaNa, Robo Facility started		
Serral, +2 missile attack started		
MaNa, 3rd Nexus started		
Serral, Ling attack at 3rd, forces cancel	Serral limiting MaNa's economy	

Figure 3.7. An excerpt of storylines from Serral vs. MaNa

After establishing the storylines, once more through the reiterative process, the final narrative can be identified by selecting the true storylines to fall under that final narrative. With the knowledge that the game's ending already in mind, the reiterative process can weed out the pseudo-storylines, such as the one about a potential game 7 as mentioned above, from the true ones. Since by the level of the storylines, the messier causal relationships have been tidied up, the organization of the true storylines into a final one is relatively straightforward. As predicted, the final narrative for the game is revealed to be one of Serral being in control and his wearing down of MaNa's economy over time. The final narrative comes in two halves; the first being MaNa's ability to stay in the game against Serral and the second being

MaNa's eventual capitulation via his damaged economy, with the critical inflection point at the commentary's acknowledgement of his shabby economy after his third failed attempt to expand to his 3rd base. This point is where the dominant narrative reaches a critical point and the storyline about MaNa's economy must be acknowledged as a key narrative component. Although chronologically in the middle, this point is the first point in the final narrative that can be "locked in" and from which all events which precedes and follows it can be interpreted accordingly. These two halves of the final narrative, which could be named "MaNa stays competitive" and "MaNa's economy leads to loss" respectively, are able to subsume all of the smaller storylines about who attacks and who defends into the larger narrative of a prolonged economic advantage.

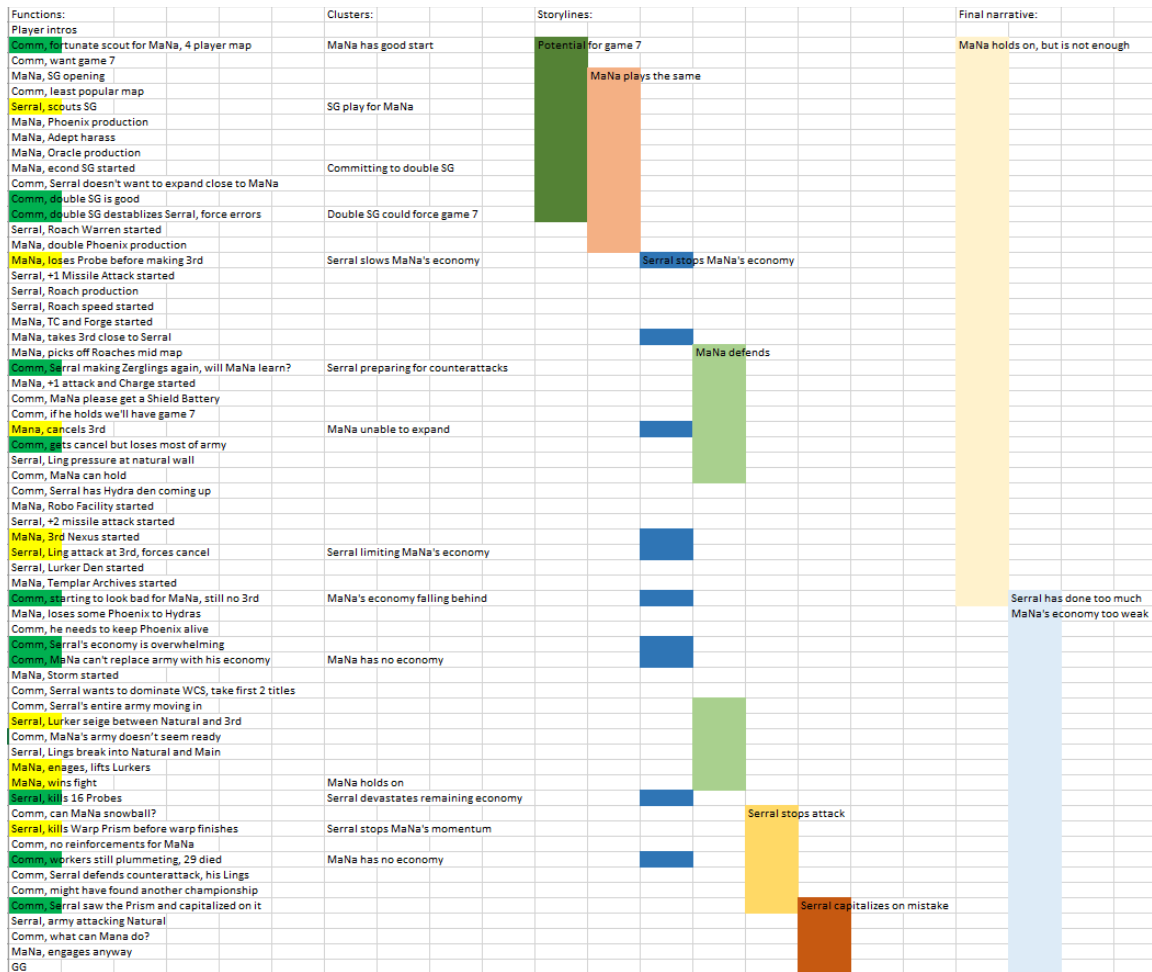


Figure 3.8: An excerpt of the final narrative from Serral vs. MaNa

3.2.1

A second game level analysis will be done to show an example of a narrativization failing. In the finals of WCS Valencia, Serral played against Ke “Has” Yu Feng, a player known for his “cheese²⁴,” or blindly aggressive “trick” plays which rely on an element of surprise and

²⁴ Cheese most often refers to an unexpected strategy that relies in large parts on lack of information and/or psychological impact on the opponent. Cheese build orders typically revolve around an early attack that, if undetected, is more difficult to defend than execute (<https://liquipedia.net/starcraft2/Cheese>).

commonly thought to be a “cheap” and borderline unfair way to play. In game 2 of the series, Serral who is known as a by-the-books player uncharacteristically cheeses Has. Although initially it seems as though Serral has out-cheesed the cheeser, with the narrativization fully dedicated to building the anti-cheeser narrative, in a sudden turn of events Has manages to win the game. The final narrative the broadcast was building towards was that Serral has successfully turned the tables on Has by cheesing him, but that narrative is dramatically upended and leaves the game without a fully fleshed out final narrative. The turnaround happens so unexpectedly and so quickly to end the game that the narrativization has no time to even correct itself and thus the vast majority of the narrative for the game is wrong.

Because the narrativization is so wrong and what would be the “correct” narrative is more or less not formulated, the shortcomings of the broadcast’s desire for the imaginary will be shown by splitting the narrativization into two parts: a first part where the narrativization is working and a second part where the narrativization falls apart as the imperatives of the real can no longer viably support the desire of the imaginary being put forth. The inflection point separating these two portions, indicated by a red line, was identified to be when Serral attacks into Has’ main base and thus would have logically concluded the initial narrativization.

First, the lowest level of raw functions is established. The distinction between the two narrativizations is yet not needed on this level.

Functions:				
Comm, what is Has going to do?				
Serral, proxy Hatchery				
Comm, if you cheese the cheeser, they don't get to cheese				
Comm, b/c Serral took a third base last game, Has won't scout				
Comm, Serral navigating Bo7 on genius level				
Comm, Serral very favored to win game				
Serral, Roach Warren started				
Comm, Has knows how to defend cheese				
Has, proxy Stargate				
Serral, Roach production				
Has, scouts proxy Hatchery				
Serral, Ravager production				
Has, Oracle production				
Serral, pressure at natural				
Comm, unpowered Gateways could end game				
Serral, breaches front				
Comm, almost at a checkmate				
Has, Oracle harass at Serral's main				
Comm, even if he kills Drones, how does he survive?				
Serral. Attacks into main				
Comm, can't imagine this is enough				
Comm, attacking the Queens				
Comm, the cheeser has become the cheese				
Has, attack Drones at proxy Hatchery				
Comm, just 2 Queens for anti-air				
Comm, into uncharted territory				
Comm, niether player has enough minerals for town halls				
Comm, look at how many oracles there are				
Has, attacks remaining Queens with mass Oracles				
Comm, no anti-air for Serral				
GG				

Figure 3.9: An excerpt of the raw functions from Serral vs. Has 2018 WCS Valencia Finals Game 2. From here, the inflection point is added after the function “Comm, the cheeser has become the cheese” to differentiate the two narrativizations. This distinction must be made if relevant functions are to be selected because there are in effect two narratives (although one is more complete than the other) being drawn from the same set of functions. The selected function above the red line are contributing to the potential narrative of if the game had gone the way the narrativization had originally intended and Serral had won, while the selected

functions below the red line contribute to the narrativization's hurried new focus on Has winning. The selected functions in this scenario would look like the figure below.

Functions:				
Comm, what is Has going to do?				
Serral, proxy Hatchery				
Comm, if you cheese the cheeser, they don't get to cheese				
Comm, b/c Serral took a third base last game, Has won't scout				
Comm, Serral navigating Bo7 on genius level				
Comm, Serral very favored to win game				
Serral, Roach Warren started				
Comm, Has knows how to defend cheese				
Has, proxy Stargate				
Serral, Roach production				
Has, scouts proxy Hatchery				
Serral, Ravager production				
Has, Oracle production				
Serral, pressure at natural				
Comm, unpowered Gateways could end game				
Serral, breaches front				
Comm, almost at a checkmate				
Has, Oracle harass at Serral's main				
Comm, even if he kills Drones, how does he survive?				
Serral, attacks into main				
Comm, can't imagine this is enough				
Comm, attacking the Queens				
Comm, the cheeser has become the cheese				
Has, attack Drones at proxy Hatchery				
Comm, just 2 Queens for anti-air				
Comm, into uncharted territory				
Comm, neither player has enough minerals for town halls				
Comm, look at how many oracles there are				
Has, attacks remaining Queens with mass Oracles				
Comm, no anti-air for Serral				
GG				

Figure 3.10: An excerpt of the selected functions for Serral vs. Has

From this point on, the original narrative is very straightforward and a simple story of Serral successfully cheesing his opponent can be built. While the new, correct narrative is clearly an unfinished conclusion and offers only the ending to a completely different narrative. On the level of functional clusters, the ones above the inflection point reveals a scaffold of the

successful cheesing narrative while the ones below the inflection point is almost without proper context.

Functions:	Clusters:
Comm, what is Has going to do?	
Serral, proxy Hatchery	Serral cheesed
Comm, if you cheese the cheeser, they don't get to cheese	Serral has strategy for series
Comm, b/c Serral took a third base last game, Has won't scout	
Comm, Serral navigating Bo7 on genius level	
Comm, Serral very favored to win game	
Serral, Roach Warren started	
Comm, Has knows how to defend cheese	
Has, proxy Stargate	
Serral, Roach production	
Has, scouts proxy Hatchery	
Serral, Ravager production	
Has, Oracle production	
Serral, pressure at natural	Serral could end game
Comm, unpowered Gateways could end game	
Serral, breaches front	
Comm, almost at a checkmate	Game is practically over
Has, Oracle harass at Serral's main	
Comm, even if he kills Drones, how does he survive?	No way out for Has
Serral, attacks into main	
Comm, can't imagine this is enough	
Comm, attacking the Queens	
Comm, the cheeser has become the cheese	Serral has successfully cheesed
Has, attack Drones at proxy Hatchery	Has counterharass
Comm, just 2 Queens for anti-air	Lack of anti-air for Serral
Comm, into uncharted territory	
Comm, neither player has enough minerals for town halls	
Comm, look at how many oracles there are	No response to Has' Oracles
Has, attacks remaining Queens with mass Oracles	
Comm, no anti-air for Serral	
GG	

Figure 3.11: An excerpt of the functional clusters for the Serral winning vs. Has scenario. On the level of the storylines, it is similar with the narrativization before the inflection point being a logical succession of scaffolded storylines and the ones after the inflection point being incomplete and without proper context. Because the game is rather short and the initial narrativization is so one-sided, until the inflection point the storylines are built as if they were

an extension of the functional clusters beneath. However, after the inflection point, as the figure shows, the “Game is practically over” storyline is forced to become the “Game is in limbo” storyline.

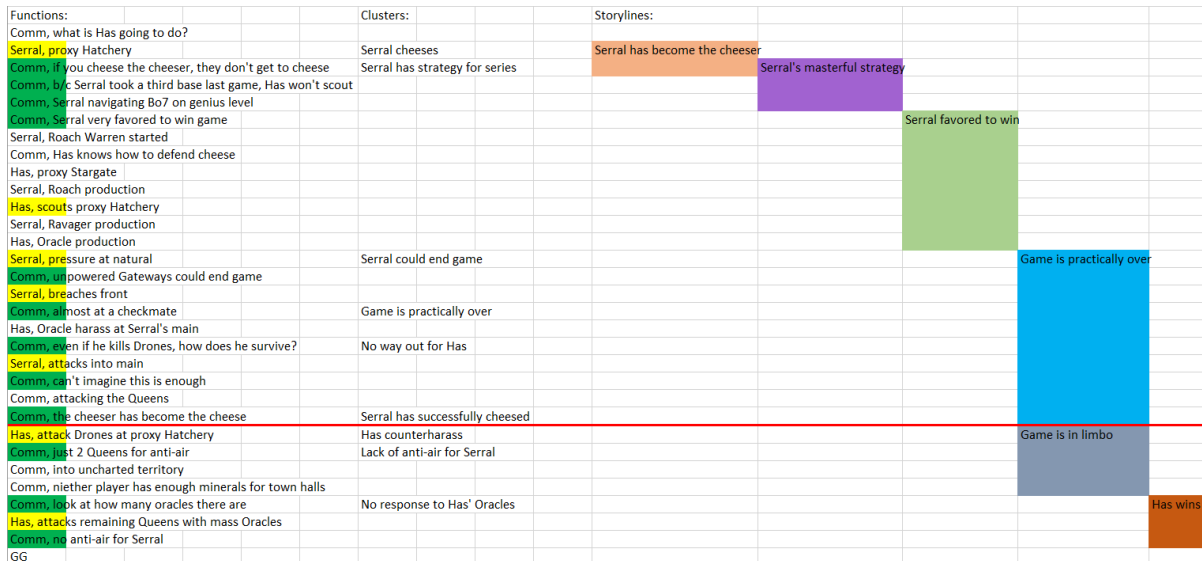


Figure 3.12: The storylines for Serral vs. Has

Finally, the final narrative reveals a clear narrative of Serral out-cheesing the cheeser before being abruptly being cut off by the point of narrative no return and being replaced by a totally new, uncontextualized, but factually correct narrative of Has winning.

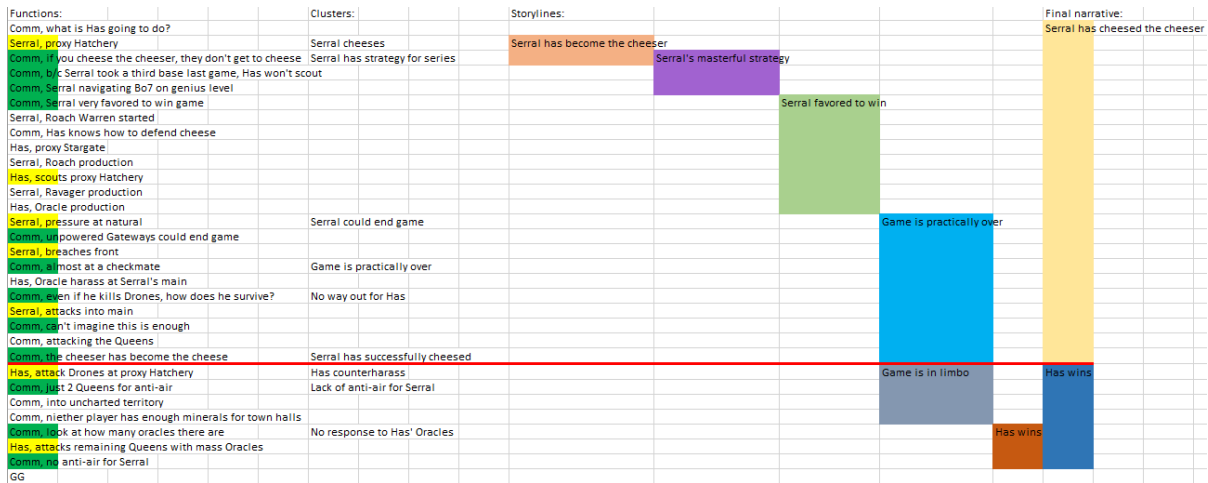


Figure 3.13: The final narratives for Serral vs. Has

The narrativization analysis of this game shows what happens when the unpredictable nature of competition upends the construction of a narrative. The majority of the narrativization building towards Serral's victory was logical, coherent, and could be reasonably extrapolated from the imperatives of the real until it could not be. Until the inflection point, it really was plausible and likely that Serral would win the game. However, once the narrativization passes the inflection point, regardless of how much effort had gone into constructing the Serral narrative, it becomes untenable to pursue it further as it would directly contradict the conditions of reality. Once this happens, the narrativization is forced to switch to building a narrative that is in line with the new imperatives of the real. In the case of this game, the broadcast is forced to recognize that Serral cannot counter Has' Oracles and the latter has won the game. This abrupt switching means that the new narrativization had to happen without any contextualization and is more or less a fragment. Although this fragment is the "correct" narrative in that it accurately represents the events of the game, because the

was overwhelmingly the favourite to win the entire series, what a perfectly objective observer would see as Has slowly gaining an advantage is glossed over by the official broadcast.

3.3

As discussed earlier, while on the individual game basis the narrativization is similar, there are key differences in organization in football and SC2 which force the creation of more narrative layers. One corollary of this is that the narrative baseline in football is a single game while in SC2 the equivalent is the best-of-X arc of the match. The enlarging narrative scope means that the final storyline on the game level can act as a narrative unit for the even larger narratives. Then, to determine the narrative on the level of the match, a narrativization analogous to building a seasonal narrative from individual games for a football season can be done for a SC2 match. Just as the narratives of the weekly regular season games were subsumed under the larger narrative of the season, the narratives of the individual games can be subsumed under the narrative of the match. So, determining the narrative of the entire best-of-7 match between Serral and MaNa can be done in a manner similar to the comparison of the weekly vs. seasonal narrative of the 2016 Patriots in the last chapter.

	Game Narratives	Sections	Storylines				
Week 1	Coaching/Garoppolo win	Brady suspended	Backup QBs				Brady's redemption
Week 2	Garoppolo holds on for win			Records broken			
Week 3	Brissett adapts to win						
Week 4	Patriots shut out at home						
Week 5	Brady returns to win	Brady's return			Revenge Tour	Patriots performance	
Week 6	Brady looks shaky but holds on to win						
Week 7	Steelers squander chance to beat Patriots						
Week 8	Bills throw away game with penalties						
Week 9	Bye week						
Week 10	Rematch of Super Bowl 49/Seattle revenge						
Week 11	Rain/NE adapts to win						
Week 12	Jets unable to hold onto advantage						
Week 13	Brady's 201st win						
Week 14	Possible Ravens upset but Patriots win						
Week 15	Patriots beat historically difficult Broncos						
Week 16	Jets mistakes cost them the game						
Week 17	Patriots shut down possible Dolphins comeback						
AFC Divisional	Patriots play sloppy but Texans mistake cost them the game			SB storylines			
AFC Championship	Patriots defense/the Brady-Belichick dynasty						
Super Bowl LI	The greatest comeback of all time	Super Bowl					

Figure 2.21: Weekly vs. seasonal narratives

Doing the same for the WCS Austin finals yields the result shown below:

	Game Narratives	Storylines:	Final storyline:
Game 1	MaNa sloppy, Serral the better player	MaNa plays too sloppy	Serral is the better player
Game 2	MaNa's aggression paid off, Serral made the mistake	Uncharacteristic mistakes from Serral	
Game 3	MaNa takes lead with aggressive play		
Game 4	Serral counters MaNa's air play, ties up series		Serral has the better skills
Game 5	Close but Serral wins, MaNa is repetitive		
Game 6	Serral cripples MaNa's economy to win		
Game 7	N/A		

Figure 3.15: The 2018 WCS Austin Finals series narrative

Although there was some hope that MaNa, the underdog, could have made an upset with a miracle run of his own the final storyline is a rather expected one where Serral wins because his efficient playstyle where he is able to garner an advantage where others cannot makes him a better player. Similar to the seasonal arc for the 2016 Patriots, the individual games do not seem to have much effect on what the overarching narrative will become. As with the 2016 Patriots, the overarching narrative seems to be less beholden to the details of the real as the fact that Serral himself also played somewhat sloppily and was behind after the first three game is subsumed under the final narrative about his superior skills. This tendency for higher order narratives to be increasingly disconnected to their source will be explored later.

Although the general trajectory of the narrative, including major narrative nodes like who wins, are immutable, the Barthesian indices which fill in the gaps in between are free to be

reinterpreted or forgotten according to which “parabolic projections” (Herman 28) are superimposed onto the narrative. As some of these narratively inconvenient indices, like the games Serral loses are left out and not integrated into higher levels, it becomes easier to project the remaining functions onto a new or different narrative altogether. This makes sense because indices are only meaningfully realized on higher levels and the levels in which the indices would have originally contributed to are replaced with an external “target story”. In effect, narratively irrelevant indices, even if they stem from the same base level of functions, are replaced with ones more in line with the target story from a source of external narrativization, even if they are less bound by the imperatives of the real. Thus, with each step up on the level of narrative, more of the narrative below it must be manipulated or reinterpreted to project it onto the target story.

3.3.1

On the narrative level above the match, the story of the tournament is constructed from the summaries of the matches played. Because of the sheer number of games that are played in even small tournaments, the narrativization is usually focused through a single player’s run, which in this case would be Serral. It should be noted that probably for very practical reasons there is simply little room by the broadcast to narrativize the tournament, because when the tournament concludes so does the broadcast. In the case of Serral’s run in WCS Austin, in the closing minutes of the broadcast, the analysts do not have much time but to acknowledge that “the best player wins it again²⁵” and that “he does what we all expected him to do²⁶,”

²⁵ WCS Austin, inControl, 1:35:03-1:35:06

²⁶ Ibid., Rotterdam, 1:35:16

completing the self-fulfilling prophecy of Serral's dominance made at the beginning of the broadcast which describe Serral as "the best player in foreign StarCraft all year long²⁷". So it is possibly for this reason that from this narrative level on, the narrativization relies increasingly more on the paratextual media outside of the games, using predictions and analyses surrounding the matches to provide the narrative framework and patchworking necessary thread together.

It should be noted that the narrativization of WCS Austin was quite minimal, possibly due to the fact that there was not much hype surrounding the tournament and it was mostly seen as just one of the multiple stops on the WCS Circuit. Serral won as expected and the prospect of him sweeping the entire circuit was still far away. However, the narrativization that did occur provides valuable insight on the competition between the imaginative storytelling of the media and the imperatives of the real game results. The various details which may oppose or undermine that narrative are underplayed or left out. The final narrative about WCS Austin is that Serral was the better player and his win was inevitable. But the actual broadcast clearly shows that Serral was behind at one point and if the match was a best-of-3, he would have lost. In games 2 and 3 which MaNa won, the commentators acknowledge that "MaNa made the right choices and it was Serral who was making mistakes because of those right choices²⁸" as "MaNa takes a 2-1 lead over the overwhelming favourite²⁹". But the finished narrative product does not reflect these details as they declare

²⁷ WCS Austin, Nathanas, 9:36-9:44

²⁸ Ibid., inControl, 43:01-43:07

²⁹ Ibid., Rotterdam, 58:30

“best player [Serral] wins it again³⁰”. Even immediately after the match, the two losses against MaNa are forgotten and Serral winning is merely him “do[ing] what we all expected him to do³¹”. To make the messy minutiae of the results fit into the “parabolic projection,” the final narrative has gone through its own process of weeding out the pseudo-narrative units from itself even in the limited window before the broadcast ends. Mirroring the diminished relevancy of the pseudo-functions to the final story of a game, the details of the match are also diminished in the final storyline of the tournament. In the retrospective telling of the narrative of WCS Austin, especially since the telling is further removed from the actual event, key details are retroactively classified as being pseudo-narrative units. The previews for the year-end Global Finals declare that “Serral’s WCS Circuit sweep has been unusually thorough” (“Kingdom Come,” Waxangel) even though he fell behind his opponents in the finals of not only WCS Austin but also in GSL vs. The World and WCS Montreal. If any of these matches were best-of-3’s, Serral would have lost. When it comes to the building of the higher narrative on the scale of the entire year, the not insignificant losses suffered by Serral in these tournaments are treated as pseudo-functions and are disregarded, similar to how the narrative thread of “Brady’s Revenge” was popularized even though by all accounts Brady was not angry. The deliberate manipulation of the lower narrative units to fit into an external narrative may be an extension of the narrative hierarchy established by Chatman where some narrative events may be considered “more important than others” (Chatman 54) if they do not fit into the “parabolic projection” aimed at by the narrativizing

³⁰ WCS Austin, inControl, 1:35:03-1:35:06

³¹ Ibid., Rotterdam, 1:35:16

forces. In service of the final narrative, the imaginative story may outweigh the imperative of the real.

The narrative manipulation described above is somewhat different from the reiterative process of weeding out pseudo-functions on the lower level narratives. In the reiterative process, the reiteration's goal is to overcome the hermeneutic problem by finding the relevant narrative units for the final narrative and to determine the final narrative from the relevant narrative units. The key factor here is that the final narrative is a product of at least some of the narrative units. In the lower narrative levels, there exists a natural relationship between the narrative and its components as a "consequence" is drawn from "consecutiveness" (Barthes 251). In the higher narrative levels, the final narrative becomes more reliant on externally sourced narrativizations than the logical cohesion of the narrative units drawn from the source broadcast. In other words, the imaginative drive of the narrative begins to outweigh the imperatives of the real. As such, the final narrative must artificially eliminate narrative units that fall outside its purview regardless of how relevant it could have been.

The shifting emphasis from being anchored to the imperatives of the real to the desire of the imaginary is shown in the decreasing uncertainty in the narrativization process. If the final narrative is externally sourced and the events are molded to fit it, then there can be no surprises. In the overall trajectory of the year, the narrativization which is not prescient retroactively constructs a story where Serral's dominance was an inevitability. Before Serral's first win at WCS Leipzig, the narrativization is unequivocally questioning his "untapped potential" (fig. 3.16) and ability to translate his skill into results and potential future success.



Figure 3.16. The narrative framing for Serral before the WCS Leipzig grand finals.

Source: Blizzard/DreamHack

Before Leipzig, he “seem[ed] further away from the promised land than ever” (“Power Rank: WCS Leipzig 2018,” Soularion) as his “tournament results have been sorely lacking” and “success has remained elusive” (“Serral: A Brother’s Keeper,” hexhaven). But after his first title, the narrative turns on a dime and any trace of doubt is eliminated. Immediately after the finals, analyst Leigh “Maynarde” Mandalov suggests that “for Serral it was just a matter of time for the big one³²” as if him winning a finals where he was down 2-1 and was “giving up a little bit of ground towards the end³³” was unavoidable. From this point on, any uncertainty about Serral’s performance falls outside the scope of the narrativization of the year. From the recap of second major tournament of the year, where “it was *fait accompli* that he would be

³² WCS Leipzig, 2:15:30-2:15:41

³³ Ibid., Nathantias, 2:18:51-2:19:06

the victor” (“Serral wins WCS Austin,” TL.net ESPORTS) to the aftermath of his WCS Circuit sweep where it is explicitly acknowledged that “‘Inevitable’ is the word most associated with Serral’s 2018 WCS Circuit run” (“Kingdom Come,” Waxangel). The narrative acts as if Serral’s unprecedented winning streak was not only somehow unavoidable but as if the narrativization knew that Serral would keep winning. Although each tournament result was not predetermined, the narrativization takes advantage of the imperatives of the real working in its favour and reframes the conditions of the real as inevitable. There are two distinct concepts at work here and in the case of Serral they collapse onto each other. First, there is a narrative inevitability in that because the narrativization excludes irrelevant functions from contributing to the story, the narrative that is produced is the “inevitable” product of the selected functions as the “synthesis of heterogeneous elements” (“Life in Quest,” Ricoeur, 21) has “a partially teleological character” (MacIntyre 216). Second, there is the narrative of inevitability in Serral’s real winning streak. Because Serral *did* sweep the Circuit, there can be an identifiable narrative thread about how Serral cannot lose. With Serral’s 2018 run, the imperatives of the real end up supporting both the narrative inevitability *and* the narrative of inevitability. Though, it is interesting to think about how the narrative would have reacted if Serral lost a tournament.

The employment of externally predetermined narratives and the changing dynamics of the imaginary and the real are relevant factors in higher orders of narrative organization. And as pointed out earlier, the higher the order the more it relies on external sources to construct its narrative. So, this narrative flexibility can be explained by the increasing gaps and the layers of mediation between the real event phenomena and the sense-making

apparatus of narrativization as it begins to rely more on mediated narrative products and emphasize realizing the externally introduced narrative at the expense of the imperatives of the real. It may be the case that with a larger gap between the source events and the narrative, either it is simply just easier to forget or manipulate the real, or that with each reiterative process of narrativization the number of pseudo-narrative units simply must increase, or perhaps both.

3.3.2

Coming back to the 2018 WCS season, the next order of narrativization is of the year. At this higher level of narrative organization, Serral becomes the focal point and the final narrative of each major tournament throughout the year become the narrative units. The externally imposed “desire for the imaginary” begin to have more influence over the narrative than the “imperatives of the real” and the finer details of the of the narrativization on the level of the tournament is discarded when establishing the year-long narrative. At these higher levels of organization, the narrative depends more on the paratextual media output based on the editorialized stories like tournament recaps than the actual games themselves. In the realm of external content, the “the emergence of strong centralized web sites... confirms the importance of the editorial function of media, that is, the ability to coordinate information and make sense of it” (“Sports Online,” Real 181) and to produce “meaningful, accessible assemblage[s]” (182). This means some of the narrative building blocks of these higher order narratives have already been interpreted and editorialized with usually clearer storylines already imbedded in them, thus making them much more straightforward to use in constructing the higher order narratives. The reiterative process necessary in the lower levels

of narrativization of the broadcast are at least partially rendered moot because the paratextual media have already done so externally. Here, it may be useful to introduce another dichotomy of narrative units. The pre-interpreted paratextual media such as articles and analyses used by higher order narratives, then, can be called **external narrative packages** as opposed to the **internal narrative units** of the primary text of the broadcast that constitute the narrative levels outlined in the first chapter (fig. 1.1). External narrative packages may be defined as narrative building blocks which have already undergone the reiterative process of narrativization and can be used to construct higher levels of narrative above them. They are pre-assembled bundles of narrative meaning, already integrated outside of the original broadcast such as articles or game recaps. The external narrative package, then, is like a larger pre-integrated sequence. It is a narrative unit that has been “endowed with meaning” by being “integrated into a superior level” (Barthes 242) and because “it is self-contained with regard to its functions” (254) it can be “apprehended as a unit, ready to function as a simple term in another, broader sequence,” or narrative. The main reason behind the reiterative process is to, with the benefit of hindsight, distinguish between the pseudo- and true narrative units. Because the external narrative packages have inevitably lost some of their details through the process of weeding out pseudo-narrative (sub)units within themselves, the higher order narrative which forgo the details of its constitutive units for narrative control and flexibility are increasingly less beholden to the imperatives of the real and freer to exercise the desire of the imaginary. With a greater degree of freedom to mold the narrative away from the imperatives of the real, gathering an accurate picture of the events through hindsight becomes less important. In a way, this disconnect breaks the

reiterative cycle of narrative determination: the going-over-again is needed to form the higher order narratives, but once these narratives are made they discard the very material whose reiteration created them to become semi-independent stories. There is little need for the reiterative process: to an extent, the narrative units can be molded to become whatever the narrativization requires. Almost like a game of telephone, with each successive layer of mediation the narrative that is being told changes slightly to ultimately fit the desire of the imaginary.

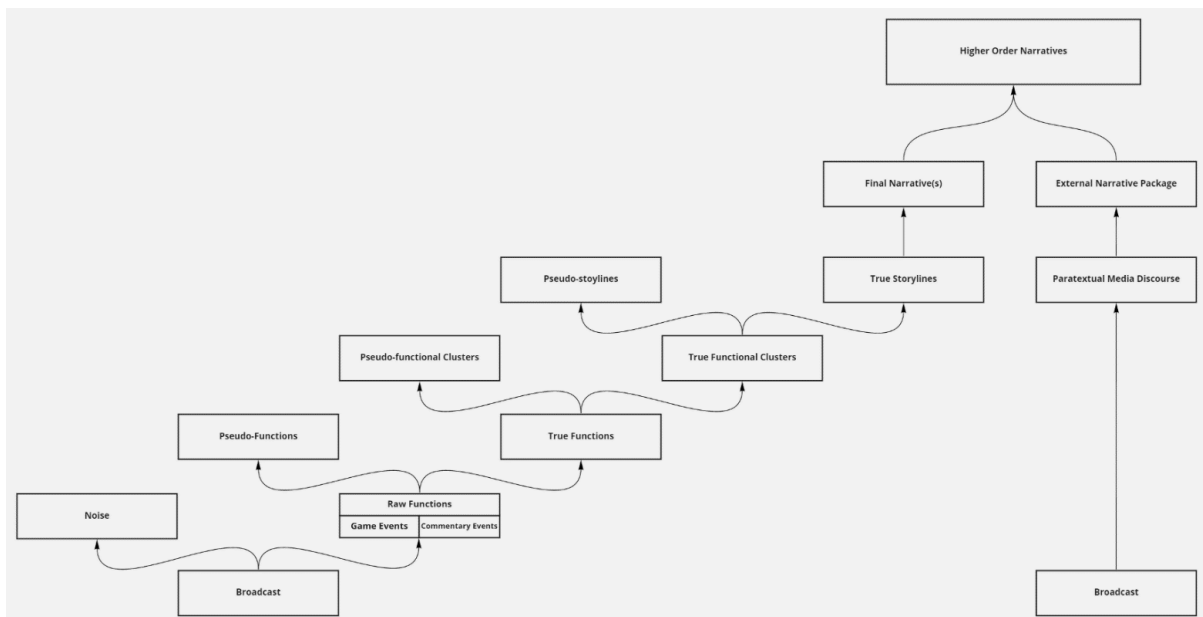


Figure 3.17: An extended model of the levels of narrative organization

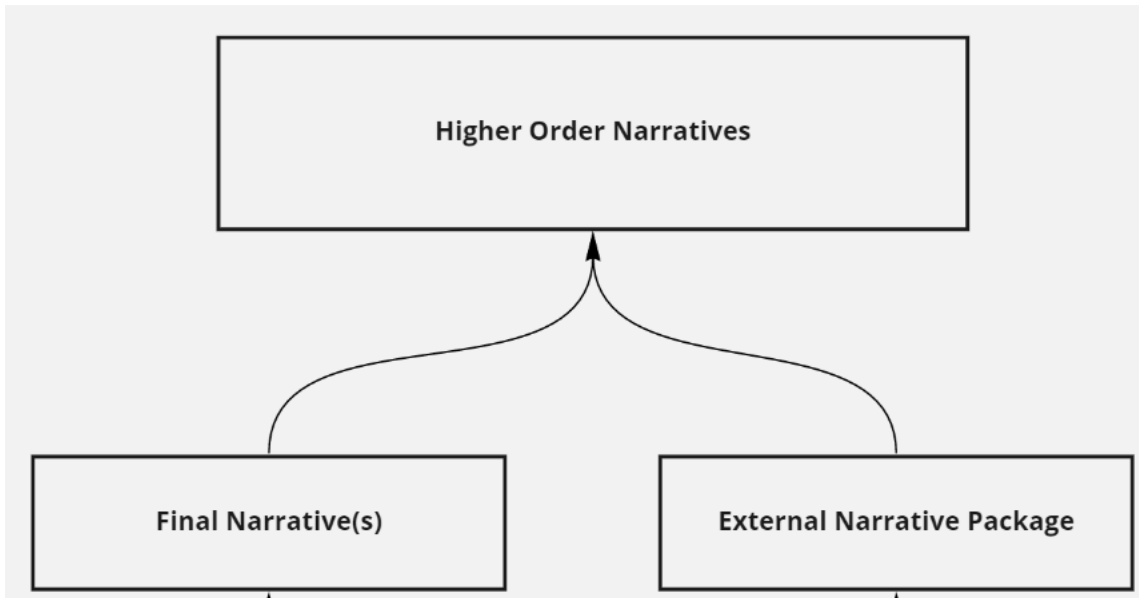


Figure 3.18: An excerpt of higher order narrative integration

The above excerpt shows how external narrative packages can be combined into the integrative process with final narratives derived from internal narrative units to form higher order narratives.

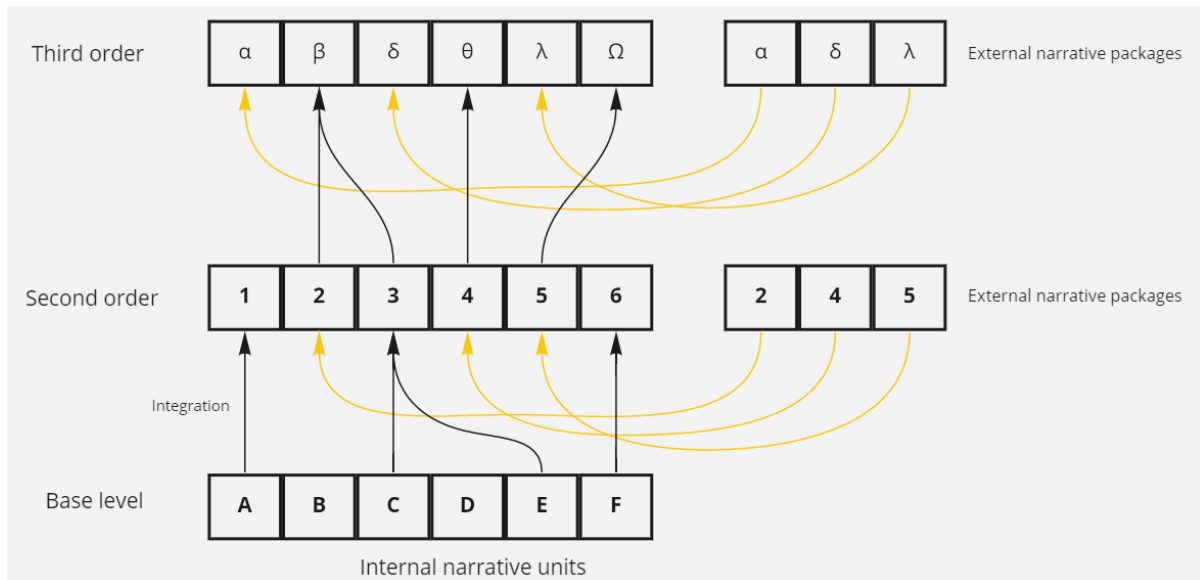


Figure 3.19: A diagram of external narrativization input

The diagram above shows in greater detail how higher order narratives are constructed by integrating some of the original internal narrative units while incorporating elements of external narrativization. As the imperatives of the real weaken on higher order narratives further detached from the original text of the broadcast, external narratives can be used instead of relying solely on the internal narrative units to be integrated through all levels. The internal narrative units drawn from the initial raw phenomena are present and integrated into each narrative level so that there is a natural relationship (the imperatives of the real) maintained between the real events and the narrative to some degree. However, with each successive increase in narrative order, the connection to the raw functions becomes diluted by new narrative units introduced by the external narrative packages. Although the higher order narratives are based on the same set of events, they become more malleable with each level as more of the narratives are replaced by externally imposed narrativizations.

With all of the above in mind, the narrativization of the 2018 season can be traced by aggregating the results and responses to the five major tournaments Serral won and examining how that narrativization adapts to the results of each tournament. As discussed before, the narrativization is focalized through Serral but even then, there are four intertwined stories operating at the level of the year: Serral's first title, Serral's sweep of the WCS Circuit, Serral being the best foreigner, and the shifting dynamics of Korean vs. foreigner StarCraft. Although there could have been no way for the league or the media could have known that Serral would have a landmark year that could be conveniently used as a narrative focus, the narrativization quickly adapt to Serral's narrative potential by building on the narrative seeds planted beforehand while simultaneously planting seeds for potential

development later on. The narrativization on this large scale juggles the four storylines by balancing its desire for the imaginary with the imperatives of the real. The shifts between the storylines can be tracked through their shifting tension or conflict. First, is Serral capable of winning a major title? Second, is Serral the best foreigner/can he sweep the WCS Circuit? Third, is Serral the best player in the world/Serral vs. the Koreans? Fourth, can a foreigner StarCraft upset the Koreans? With each successive storyline, the scope and thus the narrative into which these elements are integrated changes. This leads to a sequential chain of broadening stories which are not dystaxic as the temporal overlapping of functions can be safely ignored since they have different integrative end points.

3.3.3

The story of Serral can be traced back to 2017 with the excitement surrounding him as a promising young player. Like hedging one's bets, the narrative seeds were already being planted as Serral began to qualify for bigger tournaments with him being described as being "on a rampage" and as "[o]ne of the best European players without a major title" ("Get to Know Your WCS Challengers: Serral," Waxangel). If Serral did go on to do well, there would be narrative seeds to grow and if not, these predictions could safely be ignored. Considered to be a formidable player in the European scene, much of the language about Serral framed him as a potential *wunderkind* save for the lack of an actual title. An overview of Serral's career before BlizzCon 2017 admits that while "Serral heads into BlizzCon as one of the most interesting non-Korean players of the year" and that he "currently stands tall above almost the entire rest of the foreigner scene" ("A Brother's Keeper," hexhaven) that his "tournament results have been sorely lacking" and "success has remained elusive".

Although “[i]n another place, in another time, Serral would be considered a true child prodigy,” the lack of “actual, tangible results” stands in his way of becoming the “new savior” for [foreign] fans. Even in the preview for WCS Leipzig 2018, the writer notes that “Serral is growing into the monster he’s always been promised to be, and yet seems further away from the promised land than ever” (“Power Rank: Leipzig 2018,” Soularion) as the “only thing missing” is a championship. This absence of a major win became the defining framework for Serral leading up to his first victory at WCS Leipzig 2018.

From the initial framework of Serral as the underperformer, tracking Serral’s performance throughout 2018 reveals how the media apparatus shaped his overarching narrative. Serral entered WCS Leipzig as one of the favorites to win it and when he did win, it became possible to expand on the planted narrative seeds by reconciling them with Serral’s first title while simultaneously planting more seeds on how far he could go. After his first major win at WCS Leipzig 2018, the first article to be published on TL.net rather unceremoniously recaps the tournament, ending by simply noting that “ShoWTime left the game soon after, making Serral the 2018 WCS Leipzig champion and the first person to earn a spot at the WCS Global Finals” (“Serral wins first championship at WCS Leipzig,” TL.net ESPORTS). The initially detached reaction is indicative of the narrative hedging its bet: if Serral continues to win, the narrative seeds are there and if Serral turns out to be a one hit wonder, the narrative would not be painted into a corner. Nevertheless, for those keen on Serral this first victory became the pivotal moment to start the narrative of Serral’s much deserved arrival as one of the greats. In an article fittingly titled “Prophecy Fulfilled: Serral’s WCS Leipzig Triumph,” (Soularion), the writer sets up the titular prophecy that with the win

at Leipzig Serral “was going to become one of the best players in the world” and “give the rest of the world hope against the Koreans”. Although before Leipzig, Serral had been dogged by the absence of a keen “decision-making ability nor killer instinct needed to win the consistently,” at Leipzig he finally “fulfilled the prophecy that loomed over him for years”. With only a single major tournament win, it is still too early to declare Serral a “savior” but the other storylines of Serral being the best foreigner and the shifting dynamics of Korean vs. foreigner StarCraft would come into play and help build towards the final narrative.

By Serral’s second major victory at WCS Austin, the intertwined narratives of Serral’s sweep of the WCS Circuit, Serral being the best foreigner, and the shifting dynamics of Korean vs. foreigner StarCraft are all developed further as the imperatives of the real unfold in the “right” way to facilitate the desire of the imaginary. The narrative cautiousness around Serral begins to dissipate as with a second major victory in a row, the “Finnish phenom” was “widely regarded by fans and peers as the best player in the non-Korean scene” and “it was *fait accompli* that he would be the victor” at Austin (“Serral wins WCS Austin 2018,” TL.net ESPORTS) as the analyst Nathan “Nathanias” Fabrikant asks “how much further can this young star go³⁴?”. Supported by Serral’s wins, it has become narratively safe to expand the scope of the narrativization to include the other storylines of Serral being the best foreigner and the dynamics of Korean vs. foreigner StarCraft. Not only is Serral possibly on a “path to win all 4 WCS events³⁵,” he may be the one to break the mold of the historical

³⁴ WCS Austin, 1:39:03-1:39:08

³⁵ Ibid., Feardragon, 1:41:17-1:41:19

lack of “champions that stayed at the top for an extend period³⁶”. Additionally, revealing the self-reflexive artifice of narrative construction, the commentary team acknowledges that Serral’s performance “creates such a sort of backstory, a legend around this player... we see history developing before our eyes³⁷”.

With his third straight win at WCS Valencia, the growing consensus on Serral’s abilities allows for the combining of the two related narratives of Serral as the best foreign player and the comparison to the Koreans. After his third title in a row, the narrative has shifted from whether Serral could fulfill his potential or not to if anyone can stop him. The post-tournament summary states that “Serral entered the tournament as the heavy favorite to lift the trophy, and once again Serral lived up to expectations as he defeated all challengers who came his way” (“Serral defeats Has to win WCS Valencia 2018,” TL.net ESPORTS) and that at this point, Serral has become “the most dominant player in the WCS Circuit’s brief history, sealed with a third consecutive trophy”. With a viable claim to being one of the best foreigners, the narrativization’s scope widens and comparing Serral to Korean players becomes a key component to the evolving narrative. The historical framework of the one-sided Korean versus foreigner skill gap plays a noticeable role in how Serral’s acceptance as the foreign hope and his anticipated symbolic role in competitive StarCraft. Understandably, speculations about Serral against the Koreans became a major narrative thread at this point. On one hand, the prevailing criticism against Serral was that although he has done well in the foreign scene so far, the absence of Korean competition in the foreign circuit casted doubts

³⁶ WCS Austin, PiG, 1:41:31-1:41:37

³⁷Ibid., PiG, 1:41:44-1:42:00

over his true skill level. Without having competed against top-tier Koreans in the WCS Circuit “left many fans and players to wonder how [Serral] would fare in the GSL³⁸” (“Serral defeats Stats to win GSL vs. The World,” TL.net ESPORTS). On the other hand, the case is made that Serral’s performance is comparable to a top-tier Korean and not a “hyperbole” at all by comparing his win rates against Koreans and the foreign player Neeb, who had the previously record of winning 3 of 4 Circuit titles (“Serral by the Numbers & Other WCS Valencia Stuff,” Waxangel).

Record versus foreigners					
Player	Match score	Win rate	Game score	Win rate	Time frame
Serral (all)	97-10	90.65%	218-39	84.82%	2018 Season*
Serral (offline)	37-2	94.87%	102-19	84.30%	2018 Season
Maru (all)	27-2	93.10%	63-12	84.00%	2018 Season
Maru (offline)	19-1	95.00%	46-8	85.19%	2018 Season
Rogue (all)	38-5	88.37%	81-13	86.17%	2018 Season
Rogue (offline)	10-3	76.92%	23-7	76.67%	2018 Season
INnoVation (all)	65-8	89.04%	132-20	86.84%	2017 Season**
INnoVation (offline)	14-2	87.50%	24-5	82.76%	2017 Season
Perfect Dark	34-0	100.00%	71-8	89.87%	2012-2017***

Figure 3.20: A comparison of Serral’s win rates against Koreans. Source: TL.net

Record in WCS Circuit Tournaments					
Player	Match score	Win rate	Game score	Win rate	Time frame
Serral (all)	32-1	96.97%	95-16	85.59%	WCS 2018
Serral (offline)	18-0	100.00%	51-10	83.61%	WCS 2018
Neeb (offline)	19-2	90.48%	52-20	72.22%	WCS 2017*

Figure 3.21: A comparison of Serral’s win rates Neeb. Source: TL.net

A significant moment in Serral’s year is undoubtedly his winning GSL vs. The World, an international all-star competition where the top seeds from Korea’s Global Star League (GSL) competed against the top seeds from the global WCS Circuit. Serral’s victory

³⁸ The Global Star League, a Korean league based in Seoul. The “Global” is a misnomer much like the “World” in the MLB World Series.

here not only arguably does more to legitimize his status as the best player in the world than his previous WCS victories combined but also sets the necessary conditions to expand the Korean vs. foreigner narrative. By this point, it has become clear that Serral is the best foreigner and so that storyline has lost its tension and momentum and is subsumed by the next storyline about Serral against the Koreans. To resolve the narrative conflict about his being the best in the world, Serral must unequivocally defeat the Koreans in Korea.

Historically, very few foreigners have been able to play competitively in Korea and those who did never went far. The conventional wisdom was that “you have to train in Korea to become the best in the world – not just in StarCraft but in other games such as League of Legends as well,” (“Serral interview [GSL vs. The World Finals],” TL.net ESPORTS) which is why it was surprising that Serral, who lives and practices in Europe, was able to compete against the highest calibre of Korean players. In his own way, Serral developed an efficient and optimized, if not a bit boring, playstyle where he accrued small advantages over his opponents. It seems like he “knows how to engage better than anybody we’ve ever seen³⁹” so that “eventually his opponent always take more bad fights than he does⁴⁰” and “he can get value out of units that are considered useless at certain points of the game⁴¹” so that “he knows how to win when you give him all the right tools economically⁴²”. Overall, his style of play has “no chinks in his armour⁴³” with “all the strengths, [and] barely any weaknesses⁴⁴”.

³⁹ GSL vs. The World Grand Finals Set 3-Set4, Tasteless, 12:10-12:14

⁴⁰ WCS Montreal, PiG, 55:15-55:17

⁴¹ WCS Global Finals Grand Finals Pre-show, Rotterdam, 7:03-7:09

⁴² GSL vs. The World Grand Finals Set 3-Set4, Tasteless, 12:05-12:10

⁴³ WCS Leipzig, Maynard, 1:31:12

⁴⁴ Ibid., ZombieGrub, 2:19:34-2:19:37

So when Serral was able to win in the GSL facing off against “elite players in all three matchups (INnoVation, Dark and Stats represent a top three Korean Terran, top two Korean Zerg, and the best Korean Protoss)” (“One Eternal Moment – Serral at GSL vs. The World,” Soularion), the victory legitimized or at least made it “a fiercely debateable point” (“Serral defeats Stats to win GSL vs. The World,” TL.net ESPORTS), Serral’s status as the best player in the world, resolving much of the narrative tension around this storyline.

As the narrative conflict around Serral being the world’s best dies down, his win at GSL vs. The World sets the stage for the higher order narrativization about the changing dynamics of Korean vs. foreigner StarCraft. Capitalizing on Serral’s first legitimizing win against the Koreans, the narrativization plants the seeds for the Global Finals where Serral will once again compete against them. Just as the Korea-centric perspective of the term “foreigner” seems to imply, since the inception of competitive StarCraft nearly two decades ago with SC2’s predecessor StarCraft: Brood War, foreigners have been outmatched. Simply put, the “history of foreigner StarCraft is a history of broken dreams, where success merely ups the ante for inevitable failure” (“One Eternal Moment,” Soularion). It had become common sense that the “fate” for most foreigners was to be “reduced to dust by the Korean machine”. So, when within this context Serral managed to win the historical first foreigner GSL win, this tournament provided the necessary conditions of the real for the narrative to expand the larger Korean vs. foreigner storyline. However, as the narrativization begins to emphasize this historical context more, it comes at the expense of more fully developing the narrative of Serral’s individual performance in 2018. As will be discussed later, the agent

through which the narrative is focalized shifts from Serral the player to Serral the symbolic foreigner and avatar for the collective foreign StarCraft community.

One might argue that the more important narrative function of GSL vs. The World was to set up the higher narrative of Korean vs. foreigner StarCraft. Combined with Serral's dominant performance in the WCS Circuit so far, this was the perfect opportunity to build him up as the great foreign hope and the media apparatus did exactly that. It would be labelled by James "Kaelaris" Carrol as "one of the turning points" where the "hope [became] real⁴⁵". After this point, the storyline of Serral as the foreign hope would become the defining narrative for the rest of the year. Although it would not be fully realized until the Global Finals, the commentary surrounding Serral begins to raise Serral as the symbol of the entirety of the foreign scene. In his intro to the GSL vs. The World, Serral was described as the foreigner "[t]rying to conquer the last sanctuary, Korea⁴⁶". Even the perception of foreign SC2 starts to change as during the pregame interviews, Serral's opponent Kim "Stats" Dae Yeob admits that he has "never thought about foreigners in this way until Serral⁴⁷(author's trans.)". When the finals go all the way to a deciding game 7, the commentators, Nick "Tasteless" Plott and Dan "Artosis" Stemkoski, expand on the narrative of Serral's potential role in redefining the dynamics of Korean vs. foreigner StarCraft. The commentators play up the historical significance of what Serral's win could mean. They highlight how even though Koreans "dominated any esports they take interest in" and how especially "StarCraft... is

⁴⁵ WCS Global Finals Grand Finals Preshow, 9:03-9:16

⁴⁶ GSL vs. The World Grand Finals Set 1-Set 2, 2:32-2:40

⁴⁷ Ibid., 6:22-6:27

quintessential Korea⁴⁸,” that “the idea of any non-Korean ever really being able to hold their own” was “almost a joke⁴⁹,” so that if Serral “wins here, it’s broken basically a 19, 20 year combo of Koreans dominating everywhere⁵⁰”. With this kind of framing, Serral’s victory at the GSL served to set up the necessary imperatives of the real to construct a narrative, which even the broadcast self-reflexively admits, is “actually that good⁵¹”. The historical context of Korean dominance in the esport will be elaborated later in the chapter.

The narrative of Korean vs. foreign StarCraft is interrupted by the last WCS Circuit event at Montreal. Since WCS Montreal is a Circuit event without Koreans, the narrative temporarily returns to the previous focus on Serral being the best foreign player. Ultimately a narrative bump in the road with the grander Korean vs. foreigner storyline already set up, this last Circuit tournament draws the narrative back to a storyline that is somewhat moot. As the question of Serral being the best foreigner is more or less settled, the narrativization’s approach to this storyline is forced to evolve and focus instead on the novel notion of him being the first person to potentially win all four Circuit events. The preoccupation with Serral’s records is emblematic of the “quest for records” (Guttman 16), one of the seven characteristics of modern sports. As noted by the commentator Jared “PiG” Krensel, “the story as always through the second half of this year has been, ‘who can stop Serral’?⁵²”. However, the finals for the tournament does end up more exciting than usual as Serral faced off against Riccardo “Reynor” Romiti. The matchup would pit Serral, on the verge of

⁴⁸ GSL vs. The World Grand Finals Set 5-Set 7, 41:33-41:43

⁴⁹ Ibid., 41:52-41:56

⁵⁰ GSL vs. The World Grand Finals Set 1-Set 2, 12:25-12:30

⁵¹ Ibid., 49:00-49:10.

⁵² WCS Montreal, 20:23-20:28

winning a fourth championship, a feat “no one has ever come close to matching⁵³”, against Reynor, who was “looking to become the youngest WCS champion⁵⁴”. Full of narrative potential regardless of who wins, even the commentator Jessica “ZombieGrub” Chernega notes that “the storylines are amazing⁵⁵”. Although Serral was down a map during the series, he was able to come back and win the series, making it “the first time anyone has won every single circuit tournament for a year” and solidifying Serral’s position as the “undisputed... champion⁵⁶”. After his “inevitable” win and “unusually thorough” sweep of the WCS circuit (“Kingdom Come,” Waxangel) Serral has cemented himself as the best foreigner by “go[ing] up against virtually all the top-tier players in the foreign scene and defeat[ing] them all”.



Figure 3.22: Screenshot of the final WCS Circuit standings. Note the large gap in points between Serral and all the others. Source: Blizzard/DreamHack

⁵³ WCS Montreal, 8:21-8:23,

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10:15-10:28

⁵⁵ Ibid., 9:52

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1:53:32-1:53:40

As the last WCS Circuit event for the year comes to a close, the postgame interviews and analyses the narrativization once again turn towards the Korean vs. foreigner storyline and the only remaining event, the Global Finals. With the sweep of WCS Circuit event under his belt and his “shocking championship run at GSL vs. The World prov[ing] that his skills are not for Circuit use only,” Serral has definitively proved “that he’s a serious contender to claim the 2018 Global Championship” (“Kingdom Come,” Waxangel). When asked about his prospects for winning the Global Finals, Serral responds that “technically it’s very similar to GSL vs The World, so why not?⁵⁷”. The analyst Geoff “iNcontroL” Robinson adds that the foreign scene “never had something like this where a foreigner could stand up to the traditional monsters that are the Koreans⁵⁸”.

With the stage set, the Global Finals served as the culmination of not only the competitive year but Serral’s career and foreign SC2. Having proved himself as the best foreigner and capable of beating the best Koreans, the extant storylines funnel into framing Serral as the foreign hope who will finally be able to end the Korean stranglehold on StarCraft. Picking up on earlier narrative seeds, the line separating Serral as an individual protagonist of his own narrative and as a symbolic actor through which the higher order narrative of Korean vs. foreign StarCraft is told becomes blurred. The SC2 media expands the scope of narrativization to accommodate this change; Serral is not the story but a part of the story. Elevated to an equal or perhaps an even higher level than his personal accomplishments, is Serral’s role as the foreigner in the drama of SC2 or “the guy that has a

⁵⁷ WCS Montreal, 1:55:43-1:55:45

⁵⁸ Ibid., 2:00:46-2:00:55

chance to step into a BlizzCon and actually win it as a foreigner which we have never ever had⁵⁹". Expanding on Serral's performance in the foreign scene, the SC2 media apparatus is now able to fully realize the enticing narrative of Korean vs. foreigner StarCraft but where the latter actually has a good chance of winning.

3.3.4

With regards to the tournament specific storyline, we can see how the narrativization adapts to imperatives of the real interfering with the planned narrative framing and steer the overarching narrative back to the Korea vs. foreign storyline. The initial broadcasts for the GSL vs. The World tries to set up a symbolic battle between Korea and the foreign scene by pushing the potential meeting of Cho "Maru" Seong Ju and Serral. In an incredible feat of his own, Maru was able to win all three seasons of the GSL that year and was treated as "for all intents and purposes... the counterpart to Serral in the Eastern world, just absolutely dominating GSL⁶⁰". Narratively, it was a convenient and symmetrical mirroring of the East and the West. Two players, each the pinnacle of their regions, who are both "basically unparalleled in the history of the game⁶¹" entering the final tournament for a chance to sweep the year. In the pre-tournament roundtable broadcast, the two players are mirrored as the Eastern/Western counterpart to the other.

⁵⁹ WCS Global Finals Day 1 Pre-show, 8:16-8:32

⁶⁰ Ibid., Artosis, 14:40-14:48

⁶¹ Ibid., 4:27-4:35



Figure 3.23: Screenshot showing Serral's WCS sweep. Source: Blizzard/ESL



Figure 3.24: Screenshot showing Maru's GSL sweep. Source: Blizzard/ESL

However, in line with the unpredictable nature of competition, Maru was knocked out earlier in the tournament while Serral made it to the finals. Although the much anticipated

matchup against Maru was made impossible, another interesting storyline opened up instead: a rematch against Stats. This turn of events led to another layer to the Korean vs. foreigner narrative. While it essentially remains the same, if Serral won, it would be framed as a historic triumph for foreigners, while if Stats won, it would be a redemption arc for the Korean scene after his loss to Serral at GSL vs. The World which was deemed “unacceptable” by the Korean StarCraft community at large ⁶². The ease with which the narrative adapted and switched out the “antagonist” hints that the dominant storyline is more about the symbolic narrative about competitive StarCraft rather than the individual players. Narratively, the only thing that is needed is a top-tier Korean player to represent Korean StarCraft and it does not matter who.

How both players have become symbolic avatars of their respective scenes and their match an allegory of the esport deserves further exploration. As discussed earlier, Serral represents the hopes of the foreign scene and Stats represents the status quo that is the Korean scene. The outcome of this match is inextricably linked to and framed not in terms of the individual but in terms of the historical. For Stats, he is playing “with the pride of Korea on the line⁶³” and he is the only thing standing in the way of Serral “taking the throne of StarCraft away from the nation of South Korea⁶⁴”. A loss by Stats here would be “a huge blow to South Korea” because “South Korea has never not been the most dominant force in StarCraft I and StarCraft II and Serral is here to change history⁶⁵”. Although this is a rematch

⁶² WCS Global Finals, 1:14:18

⁶³ Ibid., 14:28-14:30

⁶⁴ Ibid., 26:03-26:10

⁶⁵ Ibid., 51:34-51:44

of the GSL vs. The World for Stats, the broadcast approaches it less like a personal revenge story for Stats as a player and more as a redemption arc for all of Korean StarCraft. In reference to Stats' previous loss, the commentator Tasteless emphasizes that "it's hard to find any country that's as good as at anything as Korea is at StarCraft⁶⁶" and how "a Korean lost to a non-Korean" became the "number one thing trending on the news in South Korea" and the general feeling on the Korean message boards was that "we need to step up our game" and that "this is unacceptable⁶⁷".

For Serral, from the preshow to the finals, the historical importance of his run is repeatedly emphasized. The foreign SC2 scene's general perceptions about Serral's appearance in the finals can be summarized by commentator and analyst Geoff "inControl" Robinson:

there's been so many scenarios and times where we're like 'wouldn't it be cool *if?* And what if this player takes us there?' ... never have we ever had someone actually get to the precipice... Serral is the favorite perhaps... he already beat him in another final so it's like too good to be true ⁶⁸.

Throughout the broadcast, Serral is introduced and referred to as "the non-Korean hope⁶⁹," playing on the conceit of him being the "savior" and fulfilling the "prophecy" set out at the beginning of the year. Even the commentary surrounding the individual games themselves seems to be subsumed by the overarching narrative of the potential toppling of a 20-year

⁶⁶ WCS Global Finals, 1:14:19-1:14:23

⁶⁷ Ibid., 1:13:59-1:14:18

⁶⁸ WCS Global Finals Grand Finals Pre-show, 2:31-2:59

⁶⁹ Ibid., 0:24, 14:46

Korean dominance of the scene. When the pregame show introduces the upcoming match, it is noted that “[s]ince the beginning of StarCraft II every single final has looked, Korea vs Korea... today things have been shaken up, today we have Korea going up against Finland⁷⁰”. Even though the tournament is not an international one in the sense that there are different countries directly competing with each other like the Olympics, the grand finals are narratively set up as not one player against another but Korea against Finland/not-Korea. When Serral was on match point in game 4, Tasteless reiterates that “if Serral wins one more game history is going to be made in a way that we have never seen before in StarCraft⁷¹”.

So, when Serral does win the match in game 6 and becomes the global champion, it is described in the postgame analysis as “an unparalleled achievement across all of StarCraft II and... esports” as Serral “etches himself in history⁷²”. The analysts desk seems overcome with emotion at the toppling of Korean dominance in the esport, with inControl asking rhetorically, “did we ever think a guy from Finland would win the world championship? Did we ever think that a non-Korean would topple 20 years of dominance of some of the best gameplay we’ve ever seen out lives in the hardest game on earth?⁷³”. The media coverage of the tournament only continues to build on “historic” victory by Serral by celebrating the fact that “for the first time a non-Korean has claimed the biggest trophy in StarCraft II” (“Serral wins the 2018 WCS Global Finals,” Olli). The narrativization repeatedly emphasizes that the

⁷⁰ WCS Global Finals Grand Finals Pre-show, 0:56-1:09

⁷¹ Ibid., 44:26-44:34

⁷² Ibid., 1:41:35-1:41:45

⁷³ WCS Global Finals, 1:43:36-1:43:56

“history” that is being made is not a function of Serral the player winning the Global Finals but one of “a guy from Finland,” “a non-Korean” winning.

3.4

An analysis of the deciding game 6 of the Global Finals shows that heavily narrativized context is fulfilled through a climactic ending. In this final game of the year, Serral manages to beat Stats in a prolonged and back-and-forth game through constant harassment wearing out his opponent, providing a capstone to the year which was not too disappointing. Because the game is longer than most, there are identifiably distinct storylines for different phases of the game. It starts with Stats’ aggressive harassment, then Serral’s risky fast transition to higher tech units, a transition to late-game air army skirmishes, then finally Stats’ crippled economy catching up to him. With this general narrative progression in mind, the narrativization analysis can begin with the establishment of raw functions. The complete narrative analysis of the game can be found in the appendix (Appendix D).

Functions:				
Player intros				
Comm, Serral here to break the Korean combo				
Comm, Serral on match point				
Comm, games so similar, both convinced they have the best way				
Comm, might behoove them to try to trick				
Stats, Stargate opening				
Comm, a rematch of GSL vs The World				
Comm, it was trending that a non-Korean won				
Comm, Korean domination in StarCraft				
Stats, Phoenix production				
Serral, Overlord speed started				
Stats, second SG started				
Serral, Spore Colonies started				
Stats, Oracle harass at 3rd base				
Stats, double Phoenix production				
Comm, Serral will be able to get scout on double SG				
Stats, tries to hide Phoenixes but scouted anyway				
Serral, more Spores started				
Stats, Robo started				
Comm, not sure if Phoenixes will be useful				
Stats, picks off some drones				
Stats, double Robo production				
Stats, more Phoenix harass				
Comm, Stats beginning to pay for Phoenixes				
Serral, fast Hive and Spire for Broodlords				
Comm, Stats saw the Hive				
Comm, Stats needs to respond				
Stats, more Phoenix harass				
Comm, 22 Drone kills				
Comm, Stats keeping Serral's economy in check				

Figure 3.25: An excerpt of the raw functions from Serral vs. Stats 2018 WCS Global Finals Game 6

From the list of raw functions, retrospective analysis makes it possible to pick out the relevant functions which contribute to the aforementioned progression of storylines.

Functions:				
Player intros				
Comm, Serral here to break the Korean combo				
Comm, Serral on match point				
Comm, games so similar, both convinced they have the best way				
Comm, might behoove them to try to trick				
Stats, Stargate opening				
Comm, a rematch of GSL vs The World				
Comm, it was trending that a non-Korean won				
Comm, Korean domination in StarCraft				
Stats, Phoenix production				
Serral, Overlord speed started				
Stats, second SG started				
Serral, Spore Colonies started				
Stats, Oracle harass at 3rd base				
Stats, double Phoenix production				
Comm, Serral will be able to get scout on double SG				
Stats, tries to hide Phoenixes but scouted anyway				
Serral, more Spores started				
Stats, Robo started				
Comm, not sure if Phoenixes will be useful				
Stats, picks off some drones				
Stats, double Robo production				
Stats, more Phoenix harass				
Comm, Stats beginning to pay for Phoenixes				
Serral, fast Hive and Spire for Broodlords				
Comm, Stats saw the Hive				
Comm, Stats needs to respond				
Stats, more Phoenix harass				
Comm, 22 Drone kills				
Comm, Stats keeping Serral's economy in check				

Figure 3.26: An excerpt of the selected functions from Serral vs. Stats

From these selected true functions, it is relatively easy to form the appropriate functional clusters because the distinct phases of this particular game makes for rather localized clusters that can be identified in each portion of the game.

Functions:	Clusters:
Player intros	
Comm, Serral here to break the Korean combo	Serral as foreign hope
Comm, Serral on match point	
Comm, games so similar, both convinced they have the best way	
Comm, might behoove them to try to trick	
Stats, SG opening	
Comm, a rematch of GSL vs The World	Rematch
Comm, it was trending that a non-Korean won	
Comm, Korean domination in StarCraft	
Stats, Phoenix production	Stats harass
Serral, Overlord speed started	
Stats, second SG started	
Serral, Spore Colonies started	
Stats, Oracle harass at 3rd base	
Stats, double Phoenix production	Phoenix harass is successful
Comm, Serral will be able to get scout on double SG	
Stats, tries to hide Phoenixes but scouted anyway	
Serral, more Spores started	
Stats, Robo started	
Comm, not sure if Phoenixes will be useful	
Stats, picks off some drones	
Stats, double Robo production	
Stats, more Phoenix harass	
Comm, Stats beginning to pay for Phoenixes	
Serral, fast Hive and Spire for Broodlords	Serral fast tech to BL
Comm, Stats saw the Hive	
Comm, Stats needs to respond	Stats needs to respond
Stats, more Phoenix harass	
Comm, 2:2 Drone kills	
Comm, Stats keeping Serral's economy in check	
Serral, Greater Spire on the way	
Comm, Stats attacking before BL tech	Stats has window for attack
Serral, counterattack on 4th	
Stats, moving to Serral's 4th	
Serral, Baneling attack at 3rd	
Comm, BLs would change the course of the game	
Serral, harass at 4th	Serral trying to buy time

Figure 3.27: An excerpt of the functional clusters from Serral vs. Stats

For example, Stats' Phoenix harassment is limited to the opening of the game and so the relevant functional clusters are also limited to this phase of the game. The next phase of the game characterized by Serral's fast transition to higher tech slightly overlaps with the tail end of Stats' harassment and that is reflected as such in the overlap of the respective clusters as well.

The storylines for the game operate similarly and reveal distinct but slightly overlapping phases of the game. In establishing the storylines, the irrelevant or redundant pseudo-functional clusters have been subsumed under dominant storylines, such as the cluster “Stats commits to air play” being subsumed under the more general storyline of “Stats Phoenix harass”.

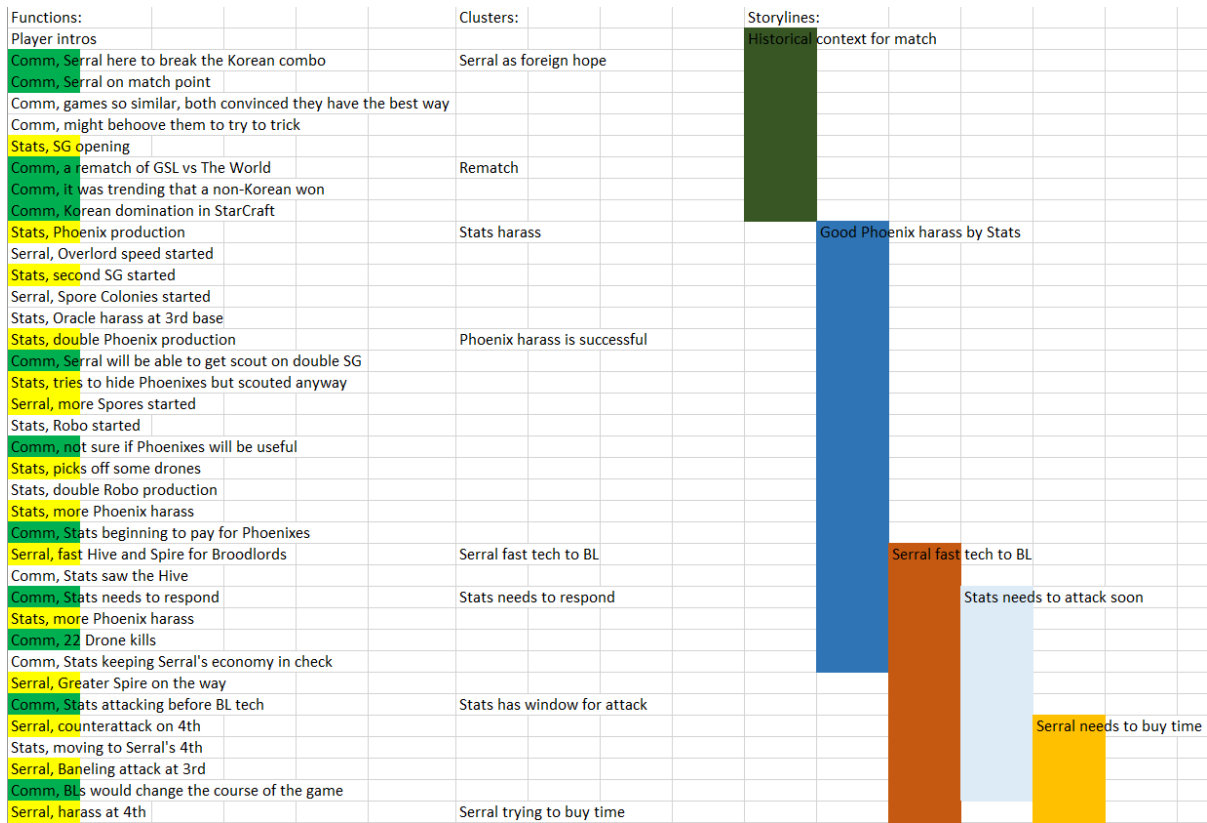


Figure 3.28: An excerpt of the storylines from Serral vs. Stats

In above opening portion of the game, the identified storylines clearly show the transition from Stats’ opening harassment to Serral’s risky and vulnerable fast tech transition. The excerpt below, on the other hand, shows that in the closing portion of the game the storylines have shifted to Serral’s harassment and Stats’ consequently weak economy. In particular,

Serral’s counterattacks, although they are the same actions in execution, have been reframed to have two different purposes and thus be two different storylines as in the different phases of the game. In the first half of the game, the counterattacks serve to delay Stats’ attack while Serral is vulnerable and are thus named “Serral counterattacks to buy time” (orange) while in the second half of the game, their purpose is economic harassment and are now a separate storyline named “Serral counterattacks to weaken economy” (purple).

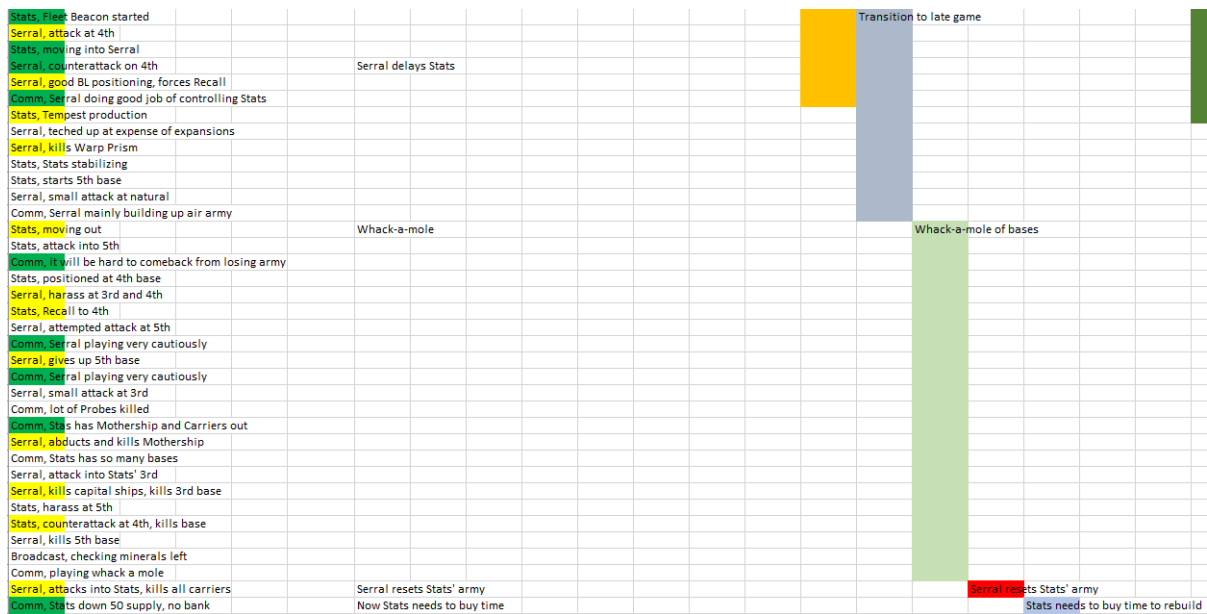


Figure 3.29: A second excerpt of the storylines from Serral vs. Stats

On the level of the final narrative, an analogous act of subsuming the multiple redundant pseudo-storylines occurs to simply and unite the narrative into a three-part structure: “Serral survives,” then “Serral drains Stats’ economy,” and finally “Stats can’t replace army”. For example, in the excerpt below, the opening storyline about the context of the match is outright ignored and the entire thread of Stats’ Phoenix harassment and Serral’s

counterattacks to buy more time are all subsumed under the more general thread of “Serral survives”.

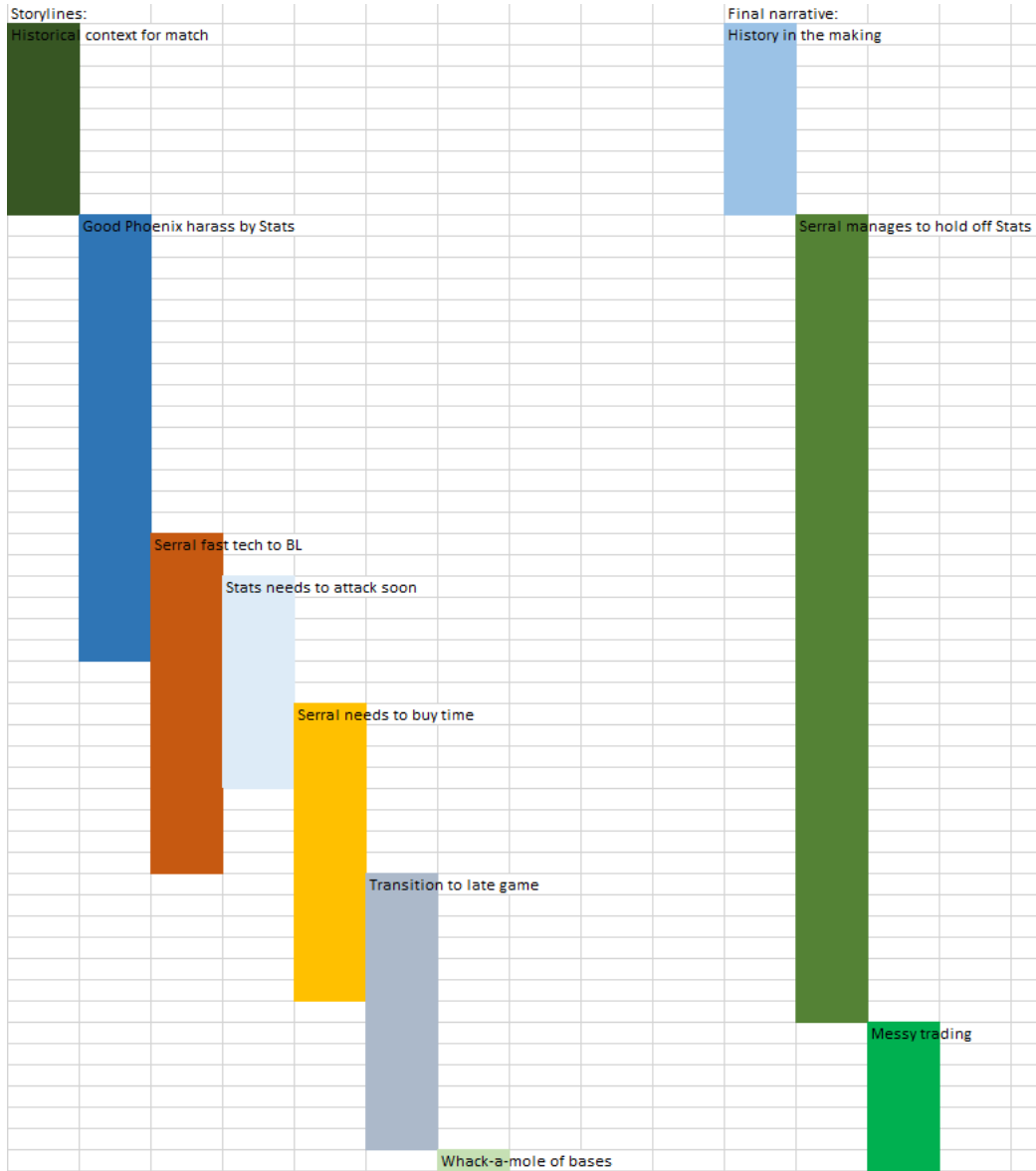


Figure 3.30: An excerpt of the final narrative from Serral vs. Stats

As expected, the final narrative on the game level, even if that game is the last game of the year and ostensibly has the most narrative weight to it, does not lend a hand to the narrativization on the higher levels. The details on how the game was won is narratively

unnecessary and ignored on the upper levels and only the fact that Serral did win, and thus establishing the conditions of the real necessary for the higher order narrative, is important.

Having examined the major tournament victories, taking the narrativization of the whole year into stock shows that the narrative on this level has progressively put more effort into developing Serral as the avatar of the foreign StarCraft community at the expense of a narrative of him as a player. When the individual narratives constructed around Serral for each of the major tournaments are weaved together for an overarching narrative for the entire year, it becomes clear that the prevailing storyline is that of Serral as the great foreign hope. The four shifting storylines outline at the beginning of this chapter (First, is Serral capable of winning a major title? Second, is Serral the best foreigner/can he sweep the WCS Circuit? Third, is Serral the best player in the world/Serral vs. the Koreans? Fourth, can a foreigner StarCraft upset Korean StarCraft?) are ultimately working towards the last one. The initial concerns about Serral’s inability to reach his full potential changes into the legitimacy of his titles which then changes into the framing of him as the savior of the foreign scene. With the benefit of hindsight, a reiterative analysis of Serral’s year with the major tournaments as the base level of narrative units, similar to the seasonal narrative analysis done with the New England Patriots, yields this result:

Tournament	Tournament Narrative	Storylines	Final Narrative
WCS Leipzig	Serral finally wins a major	Serral possibly foreign hope	Serral becomes the foreign hope and makes StarCraft history
WCS Austin	Serral cements place as best foreigner	Foreign scene domination	
WCS Valencia	Serral is the most dominant in WCS; comparisons to Koreans		
GSL vs. The World	Serral proves himself in Korea	Serral shifts SC2 dynamics	
WCS Montreal	Serral completes WCS sweep; unbeatable	StarCraft history is made	
WCS Global Finals	The best player in the world is a foreigner		

Figure 3.31: An overview of Serral’s 2018 seasonal narrative

With every title, Serral solidifies his status as the best player in the foreign scene, and eventually, the world. While there is some focus on Serral as a player and what he can

accomplish personally, by the time of the GSL vs. The World the narrative shifts focus to utilizing Serral as an actor in the larger story of competitive StarCraft itself. The foreign media apparatus is quite obviously biased and invested in Serral's doing well and the planned narrative direction and the imperatives of the real align, allowing the story of a struggling player from Finland growing into a player altering the course of StarCraft history to be realized.

3.5

The historical narrative stemming from Serral's 2018 run can be said to be a fifth order of narrative organization existing even above the level of the entire year. Based on how the narrativization presents Serral, the historical narrative is one of the underdog where after 20 long years the foreign community is finally able to upset the Korean dominance. In this narrative framing, Serral's career represents the underdog's comeback and his victory at the Global Finals the triumph. But this narrative can only be told through references in the broadcast and the media to the events outside themselves since the symbolic role of Serral as the underdog foreign community can be realized after establishing the prerequisite narrative of Korean dominance. This historical narrativization explains why both Serral and Stats can act as symbols of their communities rather than as individual competitors. Just as the narrativization for the Global Finals easily replaced Maru with Stats, because all the narrative needed was *a* Korean and not Maru specifically, the larger historical underdog only needs *a* foreigner and it did not necessarily have to be Serral. If another foreigner had been able to perform on the same level the previous year, the underdog narrative would have doubtlessly been realized through that player instead of waiting for Serral.

To understand the impact and importance of a foreigner winning the world championship and the narrativization's emphatic desire of the imaginary to pursue that storyline, the historical context for competitive StarCraft spanning both the original and sequel titles must be understood. Although released by Blizzard in 1998, an American company, StarCraft flourished in its "adopted homeland of South Korea" where by 2000, "the Korean playerbase already outnumbered the rest of the world 18-1" (S.K. Yoon) and by 2016, "4 million of the 9 million copies of StarCraft sold world wide" were purchased in Korea ("Serral's Revolution," Mizenhauer). From the earliest days of organized competition, the Koreans reigned supreme with the nation being on the forefront of not only organizing but broadcast competitive gaming. The "first professional game league (Korea Pro Gamers League; KPGL) was started by Hitel in December 1997" (Jin 3732) and networks "started to broadcast Hitel KPGL in march 1999 – the first esports league televised in Korea" (3735). Soon thereafter, in 2000, "a governing esports body, called the Korea e-Sports Association (KeSPA) was formed" (qtd. in Jin 3731). Since the inception of the World Cyber Games in 2000, an early analogue of the Olympic games for esports, Korea had "won over a decade worth of gold medals in StarCraft" by taking first place every single year. This dominance continued into StarCraft II even when the competitive scene transitioned to the sequel. In the initial years of SC2's release, foreigners were quick to transition and "performed well" in the relative absence of the top-tier Koreans. However, once the rest of the Koreans began to switch over as well, it was back to the status quo as both "[a]mateurs and ex-Brood War pros, making good use of their decade-long head start, alike dictated how [the community] interpreted and played the game at a meteoric rate".

While there have been a small number of foreigners to compete in Korea, they have never been able to sustain their success over an extended period. In the early days of SC2, it was considered incredibly difficult for foreigners to compete in Korea. Jonathan “Jinro” Walsh managed to make it to the semi-finals of the GSL in 2010 and 2011 and Greg “IdrA” Fields, even after training in Korea for three years, peaked at a round of 16 run in the GSL in 2011. More recently, players like Alex “Neeb” Sunderhaft have shattered expectations by winning the 2016 KeSPA Cup, a Korean tournament, and three of the four WCS Circuit events in 2017. However, his winning streak was not as dominant as Serral’s and was wildly inconsistent. While Serral was the favourite to win in most of the tournaments he entered, the “ethereal nature” of Neeb’s performance followed him as “the dominant, soul-crushing Neeb was hardly present at WCS Valencia, nor was it present at the GSL qualifiers... nor was it truly present at GSL vs the World” (“Neeb: The Fabled Ascendance,” Soularion). In the lead up to WCS Leipzig 2018, in an interview the caster Ravi “feardragon” Pareek summarizes Neeb as “never one of these huge dominating favorites coming into any of these events” but someone who “was able to be clutch in those moments and pull it out” (“Can Neeb be Beaten? WCS Leipzig preview w/ feardragon,” Waxangel).

It was in this context that Serral won the world championship. With the narrative potential of Serral’s historical anomaly of a performance, the narrativization could not help but center itself around the conceit of history being made.



Figure 3.32: Screenshot of Serral's introduction for the global finals. Source: Blizzard/ESL

Serral was the first player to be able to overcome the game's "ephemeral affinity for winners" ("Serral: The Harbinger," hexhaven) and avoid the fates of the others who "reach[ed] dizzying heights only to crash hard mere weeks or months later". He was able to win against foreigners and Koreans alike, and do it in a convincing fashion. He is described as playing the game smart, "always making the right move in places his kin would have gone *full foreigner*," as opposed to the majority of other foreigners who the slang implies to be developmentally challenged compared to the Koreans. Serral is not touted as the best player to have lived but as the symbol of the changing of the guards, an undeniable turning point in the esports' history. The article acknowledges that Serra is not "a bonjwa"⁷⁴ [an indisputably dominant player], the GOAT, or even the most decorated player to have attended the 2018

⁷⁴ <https://liquipedia.net/starcraft/Bonjwa>

WCS Global Finals,” but his victory marks the point where for the “first time in two decades, the power dynamic between the two regions has decisively shifted” and where “[h]istorians will look back at this moment as the one in which Korea’s reign was finally shattered”.

Serral’s win was even noticed by more mainstream outlets as his performance was named ESPN’s Esports moment of the year for 2018 (Erzberger). The article notes that in a game where “South Korean players weren’t supposed to lose to foreigners,” Serral had become the first “non-Korean player had ever been recognized as the undisputed best player in the world”. The narrative surrounding Serral culminates in the long-awaited vindication of the foreign scene, perhaps even more so than as an individual victory for Serral himself.

Which is why the historical lens is brought to the forefront as Serral became the first non-Korean in the history of the esport to win a world champion title, defeating the traditionally dominant Korean players who have unequivocally ruled competitive StarCraft since its inception over 20 years ago. This momentous occasion marked a clear turning point in the history of competitive SC2 and Serral’s victories became increasingly couched in this historical framework. As the year goes on and Serral takes more titles under his belt, the notion of a foreigner upset becomes increasingly imbedded, plausible, and narratively inevitable. Simultaneously, the narrativization slowly shifts from Serral as a player to Serral as the beacon of foreign hope. In doing so, both Serral and Stats themselves become narrative units/actors for the larger story of competitive StarCraft itself. In the “allegory” of the competition (Guttmann 12) between the foreign and Korean scenes where the Global Finals between Serral and Stats “become symbolic actions,” Serral’s 2018 run in its entirety can be integrated into this narrative as a narrative unit of the underdog upset. The 2018 WCS

narrative is then only a part of the larger historical narrative. If represented graphically, the contextualized narrativization would look like below:

Functions	Storylines			Final Narrative
Past events	20 years of Korean dominance			The foreign underdog story
2018 WCS		The foreign upset		
Future events			Hope for a changed dynamic	

Figure 3.33: Summary of the historical narrative for StarCraft esports

Where after so long, looking towards Seoul as the locus of esports and placing Korean players as the gold standard where “South Korean players weren’t supposed to lose to foreigners” and “if you were the best player in North America... you might be comparable to the 40th best South Korean player” (Erzberger), the rest of the globe was able to rally around Serral as the foreign hope being the first to hold a world title.

3.6

As demonstrated by the symbolic interchangeability of the actors in the historical narrative, an interesting area to explore is the malleable relationship between higher orders of narrative and their constitutive functional levels. If the level of the match is the base order for narrativization, all the narrativization that occurs above this level is at least in part derivative in the sense that they rely not on the actual phenomena of game and commentary events but on the processed narrative units of outside media. On the orders of the tournament or the year it leads to a disconnect between the straightforward consequential relationship between event and its narrative as the desire for the imaginary overtake the imperatives of the real. And on

the order of the historical narrative, the malleability manifests as the interchangeability of the symbolic actors. The gap in subject and story manifests as narrative malleability and the level of fidelity to actual game events becomes diminished with each successive layer departing from the baseline of the subject. For example, while by the end of the year Serral was touted as the best player in the world, for three of the tournaments examined, WCS Austin⁷⁵, WCS Montreal⁷⁶, and GSL vs. The World⁷⁷, Serral was actually behind in the finals and would have lost if the matches were best-of-3s. It is factually incorrect to say that Serral's performance was a completely one-sided affair as the narrative of the level of the year and even on the level of each tournament claim it to be, but it is presented that way nonetheless. This is similar to how the New England Patriots' 2016 season was branded as Tom Brady's "revenge tour" even when eyewitness accounts by journalists at the games say that "[a]ll week in practice, it was all football... [n]o vengeance... [s]ame thing Sunday on the field" ("Tom Brady is Back," King).

The increasing disconnect and malleability may be explained by the different approaches to the necessary reiterative process used in narrative sense making. Looking at all the levels of narrative organization reveals that the relevant role of its constitutive units varies greatly. An in-game event could heavily influence the final narrative of that specific game, but the outcome of one individual game in a best-of-7 may be less influential to final narrative of the match. Simply put, as the narrative scope becomes larger, the smaller details from the layers beneath get lost. While the narrativization analysis schema proposed earlier

⁷⁵ https://liquipedia.net/starcraft2/2018_WCS_Austin

⁷⁶ https://liquipedia.net/starcraft2/2018_WCS_Montreal

⁷⁷ https://liquipedia.net/starcraft2/2018_GSL_vs._the_World

takes discrete steps in eliminating pseudo-narrative units through reiteration, the use of external narrative packages provide a way for higher orders of narrative organization to skip, integrate, or otherwise blur those reiterative steps to formulate narratives while being relatively detached to the very events upon which the narratives are built. Each external narrative package has already interpreted away some details it has found to be extraneous any by incorporating them, higher order narratives compound the interpretive risks and the number of pseudo-narrative units leading to a higher degree of freedom for the desire for the imaginary. Also, as the scope enlarges what were once narrative units on a smaller scale may no longer practically be used as units, hence why Serral can come close to losing three major tournaments and still be called in the overarching narrative of the year as dominant. In other words, by using pre-interpreted media which have rejected certain elements of reality as pseudo-narrative units already, higher order narrativizations can build narratives which reject even parts of interpreted stories and stray further from the imperatives of the real.

In effect, the compounding narrativization is like a game of telephone with each successive transfer of content losing fidelity to the original message. The compounding of interpretive risk even starts from the in-game commentary, an element of the raw broadcast itself. The very act of providing commentary is informed by the narrative context for the match and thus the things that are said are a product of a reiterative process inside the commentators' minds. While on the higher orders of narrative like the year-long storyline, they use pre-interpreted media of tournaments and analyses as their narrative units so that they are built on at least two different layers of reiterative narrative products. Hence, if the purpose of the reiterative process is to determine the final narrative and to weed out the

extraneous material, the self-reflexive quality of the commentary itself already includes it. It is a self-reflexive, adaptive mechanism as the narrative self-corrects and subsumes contradicting events. For example, in game 3 of the WCS Austin finals against MaNa, aggressively attacks into Serral against conventional wisdom. The commentators warn that these attacks are “too late” and “the blink forward again... might cost him the lives of every single stalker⁷⁸” (fig. 3.34).



Figure 3.34: Screenshot of MaNa attacking into Serral, 2018 WCS Austin finals game 3. Source: Blizzard/DreamHack

However, against these predictions, MaNa kills Serral’s army to end the game (fig. 3.35), leading to surprised exclamations of “he actually won that game?! Are you kidding me?⁷⁹”

⁷⁸ WCS Austin, 57:40-57:45

⁷⁹ Ibid., 58:21

from the commentators and for it to be called “a strangely stupidly beautiful thing, it was supposed to be bad but it looked good⁸⁰”.



Figure 3.35: Screenshot of MaNa killing Serral’s army. Note the supply difference of 108 vs. 140.

Source: Blizzard/DreamHack

From the almost guaranteed position that MaNa would lose, the narrative moves to accommodate his surprise win. While Ricoeur claimed that “plot is not a static structure but an operation, an integrative process” (“Life: A Story,” Ricoeur 426) with respect to the audience, because the storyline here is self-correcting, it is as if it is integrating contradicting events it experiences to present itself as a harmonious whole to the outside audience. The self-reflexivity of commentary and its integration into itself and higher levels contradicts Barthes’ position that the “one *who speaks* (in the narrative) is not the one *who writes* (in real

⁸⁰ WCS Austin, 59:00-59:04

life) and the one *who writes* is not the one *who is*” (Barthes 254). However, when the distinction between narrative and reality collapses, as in the case of e/sports where the reality is the narrative, the commentators who are literally speaking *are* the ones who write. This writing is done in two ways: first, their very speech acts “write” the storyline of the game as their narrativization goes from the “order of pure observation... to the performative order, whereby the meaning of a speech act becomes the very act by which it is uttered” (263) and second, when their speech acts are integrated into higher levels of narrative meaning making. Therefore, the narrativization analysis requires less rereading by an external actor. Thus, the commentary is already a compromise between the “desire for the imaginary” and the “imperatives of the real” (White 4) acting as the extension of the inextricably intertwined nature of sports and sports media (Rowe 2). It is not just that imagining sport is impossible without it being “accompanied by the inner voice of phantom sports commentators” (13), it is that the “inner voice” shapes what is being imagined in the first place.

As shown in fig. 3.19 outlining the compounding interpretations, the higher order narratives have greater input from an external source of narrativization and are capable of exercising a greater amount of freedom in how they are shaped. Essentially, the externally imposed desire for the imaginary act as the plot, “a synthesis from a *second* point of view” (“Life in Quest,” Ricoeur 21) and it fills in the gaps created by the rejected narrative units with what it sees fit, such as Brady being angry. Acting as the plot on each level, the external desire for the imaginary is able to dictate not only the “logic of connection” between narrative events (Chatman 53) but also the “logic of *hierarchy*” and deem some events “more important than others”. This is the mechanism through which the higher order narratives are

able to reject narrative units grounded in the imperatives of the real for ones demanded by the desire for the imaginary. Then the higher orders of narrative are like a successive chain of third, fourth, and fifth points of views, each making sense of the base material beneath it by “organiz[ing] together components that are as heterogeneous as unintended circumstances”. These second, third, etc. points of views are then “grand narratives... which seek to narratively articulate and legitimate some concrete first-order practices or narratives” (Bernstein 102).

3.6.1

Under the umbrella of overarching narratives, the relationship between the various mid-level narratives may also be seen in terms of a serial narrative. For example, the 2018 WCS year can be thought of a season of a television show with the major tournaments as its episodes. The concepts of “iteration, multiplicity, and momentum... primarily address patterns within installments, or explicit *discursive connections* between installments” (O’Sullivan 52) and “world-building, personnel, and design... primarily address the *varieties of scope* that serials can create as their installments accumulate”. Under this lens, the use of iteration, multiplicity, and momentum describes the narrative impulses of the tournaments and their “discursive connections” while the higher levels of narrative, the storylines on the level of the year and the historical scope of competitive StarCraft, rely on world-building, personnel, and design. These concepts act like Barthes’ indices, integrating themselves into higher levels of narrative to “direct the comprehension of fragmented elements, at once contiguous and heterogeneous” (Barthes 270) so that “each (integrated) level imparts its isotopy to the units of the lower level, and prevents the meaning from ‘hanging loose’”. Just as how television

“made the link between sports and identity that much stronger” (Jay 5), the broadcasting of competitive StarCraft, which did in fact start on South Korean television, heightens the relationship between the regional affiliations between the players being shown and their audiences. The “narrative structuring and interactive narrative logic” (Petten) aid the world-building capabilities of serial narrative and the connection between broadcasted players and audiences.

3.7

The narrativization analysis of SC2 is similar to that of football, at least on the level of individual games. Using the retrospective schema, a list of raw functions can be garnered from the broadcast and through the reiterative process of separating the narratively relevant true units from the pseudo ones, the analysis can lead to a final narrative. However, because of the mechanical and the organizational differences SC2, the narrativization occurs on multiple layers not found in football. The increased distance from the source material and the increased role of externally introduced storylines means that higher order narratives become more detached and malleable. As the 2018 WCS season goes on and the story of Serral grows in scope, working from his initial victories to becoming the symbol of foreign hope, the smaller details which are narratively inconvenient are left out. Ultimately, the examination of Serral’s 2018 performance reveals that the more narrativization occurs in higher levels of narrative, the easier it is for the desire of the imaginary to overcome the imperatives of the real.

Chapter 4

A Comparison of Traditional and Esports Broadcasting

4.1

This chapter will examine the potential differences in narrativization methods and results between traditional sports and esports by comparing and contrasting the broadcasting of professional football (NFL) and professional StarCraft II (WCS). While some of the organizational and mechanical differences between the two competitions were examined in the last chapter, the discussion here will explore the differences in broadcasting, medium, and viewership to study how they affect narrativization. Most obviously, the main distinction is that football is a traditional sport played in the real world while SC2 is an esports that can only be played through computers. Although there are some crossovers in broadcast media, with select Thursday Night Football being streamed on Twitch.tv (Freitas, Amazon Staff) and StarCraft having been first televised in Korea in 1999 with the Hitel KPGL (Jin 3735), it is mostly the case that football is packaged for television and SC2 is packaged for online streaming. Therefore, the NFL and the WCS will be read as case studies of older televised media and newer streaming media, respectively.

With televised sports long established before the advent of esports, it is no surprise that esports broadcasting has borrowed many elements from television. Although the field of play for football is in the physical world and the field of play for SC2 is a virtual one, both broadcasts are mediating the action on the playing field through cameras to the viewers' screens at home. It is within this mediation that narrativization occurs. Thus, if there are significant differences in their mediation processes, there should be corresponding

differences in their narrativized products. While there are some unique features of streaming such as interactive peer-to-peer chatting and the cultivation of online sub-cultures, most the actual broadcast methods and techniques are similar to television. So rather than conceptualizing esports streaming as a completely separate endeavor, it may be more accurate to think of it as merely a different iteration of sports broadcasting, not unlike the differences in the recording and presentation of football and basketball. One would not say that televised basketball is an entirely new endeavour, but rather that it is one of many possible iterations of televised sports. Because there are mechanical differences in the field of play and rules, it should be no surprise that the particularities of the broadcasting leads to certain differences in the specific processes of narrativization for each sport, even if the final narrative products are the same or analogous. For example, the replays of a close goal may be shown repeatedly as the officials try to decide whether it was fair or not. In SC2, because it's computer mediated and calculated, there are no such instances of ambiguity. Thus, SC2 cannot benefit from technical ambiguities of this kind to build additional tension.

Still, it may be worth challenging the notion that the difference in broadcast media, i.e. television vs. internet streaming, results in different broadcast results, or at least that they may be more similar than different. Especially considering that today, all major sports (baseball, football, basketball, hockey) are available to stream online through their respective league or contracted content provider, ultimately making the difference in medium between traditional sports and esports moot. Still, the existence of interactivity found in streaming may have an impact of the narrativization. So, the main purpose of this chapter is to examine

if there are any narrativization differences between the two competitions stemming from the difference in broadcast media.

4.2

The concept of mediation is important for seeing how the broadcast functions as narrativization. The term “mediation,” especially in a new media context has many layers of meaning ranging from “technological intervention between experience and reality to one in which the ongoing, mutual reshaping of communicative action and communication technology actually *constitutes* experience” (Lievrouw 313). However, in the context of this discussion, mediation will refer to the technological transmission of content “as the intervention of transmission technologies in the human communication process” (316) rather than the more abstract definition of a “dialectical process in which institutionalized media of communication... are involved in the general circulation of symbols in social life” (Silverstone 762). If plot is ultimately an organizing principle operating on a higher level than its constitutive events, then the narrativization happens during the process of organizing the action on the field into a comprehensible product for the screen. The broadcast, then, is what interprets and packages the sporting event to produce a comprehensible narrative as “narrativity is an interpretation, not a meaning inherent to the referent” (Ryan 150) since the sporting event itself is non-narrative but it becomes narrative when it is broadcast. The “camera coverage and commentary... identify, focus on, and interpret key moments of conflict” (Sullivan 138) to “transform the signifying material of the live event from sport to entertainment”. In doing so, it can be argued that the “primary event being covered isn’t the contest itself, but its immediacy, thereby eliminating, in a sense, the game itself as referent”

(139) as the camera and commentary transform the sporting event on the field into a separately identifiable entity of the broadcast product during its mediation. This mediation facilitates the transformation “from sport as autonomous event, holding television in a relation of descriptive subjection, towards sport as a televised event, when television itself has greater autonomy in the construction of its own preferred forms of narrative, characterisation, drama and entertainment” (Whannel 95). It is within that space of mediation that the sporting event is narrativized; the broadcast’s narrativization cannot exist outside of its mediation. Whether viewing at home through a television screen or a computer monitor, or even in the stands through the jumbotrons found in stadiums and studios, the interpretive act required for narrativization happens within mediation even for traditional sports. The form and context of the content delivery indelibly shapes the viewer’s experience of the narrativization. While there is the possibility of an emergent narrative from viewing the pure gameplay, that is not the same as the broadcast’s explicit storytelling. Because the broadcast is a process of mediation, it is only within that mediation that narrativization can occur such that it can be argued that the ultimate aim of the broadcasting is a form of storytelling. It may be worth noting that the rise in mass media, whether print, television, or internet, has played a role in the rise of sports narratives as the “importance of the editorial function of media, that is, the ability to coordinate information and make sense of it” (“Sports Online,” Real 181) helps to construct, interpret, and disseminate recognizable sports stories to audiences.

The almost invisible layer between the actual game and its broadcast, the “immediacy” which eliminates “the game itself as referent” (Sullivan 139), is the mediated space where the narrativization happens. The raw action of football consists of balls being

thrown around and crossing imaginary lines, yet its mediation can produce the narrative of the greatest Super Bowl comeback in history. This gap between the actual game and its broadcast is difficult to notice because sports became “increasingly indistinguishable from the *sports media*” (Rowe 2) and “one is literally unthinkable without the other (literally because it is almost impossible now to ‘imagine’ sport without the mind’s eye conjuring up replay, slow motion, and multi-perspectival images, accompanied by the inner voice of phantom sports commentators)” (13). The final broadcast product viewed by audiences is reflective of the remediated “inseparability of mediation and reality” (Bolter and Grusin 346) as the “primary event being covered” becomes the “immediacy” of the contest replacing “the contest itself” (Sullivan 139). Though the space between reality and its mediation is partially hidden, it is a necessary space where the raw sporting event is interpreted and packaged into a viewable product.

For television, the collapse of reality and its mediation to produce the sports media product is crucial. Although with television, “the function of which was intended to report rather than interpret sports,” (Cashmore 295) the “networks discovered early on that sports contests could not be covered simply as actualities” (Sullivan 138) and the networks escalated the storytelling aspect as “mere ‘stories’ were deemed insufficient” (Leibovich 107) and “had to become ‘storylines,’ or ‘backstories,’ or if the storytellers were feeling really literary, ‘narratives’”. Since “[s]ports in the raw is insufficient for the tv viewer: he or she wants it packaged and presented, just like any other commodity” (Cashmore 341) because fundamentally sports are an inherently non-narrative phenomena where “the action doesn’t speak for itself: it needs the direction and narration that produce drama” (342). So,

networks like ABC attempted to “broaden the appeal of football by incorporating elements of drama and popular entertainment into its coverage” through tactics like “[u]nusual camera angles, personality close-ups, [and] half-time interviews” (333) and using “cameras and narration to transform the signifying material of the live event from sport to entertainment” (Sullivan 138). So that “in the way television is able to draw upon the inherent hermeneutic of sport events, to reorganise, to re-present it, it can be said to be narrativizing” (Whannel 132); without broadcasting, there is no sports narrative.

The role of the broadcast and its capacity to re-present, package, and provide narrative direction was made clear in a one-time experimental airing of an NFL game without any commentary in what appeared to be an attempt at recreating the stadium experience at home. The game between the New York Jets and the Miami Dolphins on December 20, 1980 was broadcast “without a play-by-play crew” (Garber) though Bryant Gumbel, then the host of NBC’s pregame show, introduced the broadcast and periodically returned to give “several updates as the game progressed”. Furthermore, microphones were placed around the stadium to pick up crowd sounds; some graphics were used, but neither a score bug or a running clock were shown; and the same pre-recorded interviews with Dolphins head coach Don Shula and receiver Duriel Harris were played repeatedly to fill in the gaps. In effect, the result was as close an approximation to the in-person experience as possible through the limitations of television at the time. In a 2010 interview, Gumbel has said that the experiment ultimately “lack[ed] a degree of drama... unless somebody is there to say, ‘All right, here’s why we’re going to shut up and just watch this. Here’s what’s at stake’” and “would have benefitted from an announcer’s ability to provide... context” (Garber). Dick Enberg, who was then “one

of NBC's lead football announcers," agreed that while the announcers are "not the most important ingredient in the pie, [they] certainly are a slice of that pie that gives the whole experience full flavor". Ultimately, without the commentary or even functional use of graphics, the broadcast was unable to properly guide and contextualize the raw events to produce a dramatic product for the viewers.

Overall, the viewer watching the game through a mediated screen is privy to more information and narrativization than one watching from the stands, an advantage that should not be forgotten. The broadcast sports products are "are introduced with sophisticated graphics, with evocative and sometimes powerful music, with carefully chosen and seductively filmed images" (Barnett 164) as a part of a "complex and highly professional packaging operation designed to convey a more attractive and seductive context for the event". Fundamentally,

sport on the screen is an entirely different experience compared to sport at the stadium: not simply because a living-room is a different environment from stands and terraces, but because the event being witnessed goes through several processing stages before reaching the screen. The live spectator will be free to move, to turn the head, to absorb many different pictures, sounds and smells simultaneously, and will therefore stay master of his or her own interpretation. The television viewer is a prisoner to sports producers, directors and commentators, with sound and vision subject both to technological and to resource limitations as well as to the whims of one person in a control van. In front of the screen, the event is interpreted on our behalf, in ways which can make the living-room experience utterly different from live experience of the identical event. Viewers may lose out on uniquely atmospheric moments of sporting drama, but their perspective is enhanced in other ways which can make live spectating a humdrum experience (155).

While the in-person spectator is able to experience the atmosphere or the “feel” of the crowd, the consumer of the broadcasted product is “in a substantially more privileged position than the spectator” by being made privy to the “voice-over accompaniment to describe, explain, analyse and predict the event as well as to contribute an occasional dramatic embellishment which the game itself may lack” (157). With the help of the camera and commentary “football made more sense on the small screen than at the stadium” as the “fan at home is aided and abetted in interpreting the content by the television camera, which focuses on action deemed important” (“Media,” Wenner 15) as the televised feed could “isolate the ball carrier and make it possible even for the casual fan to follow most plays” (Jay 97). The heavy editorializing and high production value of overt storytelling agents like NFL Films, the media branch of the NFL, “made football more comprehensible to viewers” (Oriard 18).

4.2.1

As an integral part of any sports broadcast’s storytelling function, the role of the camera has competing models of categorization. Some have proposed more general “types of visual transformation” under the categories of simple, cutaways, cutting patterns, spatial mobility, spatial fragmentation (Whannel 90-91) while others have tried to categorize television’s various “effects which are unavailable to the live event audience” such as:

1. Changing the size of the image and permitting a greater range of vision (wide-angle lens, split screen)
2. Concentrating time diffuse events into a more manageable time span (highlights)
3. Manipulating time to dramatize action (instant replay, slow motion, stop action, highlights)

4. Focusing on one isolated action (isolated camera, instant replay)

5. Providing more statistical information (Birrell and Loy 11).

“Changing the size of the image and permitting a greater range of vision” allows for the viewer to apprehend a greater context of any action at hand either through a larger field of view to contextualize the game or through split screens so that the running action can be broadcast while also showing a replay. “Concentrating time diffuse events into a more manageable time span” can provide the viewer with a succinct summary or a montage of past events to emphasize any patterns developing in the game to strengthen potential narrative threads. “Manipulating time to dramatize action” can not only grant clarity to close calls that could never be determined by the naked eye via replay reviews, but instant replays and slow motion especially lends narrative import to whatever is being shown again. While on the field, an event happens only once, but the broadcast is free to showing it multiple times, signaling to its audience that it is a narratively important one. “Focusing on one isolated action” lets the broadcast focus its view onto specific parts of the action to give it narrative import because by the fact that the camera is choosing to show something in deliberate focus over the rest of the action raises its narrative relevance. While the in-person spectator is free to focus their attention on whatever they choose, the camera makes that decision and thus a part of that interpretation for the viewers at home. “Providing more statistical information” gives more information not available in real life on the field to contextualize the action or the player acting as indices for the building narrative. In addition, the fact that any indexical information is bring provided at all could also imply that the action at hand is narratively important. These various effects can each play a role in how the broadcast narrativizes the

game as what the camera shows “lends plot to what is an unpredictable, unscripted story by enhancing the imagery” (Sullivan 138). Since the camera chooses and frames the action, these broadcast choices “transform the signifying material of the live event from sport to entertainment” and interpret the action in a way unavailable to the naked eye of the in-person spectator without mediation. In practical use, multiple techniques are combined for efficacy. For example, CBS’ “EyeVision” segments break down and explain past plays and strategies for the audience to provide a more informed context for the game at hand. These segments are a part of a larger “[c]oncentrating time diffuse events into a more manageable time span” (Birrell and Loy 11) showing past highlights, they “[m]anipulat[e] time to dramatize action” by using various speeds and stop actions, they are “[f]ocus[ed] on one isolated action” of the specific play being analyzed, and they “[p]rovid[e] more statistical information” in the form of graphically annotated play analyses.

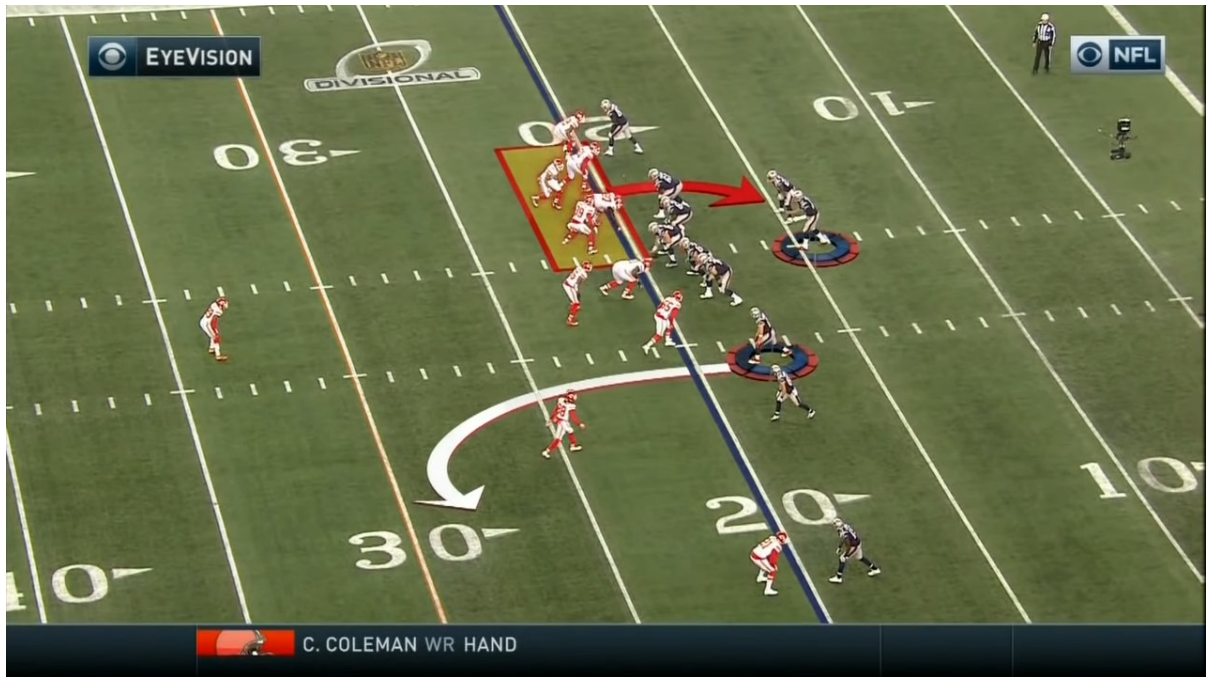


Figure 4.1: Screenshot of CBS EyeVision analysis against the KC Chiefs. Source: NFL/CBS

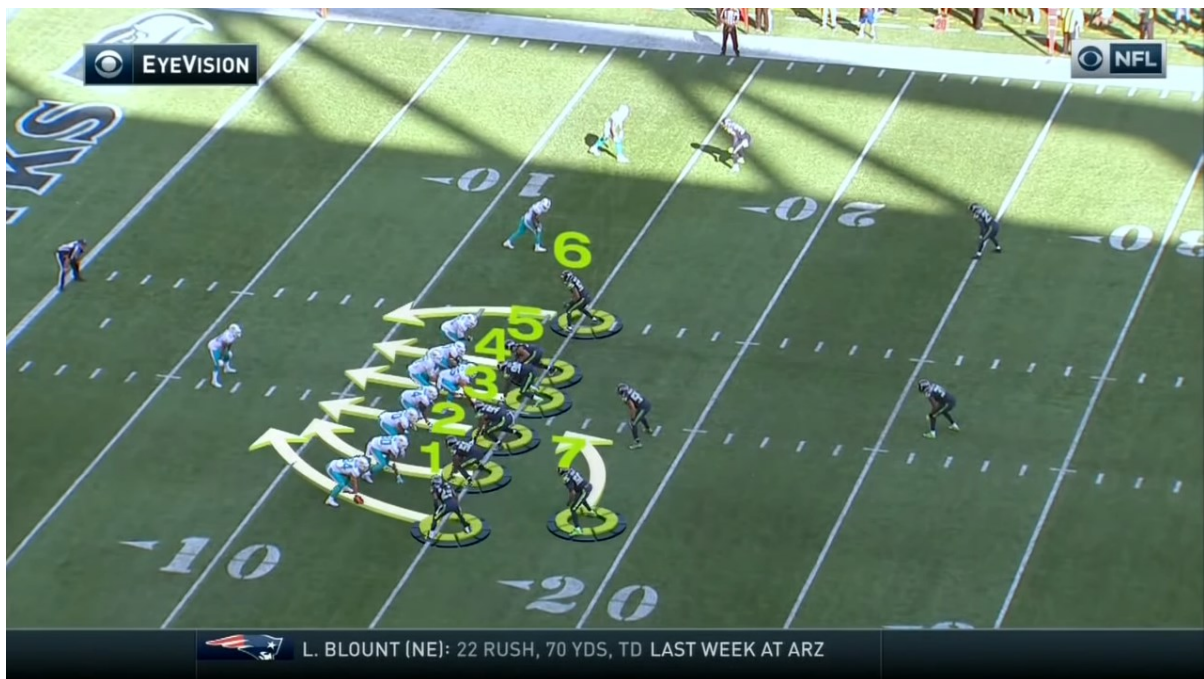


Figure 4.2: Screenshot of another CBS EyeVision analysis. Source: NFL/CBS

4.2.2

While the mediated sports broadcast is undoubtedly enhanced through various techniques, the difference between in-person and home viewing is not cut and dried as even the live in-person viewing experience is narratively augmented through mediated broadcast elements. If the live spectator is to experience the narrativized game product and not just an individual emergent narrative, the in-person viewing must be supplemented by the on-site scoreboard keeping track of the game and/or the elements of the mediated broadcast, whether it be simulcasted radio coverage, the replays and slow-motion on the jumbotrons, or smartphone apps. The spectator relies on the guiding voices of the commentators to explain and to build excitement while the giant screens above the field show in inhuman detail and speed the action happening in multiple angles. Logistically, what an audience member may not be able to see because the action is obscured or may simply be too far away, is almost always available to the broadcast with its arsenal of cameras “permit[ting] close-ups not even visible to audiences watching the game live” (Cashmore 324). For example, baseball spectators have been bringing radios to listen to the live commentary and there is still “a group of passionate fans who listen to the broadcast while at the [baseball] game” (Sunderland) to let the broadcaster become “the eyes and ears of the listener” (Curts) so things not visible from the stands like “whether a pitch caught the inside corner” can be narrativized. When the technology improved, “those in the stands often br[ought] along a portable television so they can ‘see the game better’” (Birrell and Loy 15) and in the Houston Astrodome, “the ridiculous distance from the live action all but prohibits the box owner from viewing the sporting event, box owners are virtually forced to watch the closed circuit broadcast of the

live event in order to follow the game,” (16) completing the replacement of “the game itself as referent” (Sullivan 139) with “its immediacy”. Similarly in football, the in-person viewing experience is assisted through elements of the mediated broadcast.

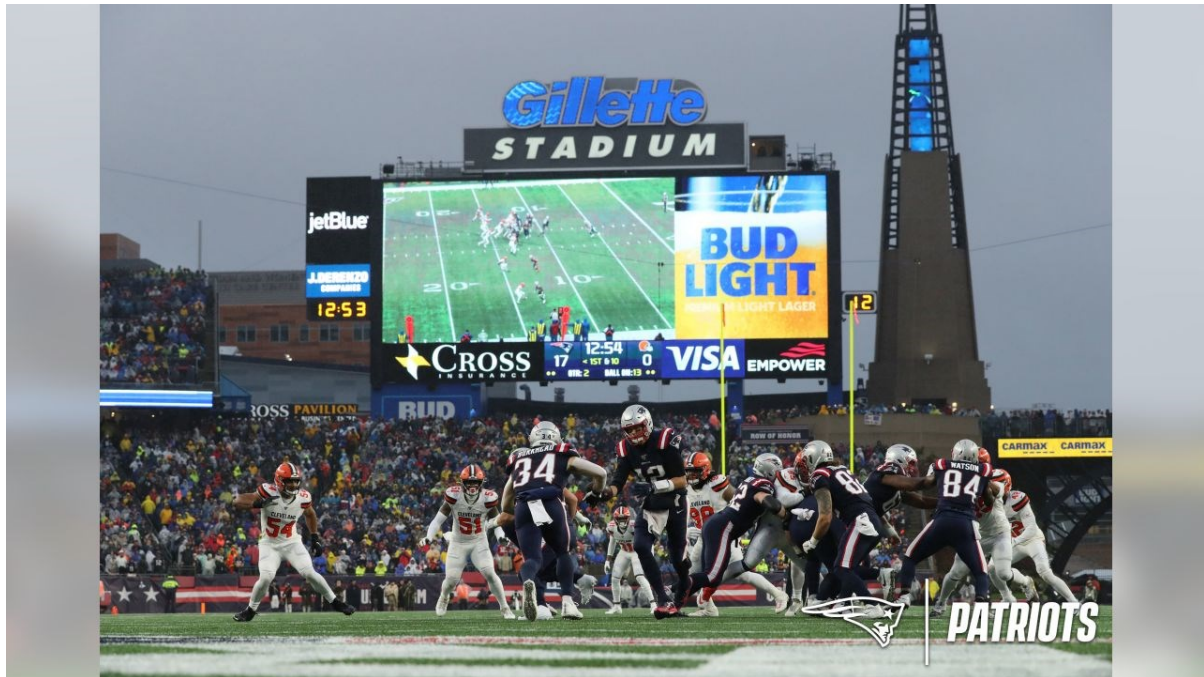


Figure 4.3: The screen at Gillette Stadium. Source: David Silverman

No matter how good a seat may be, there is no way for the human eye to compete against the explanatory and interpretive capabilities of a zoomed-in, slow-motion replay of a touch down or an interception being repeated on the big screens above the field. The spectator in the stadium, while “free to move, to turn the head, to absorb many different pictures, sounds and smells simultaneously, and will therefore stay master of his or her own interpretation” (Barnett 155) must rely on the screen or other elements of the packaged broadcast to experience the broadcast’s “official” interpretation/narrativization of the game. The replacement of “the game itself as referent” (Sullivan 139) with “its immediacy” becomes

clear in cases like the Dallas Cowboys' AT&T Stadium which unveiled in 2009 two screens measuring "72 ft by 160 ft" that can "display a nearly life sized game to fans sitting anywhere in the stadium" (The Drive Staff) or SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles shared by the Chargers and the Rams where they unveiled in 2020 a "360-foot, double-sided 4 K video board" featuring "70,000 square feet of digital LED lighting" (Young) which is bigger than the actual field itself. Such advances in visual fidelity help mediate what is happening in front of the spectators through giant screens seems to imply that mediation has become a necessary to the in-person experience.

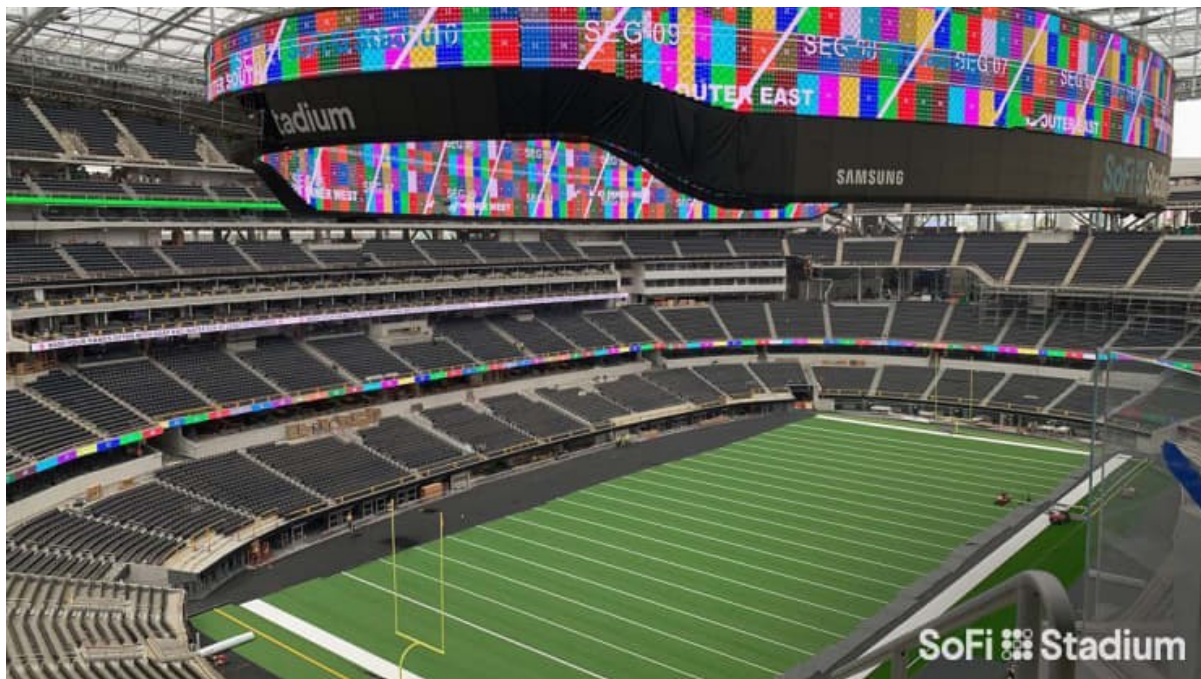


Figure 4.4: The screens at SoFi Stadium. Source: SoFi Stadium

Though it may seem counterintuitive, the reliance on the elements of the broadcast also extends to esports and its in-studio audiences despite the fact that the games are "computer mediated" (Hamari and Sjoblom 213). The live studio audiences must experience

the game being played by players in the same room through a secondary screen because “spectating can never be without computer-mediated aspects as spectators watching an esports event ‘live’ have to eventually watch events from a computer output such as a video screen or monitor”.



Figure 4.5: Screenshot of the main stage and screen at the 2018 WCS Global Finals.

Source: Blizzard/ESL

While each competitor is privy to their own in-game vision shown on their respective monitors, the “observer,” a dedicated employee acting as an in-game cameraman, is given vision of both players’ activities and works in tandem with the commentators to direct and focus the action to “select... major game scenes that the audiences must see” (Jin 3737). Employed under the tournament organizer, the observer is entered into the players’ match as a neutral party without any units to control but with the ability to freely look at anything in-

game. The observer's feed is what is broadcast on stream and in turn the broadcast is what is shown on the main screen on stage for the live audience. If the giant screens which by virtue of their function enshrine their content with narrative value by "interpreting the content" and "focus[ing] on action deemed important" ("Media," Wenner 15) are an inescapable part of the live experience, it is especially true for esports spectators. If anything, the esports audience is more captive to the narrativizing efforts of the broadcast because they do not have a real world referent they can watch: the only spectacle they have access to is the broadcast. This means that for both traditional sports and esports, the in-person viewing experience is not a case of individualized emergent narrative. At least to some degree, the crowd member who is "free to move, to turn the head, to absorb many different pictures, sounds and smells simultaneously" is not "master of his or her own interpretation" (Barnett 155) but the narrative experience is informed by the interpretive actions of the broadcast as the viewer consumes the slow-motion replays of the ball crossing into the endzone or the game's observer bringing to attention a counterattack on screen. Since even the in-person viewing needs mediated content to be narrativized, it is no surprise that the fully mediated home viewing experience for both football and SC2 reveals more similarities than differences.

4.3

Since the mediation of the action to the viewer is the same as, or at least inseparable from, its narrativization, whether the field of play is online or offline, the narrative functionality of their broadcasts is essentially the same. In fact, esports broadcasting generally can be said to be mimicking the broadcasting tropes and techniques of traditional sports media, especially

in its narrative framing. Other unorthodox “sports” have copied mainstream sports, borrowing the necessary techniques not only to mount a successful broadcast but to lend credence and legitimacy through familiar execution. For example, in the world of competitive eating organized under Major League Eating⁸¹, the “form and structure, the language, and the spectacle of competitive eating not only enhance the drama of competition but also enable the identification of this sport with more traditional sports and explain why fans flock to see their favorite competitive eaters perform their feats” (Congalton 175). These unorthodox competitions accomplish this by “mimic[king] the introductions of professionals in other sports,” (180) having sportscasters who have “adopted the discourse of traditional sports,” (183) and by having the announcers “routinely perform scripts that are easily identified with coverage of major sports competition”. In addition to copying the rhetorical strategies of traditional sports, the need to “enhance the drama of competition” seems to result in the adoption of “scripts,” or “standard game-plots” (Ryan 145). So, esports, being in a similar position to competitive eating in that it too is an unconventional sport have “long looked to how compelling emotional and even visceral content for viewers is created by traditional sports broadcasting” (*Watch Me Play*, Taylor 169) and “are now regularly filled with story arcs and pivot points” relying on traditional sport plots and scripts such as “[p]ersonal stories and trajectories as well as team and player rivalries [which] figure into the framing of a game” (170) to present itself.

⁸¹ <https://majorleagueeating.com/>

The adoption of these “scripts” across different competitions is possible because unlike pure fiction, there are a limited number of viable narratives within the competitive context. At first glance, “the structure of a sporting event is essentially narrative, with a beginning, plot complications, and resolution,” (“Theorizing,” Real 30) and seems fully open to narrativization. As competitions, football, SC2 and other sports share the same “sense in which every game satisfies the minimal conditions of narrativity” (Ryan 144) and they “instantiates the most basic narrative pattern: the fight of the hero and the anti-hero,” or “how one team overcame the other”. However, this narrative potential is severely limited because it must meet the condition that it produce a winner and a loser at the end. There have been efforts to categorize story structures that satisfy these conditions. The identified sports narrative structures vary from “the Incredible Come-From-Behind Victory, the Fatal Error, the Heroic Feat, the Lucky Break Victory, the Unlikely Hero, the Inevitable Collapse, Overcoming Bad Luck, Persistence That Pays Off” (Ryan 145) to the “traditional-rivals story, the bitter-enemies story, the wounded-hero story, the Cinderella or Ugly Duckling story, the son-challenging-the-father story” (Oriard 26). While there is no clear consensus of their exact number or names, there are clear cases of overlap like “the Unlikely Hero” and “the Cinderella or Ugly Duckling story”. Regardless of whether video game competitions can be called a sport or not, because SC2 is a competition there is no reason why the “game-plots” and the dramatic structures would not be just as applicable to it as they would be to basketball or hockey. The drama of Serral’s undefeated sweep of the WCS Circuit undoubtedly has a parallel in the “perfect season” found in the 1972 Miami Dolphins⁸². The

⁸² <https://www.profootballhof.com/football-history/miamis-perfect-season/>

framing of the Global Finals as the foreign hope against a historically dominant Korea is merely a variation of the underdog story. Depending on when and how, various parts of Serral's 2018 run could fit into the "game-plot" of "the Heroic Feat," "the Unlikely Hero," "Persistence That Pays Off," or perhaps all of them. In other words, unorthodox competitions resort to the "parabolic projections" of established scripts where "a source story... is projected onto a target story... to help make the latter more intelligible and traceable" (Herman 28) so that even if the content may be unfamiliar, the form is recognizable. So not only do football and SC2 share a base structure which limits the possible potential narrativizations, the practices and techniques behind the interpretive work of broadcasting is openly mimicked by the latter to produce similar results.

4.4

In addition to the adoption of sports narratives, even the presentation of esports broadcast copies techniques from traditional sporting events. The presentation of the home viewing broadcast for esports is, though obviously specialized for the game, similar to the presentation of traditional sports in that it provides the necessary information to provide the viewer a snapshot of the status of the game. In this regard, the broadcast presentation of SC2 is no more different from football than baseball is to hockey and that it is a computer game or that it is primarily streamed over the internet plays no role in its broadcast presentation. In other words, the process of sports mediation and its by-products are the functionally the same but adapted to the specifics of each case.

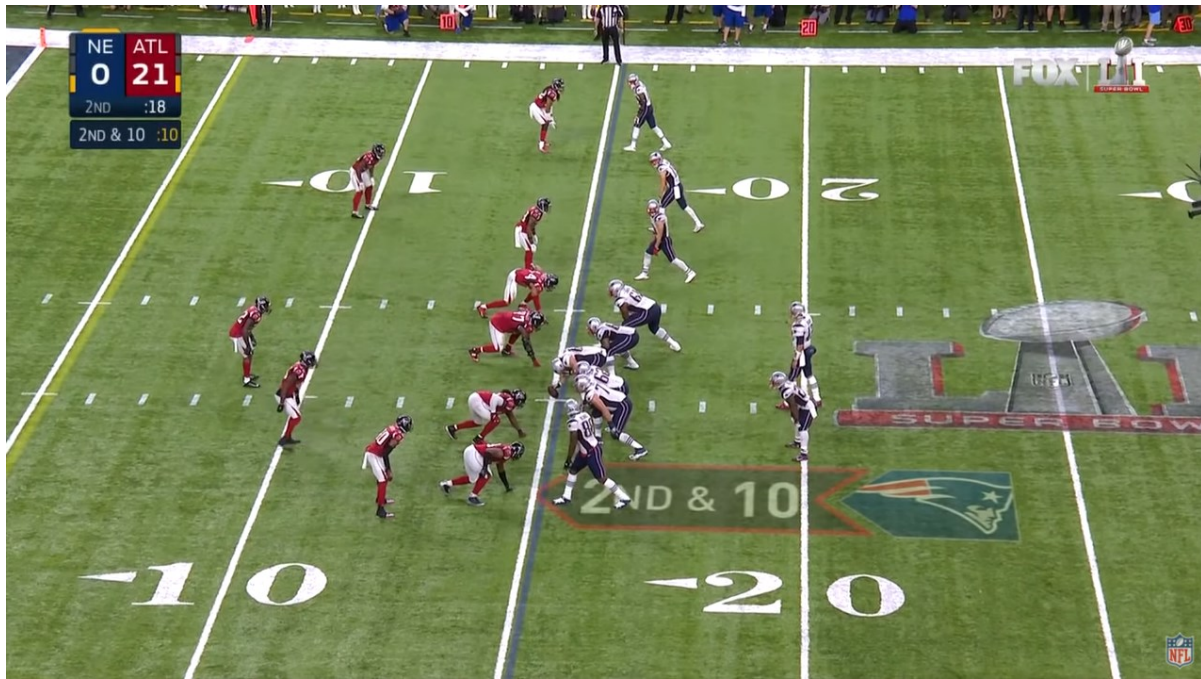


Figure 4.6: Screenshot of a typical football broadcast coverage. Note the addition of the blue line for the line of scrimmage and the yellow line for the 10 yard marker. Source: NFL/FOX

In a typical football broadcast, several graphics are added to aid the viewer in following the game. Other than the obvious score bug in the top left corner with the quarter and remaining time underneath, it also indicates the down and yards with the play clock counting down (currently showing 10 seconds). With the main mechanic in football being moving the ball down the field, the down and yards are graphically shown by adding additional graphical cues to clearly communicate them. A blue line is superimposed onto the field at the line of scrimmage by the 15 yard line where the play will begin, with a big arrow with the down, yards, and the logo of the offensive team; and a yellow line is added by the 5 yard line to mark the distance where the downs will reset. These lines are not actually painted on field but are added to the mediated broadcast to aid the viewers. In conjunction with the score and the clock, these superimposed elements provide a picture of the status of the game at that

point. Comparing this to the SC2 broadcast shows that, while very different visually, the added graphical elements serve the same purpose of framing the action and making it easier to understand.



Figure 4.7: Screenshot from the 2018 WCS Global Finals. Source: Blizzard/ESL

The above screenshot shows a typical SC2 match. While it looks quite busy and impenetrable if unfamiliar with the game, its function is to provide pertinent information so that viewers can reasonably gauge the status of the game. While for the most part football has a clear objective to show (how many tries does it take to move the ball 10 yards), because SC2 is more fluid, more information must be provided to contextualize the game. Merely following the action around may not give the most accurate picture, so the broadcast provides more information to explain the situation. For example, if a player loses a battle it may seem like they are at a disadvantage, but if the broadcast shows that the player has saved plenty of

resources, the situation may be more even than it appears. Thus, the SC2 broadcast must show both the state of the economy and the army for both players for the viewer to accurately follow the game. The bottom center interface shows in direct colour-coded comparison, from left to right, the map score, the total supply of units, the amount of minerals and gas, the supply of workers and army units, and upgrades (of which there are currently none).



Figure 4.8: An excerpt of the bottom bar from the WCS Global Finals broadcast

The production tab in the top left corner shows every unit, building, and upgrade currently being made for both players while the mini-map in the bottom left corner in colour-coded fashion shows the position of every unit and building.



Figure 4.9: An excerpt of the production tab from the WCS Global Finals broadcast



Figure 4.10: An excerpt of the mini-map from the WCS Global Finals broadcast. The white trapezoid shows the current location of the observer's camera

The interface also includes a selected unit information screen on the bottom left corner. This combination of features allows the viewer to garner a snapshot of each player's economy and army at any given time and reasonably assess who has the advantage. Is there more red than blue on the mini-map? Does one player have more resources than the other? Is there a large difference in supply? These kinds of questions and more can be quickly answered with a glance. Like the added in line of scrimmage marker in football, the specialized spectator user interface helps viewers understand the game better. While in football the score can summarize the state of the game, the multi-focal fluidity of SC2 necessitates a more extensive information system to accomplish the same goal.

The crucial role of the additional information in contextualizing and narrativizing "streaming esports games" broadcasts become apparent when compared against a typical example of "esports event broadcasts" (Jang et al. 94) considering that "the *personal* stream subgenre... exists on the opposite end of a continuum from highly managed *event* streams

typical of large, corporate-sponsored e-sports competitions” (St. Clair 704). Because the former is a basically a mirror of the first-person perspective gameplay, not only is it limited to the player’s own vision lacking perfect information on both players like the broadcast, but the presentation of information is adapted for a player/competitor, not a spectator.

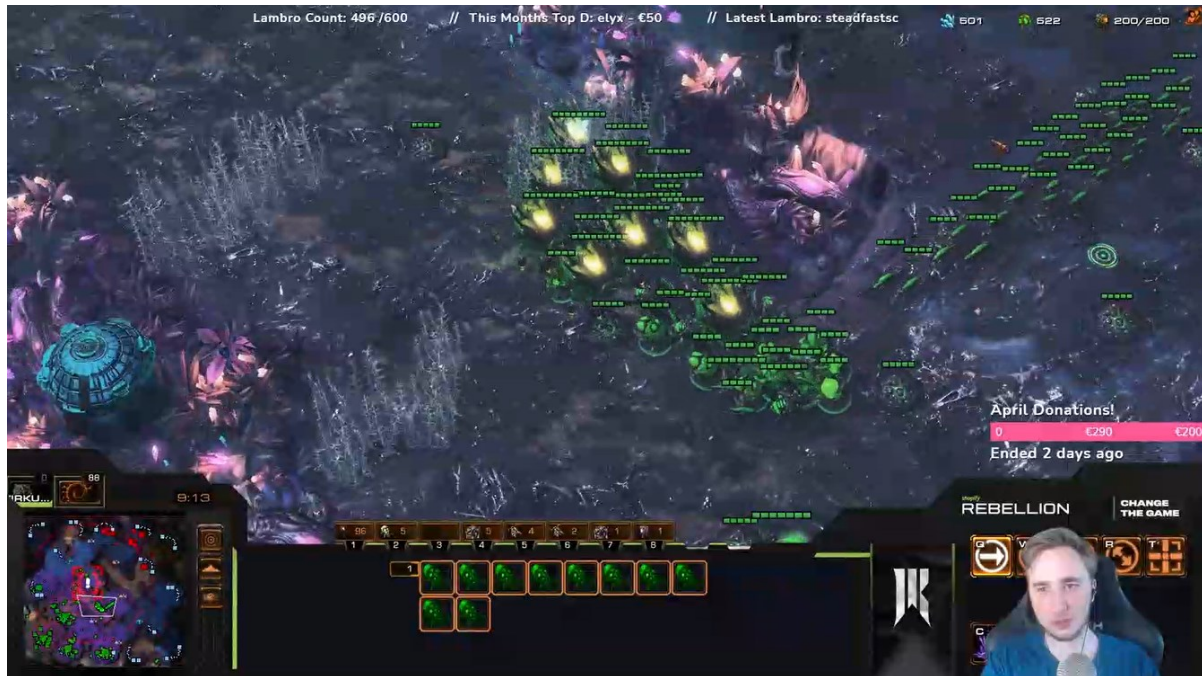


Figure 4.11: Screenshot from Lambo’s personal stream. Source: Twitch/Julian Brosig

In the example above, the screenshot shows Julian “Lambo” Brosig’s stream⁸³. Most obviously, it has features specific to “streaming esports games” (Jang et al. 94) like a donation and subscription counter. The individual streaming broadcast lacks the contextualizing features of the tournament broadcast like perfect vision of both players, the comparative bottom info bar, and the production tab. Instead, the selected unit information screen takes up the bulk of the interface. The player/streamer’s own total supply, minerals,

⁸³ <https://www.twitch.tv/lamboking>

and gas are shown far less prominently in the top right corner and both the streamer and viewer can only guess as to how the opponent is faring. As expected, the individual stream is designed around facilitating the player and thus is focused on unit selection, unit functionality, and a simplified view of resource and army management.

Additionally, for both competitive football and SC2 broadcasts use pop-up graphics to provide additional information to further contextualize and narrativize the game. The “Under Pressure” graphic below gives the relevant statistics for the game showing how Brady has been attacked. By giving these details to the viewers, the broadcast can narrativize New England’s inability to score as a result of Atlanta’s defensive capabilities holding Brady at bay.



Figure 4.12. A typical football statistics graphic. Also note the extended graphic by the score bug detailing the Patriots’ offensive drive. Source: NFL/FOX

Similarly, in the example below, the WCS broadcast shows a “Units Lost” tab, which totals the number of units killed and their collective cost in resources. Like in the Super Bowl example above, by showing that Stats has not lost a single unit so far while Serral has, the broadcast can contextualize and craft a narrative thread about Stats’ efficient harassment of Serral.



Figure 4.13: The units lost tab shown during SC2 broadcasts. Note that it is being shown to highlight Stats’ efficiency in the game so far. Source: Blizzard/ESL

The SC2 broadcast frames, contextualizes, and narrativizes the contents of its broadcast analogously to traditional sports broadcasts. The usage of scripts or game-plots lends a narrative familiarity to esports and the broadcast interface and graphics, though game specific, are employed for the same goal of aiding the viewer through contextualization.

4.5

Of course, there are differences in how football and SC2 are broadcasted. However, the question that must be answered is do the difference stem from differences inherent in traditional sports and esports? Or do the differences stem from differences specific to the competitions, and thus are no more significant than the broadcasting of basketball vs. hockey? At a glance, it seems that since esports is a digitally native endeavor, there must be some fundamentally different aspects and thus consequences to its broadcasting, especially considering the capabilities for interactivity. However, as pointed out earlier esports is a “hybrid of digital and corporeal” (*Raising*, Taylor 210) as much as, or perhaps no more than, traditional sports. Additionally, the role of interactivity in esports broadcasting must be carefully delineated between “streaming esports games” and “esports event broadcasts” (Jang et al. 94). The former is the “individual user-generated content is provided on live stream platforms (e.g. Twitch and YouTube) with high levels of interaction and communication that take place between individual content creators and their viewers via a live chat service” (91), most commonly associated with characteristics such as “a user-generated content culture, multiple interactions (i.e. streamer-viewer-viewer), donation economy, and broadcast schedules” (94). These types of personal streams are “operated by a single player or small group and are characterized by the ways in which they allow direct interaction between the streamer(s) and their audience” (St. Clair 704). On the other hand, esports event broadcasts are the “institutionalized stages upon which professional game competitions take place at specific venues and during specific times” and they “are managed much like traditional

sports broadcasts, with paid commentators and interstitial features”. These are the structured and interpreted broadcasts of matches, i.e. esports, that are the focus of this discussion.

While it may be true that “sport studies has not adequately addressed how new digital technologies and new networks and modes of engagement are changing the cultural work of contemporary mediated sport,” (Brookey and Oates 5) it is not clear whether or not what difference the “contemporary mediated sport” makes. It may be tempting to claim that the interactivity afforded by the internet has had an impact on broadcasting and the “the live stream experience” is no longer “a simplistic one-way broadcast via the internet rather than a television network” (Jang et al. 91). However, when it comes to esports event broadcasts, the interactivity afforded to the viewer is neither uniquely different than the interactivity afforded to spectators of traditional sports nor are the effects of the interactivity particularly impactful to the final broadcasted product. For streaming, the live chat is the focal point of interactivity. In terms of live chat interactivity, on the one hand there is the multifaceted “streamer-viewer-viewer” interaction typical of “streaming esports games” where the streamer is actively cultivating a “user-generated content culture” in a virtual space “of real-time dynamic exchange not just between broadcaster and audience but the audience member with each other too” (*Watch*, Taylor 43). On the other hand, in esports event broadcasts, while it is possible for the host or the commentators to make references to the chat or have automated polls in the chat, the acknowledgement of the chat audience is not aimed at fostering a subculture (the streamer-viewer relationship) in the same way that individual streamers do, and the main purpose of the stream still is to mostly show the matches as a “simplistic one-way broadcast” (Jang et al. 91).

Furthermore, for either in-person or mediated viewing, the interactivity found is not fundamentally different for traditional sports or esports. Whether in sports stadium or esports studios, the active participation of the crowd in attendance lets them contribute to the “uniquely atmospheric moments of sporting drama” (Barnett 155) to create “an energy that circulates between audiences and competitors at live events” (*Raising the Stakes*, Taylor 210) and even before the televising of professional matches, early Korean fans “flocked to PC bang not only to play games but also to watch PC bang regulars go head to head” (Jin 3733). For both traditional sports and esports the modes of fan engagement like cheering, clapping, and bringing home-made signs to show the camera are shared for the same effect. So much so that even for esports, the playing field must be conceptualized as “the hybrid of digital and corporeal”. In the act of prosumption, or the “interrelated process of production and consumption” (Andrews and Ritzer 357), the spectator is “at least partially responsible for generating the atmospheric backdrop against which the sporting drama (or otherwise) unfolds” (358). Whether fans of football or SC2, fans are compelled to contribute to the product of the live event. In both examples below, fans of football and SC2 are actively engaged in producing the live atmosphere, which is then captured by the cameras and packaged into a product for the screen. The fans who do pay for the tickets, parking, hot dogs, and more, to be at the sporting event in person do so not merely to see the game, which could be done on any screen, but to experience the live game itself because “for sports fans, liveness matters” (“Theorizing,” Real 21). The in-person spectator is “free to move, to turn the head, to absorb many different pictures, sounds and smells simultaneously” (Barnett 155) and is privy to the “energy that circulates between audiences and competitors at live events

that cannot be overlooked” (*Raising*, Taylor 210) not available to someone watching the event on television. The spectacle of the live game is in itself an experience. Thus, sports spectators “add to the surplus value of a sporting event – and pay for the privilege of doing so – by positively contributing to the enactment of the live sporting contest” (Andrews and Ritzer 359) through engaging with the sporting event through the various means of cheering and spectating.



Figure 4.14: A Patriots fan holding up a sign during a game. Source: Boston Globe

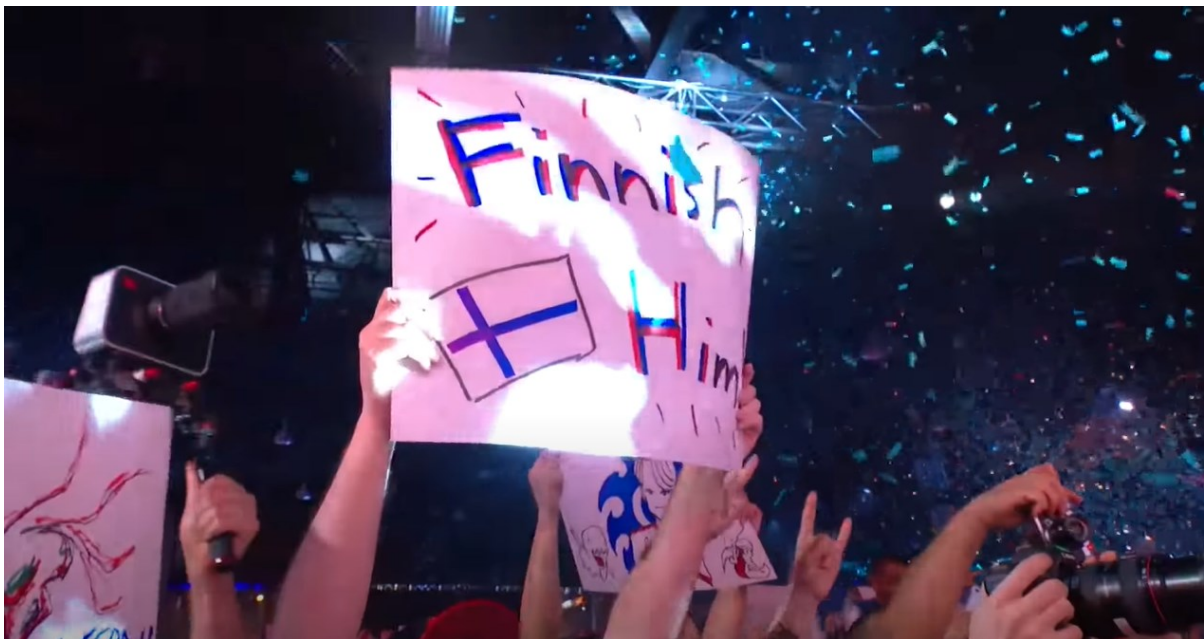


Figure 4.15: A Serral fan holding up a sign at the WCS Global Finals. Source: Blizzard/ESL

In the context of home viewing where the spectator is only engaged with the broadcast through screens, although it may seem like “the interactive, mobile, and user-

generated” (Andrews and Ritzer 360) new media interactivity is unique to esports, it is not. Although some may claim that esports exists as “an exemplar of the convergence of the material and the digital that characterizes prosumer society” (364) through integrated live chat on platforms like Twitch.tv, traditional sports are just as digitally interactive.

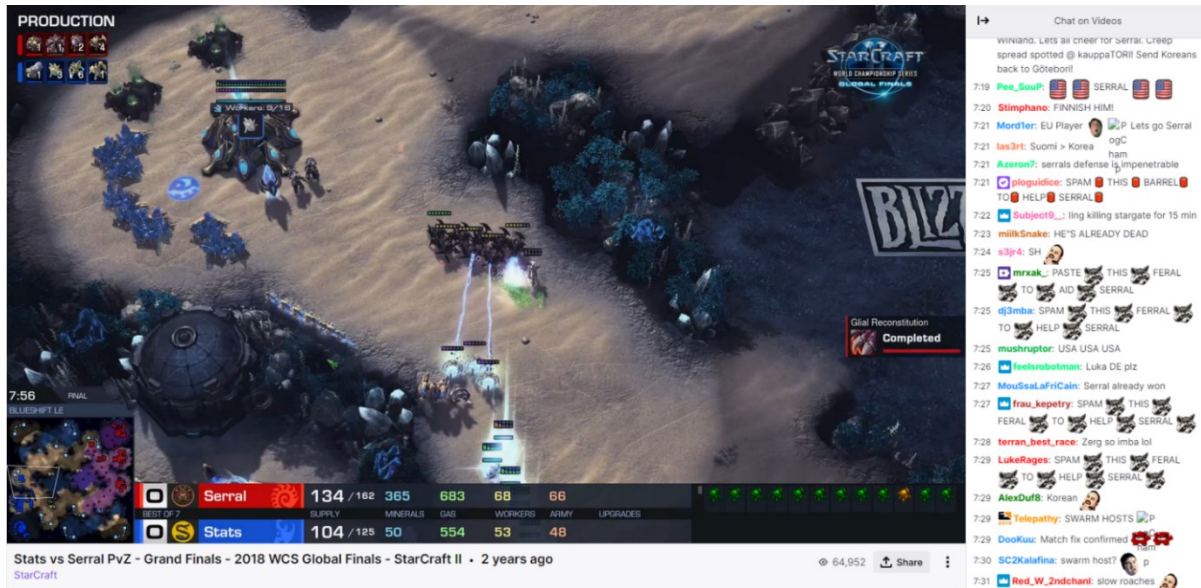


Figure 4.16: Screenshot of the WCS Global Finals with the live chat. Source: Blizzard/ESL/Twitch

The “contemporary sport prosumer is encouraged to feel like a contributor to the media sport landscape, rather than merely an observer” (363) through live reactions, comments, and discussions on social media platforms like Twitter or other dedicated forums, thus making for all intents and purposes contemporary participation in viewing traditional sports is just as much of a “convergence of the material and the digital” as esports. Akin to the integrated live chats of esports streams, live-tweeting to a game serves the same functionality of providing a localized place where spectators can react to the broadcast in real-time. While it may not be as integrated, live tweeting games in real-time is popular practice for traditional sports viewing (Murphy) and “[t]weeting while the game is on expected from almost all sports

accounts” (Herman). Compared to the live chat on the twitch stream, it can be argued that while the platform may be a separate one, the goal and function of the tweets are the same as the Twitch chat. During the 2016 Super Bowl, there were 27.6 million tweets made about the game according to Twitter (Barge) and people live tweeted their reactions to what was happening in the game. When it seemed like the Falcons would win, prominent sports media personalities like Skip Bayless tweeted that the Falcons have already won.

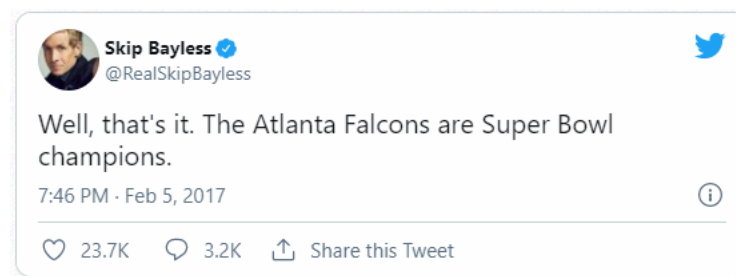


Figure 4.17: Tweet by Skip Bayless. Source: Twitter @RealSkipBayless

Then when the Patriots mounted their unlikely comeback, the figure below shows the real-time reaction to the Falcons’ loss by Jeanna Thomas, a sportswriter for SB Nation and a Falcons fan.



Figure 4.18: A live tweet reaction to the Falcons' Super Bowl loss. Source: Twitter @jeannathomas

Furthermore, the practice of forum-based live threads is shared by sports and esports as well. For Super Bowl LI between the New England Patriots and the Atlanta Falcons, the NFL subreddit's official thread for the game had over 91 thousand comments⁸⁴.

⁸⁴ https://www.reddit.com/r/nfl/comments/5sapal/super_bowl_51_game_thread_new_england_patriots/

Posted by [NFL](#) u/NFL_Mod 4 years ago

13.7k Super Bowl 51 Game Thread: New England Patriots (14-2) at Atlanta Falcons (11-5)

Game Thread

[New England Patriots at Atlanta Falcons](#)

- NRG Stadium
- Houston, Texas

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Overtime	Final
Patriots	0	3	6	19	6	34
Falcons	0	21	7	0	0	28

- General information

Coverage	Odds	Weather
FOX - watch online	New England -3 O/U 57	50°F/Wind 6mph/Partly cloudy/0% chance of rain

Headlines	Communities
Ravens were set to trade draft class to pick Matt Ryan in 2008	r/falcons
Patriots deactivate Michael Floyd for Super Bowl LI	r/patriots

- Game Stats

Passing	Cmp/Att	Yds	Ints	Tds
M.Ryan	17/23	284	0	2
T.Brady	43/62	466	1	2
Rushing	Car	Yds	Lng	Tds
D.Freeman	11	75	37	1
L.Blount	11	31	9	0
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Lng	Tds
J.Jones	4	87	27	0
J.White	14	110	28	1

- Thread Notes
- [Message The Moderators](#)

Discuss whatever you wish. You can trash talk, but keep it civil.

Turning comment sort to ["new"](#) will help you see the newest comments.

Try Chrome Refresh or Firefox's ReloadEvery to auto-refresh this tab.

Use [reddit-stream.com](#) to get an autorefreshing version of this page

Check in on the [r/nfl](#) chat: [#reddit-nfl](#) on FreeNode ([open in browser](#)).

Show your team affiliation - pick your team's logo in the sidebar.

91.5k Comments Share Save Hide Report 76% Upvoted

Figure 4.19: The original post for the Super Bowl LI live thread. Source: reddit.com/r/nfl

Whether they are simultaneous like the tweets or slightly delayed like on the forums, these platforms all serve as loci for spectators viewing the same broadcast simultaneously to engage with each other or simply air their thoughts on the game.

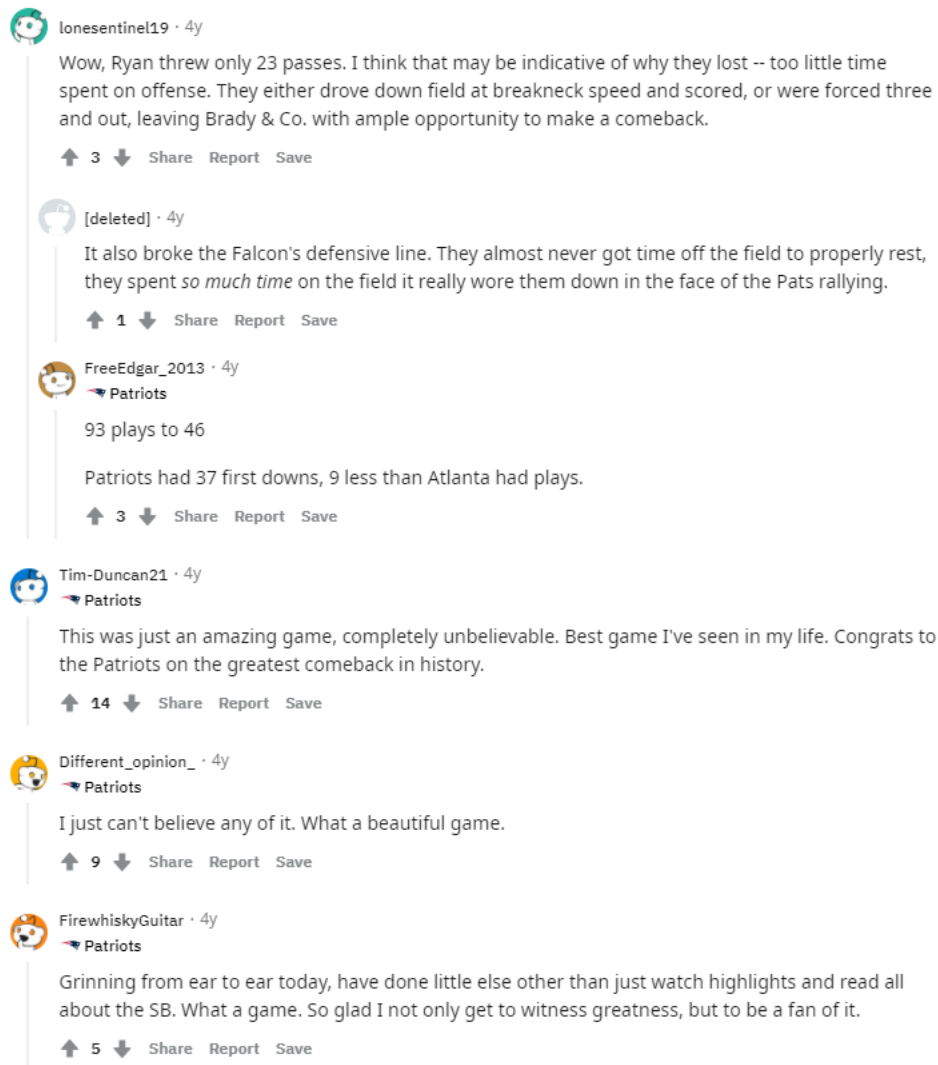


Figure 4.20: An excerpt of some user comments on the Super Bowl 51 thread.

Source: [reddit.com/r/nfl](https://www.reddit.com/r/nfl)

And there are also live threads for discussion for esports. The participants are free to chime in and add to the running conversation about the game at hand and there are no functional differences in between a thread covering football and SC2.

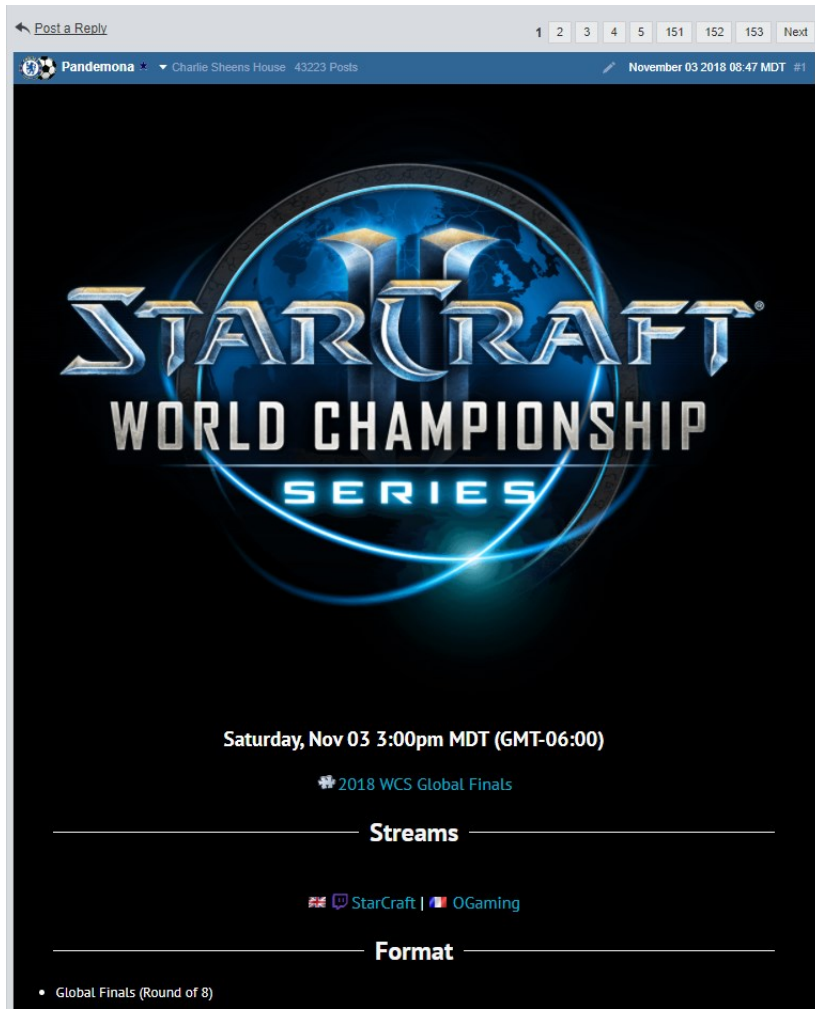


Figure 4.21: Excerpt of the original post for the WCS Global Finals on teamliquid.net. Source: TL.net

Pandemona ★ Charlie Sheens House 43223 Posts November 03 2018 08:47 MDT #2

Poll: WCS 2018 Champion

Serral (121)	65%
sOs (31)	17%
Stats (18)	10%
Rogue (15)	8%

185 total votes

Your vote: **WCS 2018 Champion**

(Vote): sOs
 (Vote): Stats
 (Vote): Rogue
 (Vote): Serral

Moderator Team Liquid Football Thread Guru! - Chelsea FC ♥

Quote Gift TL+

buffzerg33 96 Posts November 03 2018 08:50 MDT #3

Serral 2-0 sOs
 Serral 2-0 Zest
 Serral 3-0 Dark
 Serral 3-0 Rogue
 Serral 4-0 Stats

Best player in history of SC2 is not from Korea.

Quote Report Gift TL+

DarkGamer Germany 200 Posts November 03 2018 08:52 MDT #4

Rogue or Serral will make it. I dont know if rogue is better then dark in zvz but we will find out soon.

Quote Report Gift TL+

Fango United Kingdom 8230 Posts November 03 2018 08:53 MDT #5

With Maru out there's no one I can see beating Serral here.

Zest, sOs, PartinG, Dark, and Maru are the real champs. ROOT_herO is overrated. Snule, Serral, and Scarlett are the foreigner GOATS

Quote Report Gift TL+

TheBloodyDwarf Finland 7511 Posts November 03 2018 08:54 MDT #6

Looks quite good for Serral

Figure 4.22: An excerpt of a poll and some comments from the WCS Global Finals thread.

Source: TL.net

So, when engaging with the broadcast online, both traditional sports and esports have the same or analogous methods of engagement and it can be argued that the audience has little interactivity overall, for both in-person and mediated experiences. It exists in similar and analogous ways. However, the claim that these prosumption interactions “shapes, however minutely, the meanings circulating within the sporting universe” (Andrews and Ritzer 361) deserves an examination. It is undoubtedly true that forum discussions and social media posts do influence “meanings” in the sense that they contribute to the broader discussion, but are these “meanings” the same as the broadcasted narrative? And to what extent does social media content influence the broadcast narrative?

In terms of social media content influencing the broadcast narrative, the implications of the imperatives of the real and remediation hinder how much online interactivity can impact broadcast narrativization. On the most basic level of the game or the match, the meanings and stories that arise out of the presumptive view of interaction are separate from the broadcast narrative, though there can be some reciprocal influences one can have on the other. Ultimately, as stated before, the broadcast narrative is beholden to the imperatives of the real while the “meanings circulating within the sporting universe” are paratextual interpretations reacting to the original broadcast. So, while the “interactive, mobile, and user-generated” (360) methods of engagement are free to create external interpretations of broadcasts, they result in just that: external interpretations. And since the locus of narrativization has been externalized from the game itself through mediation, the online presumptive apparatus is much freer to impose its own interpretations on top of the broadcast narrative. The same loss may be read as a result of a bad call by the coaching staff, a result of

poor officiating, or a myriad of other reasons. For example, the Atlanta Falcons' unexpected loss in Super Bowl LI was attributed to a variety of factors ranging from a single misplay like letting "Matt Ryan take a critical sack, pushing the team out of field goal range," (Thomas) poor decision-making by the offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan who "got greedy, caught up in his battle with Bill Belichick" (Prisco) and "got too cute" with passing plays rather than running plays (Ledbetter), or a combination of "mental mistakes, penalties and a porous defensive effort" (Sobleski). As the many interpretations of the same game show, because the online discourse is in effect externalizing the interpretation of the game, it is less beholden to the granular imperative of the real and thus freer to impose its own interpretations.

Additionally, it is impossible for the social media content to be the same as or even be on the same narrative order as the broadcast narrative because it is a reaction to a mediation. Simply put, the broadcast happens before the production of meanings circulating the broader discourse. So, while the broader discourse can react to the events on the field and their mediation, the events on the field do not react to the forum discussions because they happen temporally prior to them. Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that the digital interaction is a reaction to the mediated broadcast of the game, and not the game itself. As "the logic of immediacy leads one to erase... the act of representation" (Bolter and Grusin 329) and leads to "the inseparability of mediation and reality" (346), the online discourse ends up reacting to the broadcast of the event and not the event itself since the "primary event being covered isn't the contest itself, but its immediacy, thereby eliminating, in a sense, the game itself as referent" (Sullivan 139). Thus, the online discourse uses the already partly interpreted game, experienced only through camera and commentary, as its basis. In other words, the digital

interaction is reacting not to the sport but the sports media. Since the commentary “is produced in response to a temporal sequence which manifests itself quite separately from the commentator, and which has an independent existence in time” (Marriott 82), the online discussions produced in response to the broadcast which “has an independent existence in time” are like second- or third-order commentary. Thus, other than predictions which obviously happen before the game, the social media content or the chat cannot control the outcome of the broadcast or its narrativization which happens before and must wait until the broadcast is shown to react to it.

Although the social media discourse cannot single-handedly direct the sporting event or the narrativization of the broadcast, there are two ways it can influence the narrative: an integration of the digital discourse by the broadcast or through the use of external narrativization. First, it is not unusual for broadcasts to feature tweets or for esports events, garner predictions from the chat, and incorporate these elements as part of the show.

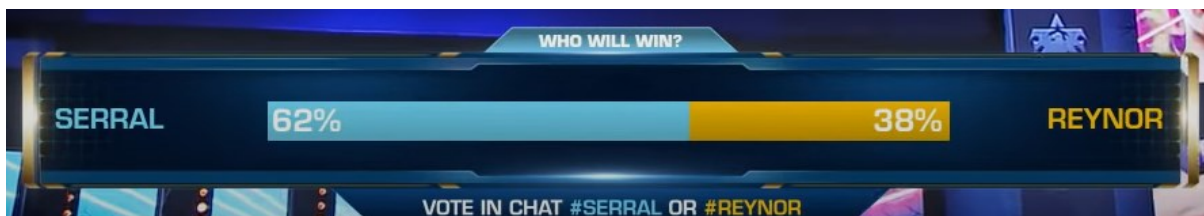


Figure 4.23: A Prediction poll for WCS Montreal. Viewers vote by typing “#Playername” into the chat. Source: Blizzard/DreamHack

While the broadcast can use these polls to plant the seeds for possible narrative threads, no matter what the tweet may say or what the poll result may be, and no matter how much the broadcast tries to frame itself using these interactions, if the imperatives of the real force the narrativization to go in a different direction, the broadcast must follow. Second, as pointed

out earlier, it is reasonable to assume that the social media content does influence the paratextual discussions in the broader sports discourse. So, while the interactivity may not be able to exert its influence directly on to the narrativization of the broadcasts, it can influence the higher order narratives when its externalized interpretations of media coverage begin to play a greater role in how games are narrativized. The social media discourse and forum discussions can form the basis of a consensus which in turn forms the external narratives which then are used as the framework for approaching a game, season, or player. For example, the framing of the Patriots' 2016 as "Brady's revenge tour" stems from sentiments not found on the field and revealed through plays but from the broader football discourse. As sportswriter Peter King pointed out, there was no evidence of this "revenge tour" at practice all week or the game ("Tom Brady is Back," King), but it certainly was the dominant narrative surrounding Brady's return from suspension and his supposed "built-up frustration" ("Patriots vs. Browns Game Summary," ESPN/Associated Press). As the outside discourse of revenge found in articles, previews, and social media is used to interpret the broadcasted games, the external narrative of revenge is imposed on to broadcasts. As the diagram below shows, if the online discourse influences the external narrativization, it is possible for it to impact the higher order narratives.

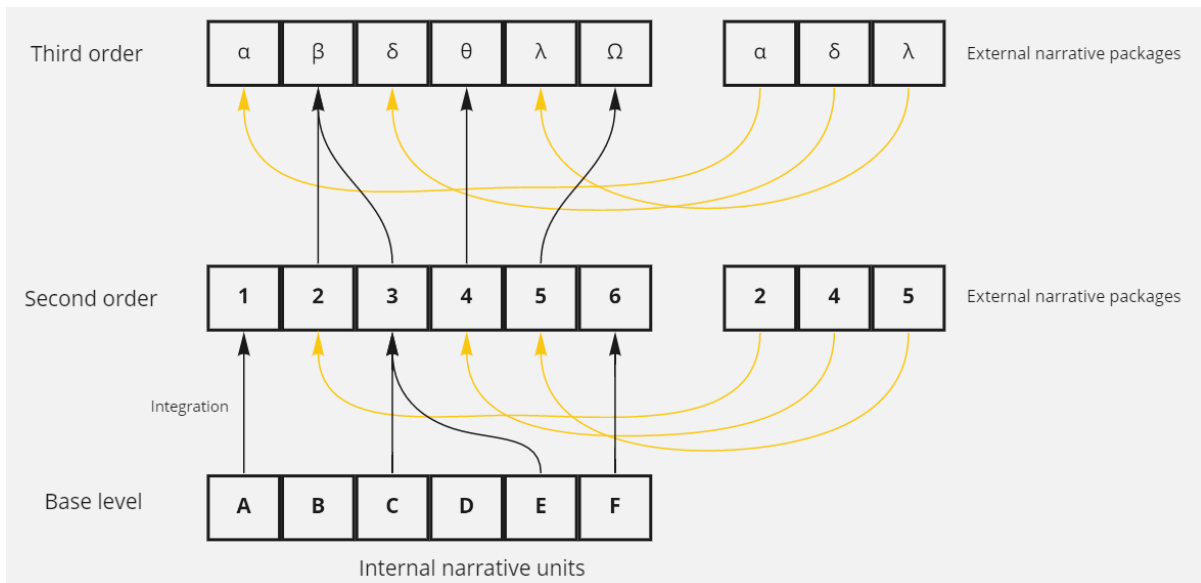


Figure 3.19: A diagram of external narrativization

Thus, in its potential to influence the higher level integrative narratives, the online interactivity could be said to have an indirect impact on the narrativization. Thus, the influence of the broader discourse is limited to second or third order levels of organization where the imperatives of the real are weak enough to leave room for outside sources of narrativization.

4.6

Whatever the impact the broader discourse has on the narrativization, whether traditional sports or esports, or offline or online, there is no functional difference between how the online interactive discourse and the top-down newspaper/Web 1.0 sports discourse “shapes, however minutely, the meanings circulating within the sporting universe” (Andrews and Ritzer 361). Though it may be tempting to overemphasize the novelty or the simultaneity of the digital interactivity present in online spectatorship and engagement, there is no unique impact on the broadcast insofar as influencing its capacity for narrativization. Whether

directly incorporating aspects of the wider conversation as talking point in the broadcast or utilizing it as the basis for external narrativization, what difference does it make if the conversation takes place on an internet forum or in the pages of a newspaper? What is the difference in narratological impact between a broadcast referring to a tweet written 5 minutes ago predicting that “Team A will win” compared to a broadcast referring to an article written the day before predicting that “Team A will win”? It is novel that there can be real-time feedback from the audience but that is just that, a novelty. Not only is the immediate digital reaction still temporally following the actual broadcast and confined to the imperatives of the real, its external narrativization is the most effective when it is not immediate but when it has had the time to permeate the wider sporting discourse. It is when conversations gather enough momentum and relevance in the broader discourse that it gains enough narrative relevance as external narrativization to be integrated into the various levels of narrative. For example, the entire Deflategate scandal arose out of a single tweet made by Bob Kravitz after the 2015 AFC Championship game where the Patriots defeated the Indianapolis Colts 45-7 alleging that “the NFL is investigating the possibility the Patriots deflated footballs Sunday night” (Kravitz).



Bob Kravitz ✓
@bkravitz



Breaking: A league source tells me the NFL is investigating the possibility the Patriots deflated footballs Sunday night. More to come.

12:55 AM · Jan 19, 2015 · Twitter for iPhone

4,794 Retweets 47 Quote Tweets 1,304 Likes

Figure 4.24: Bob Kravitz's breaking tweet. Source: Twitter @bkravitz

Within four days, the scandal had become the lead story for all three network evening newscasts of the NBC Nightly News, CBS Evening News, and the ABC World News Tonight (Smith). Regardless of whether or not there really was deliberate cheating or whether the balls were underinflated enough to make an impact on the game or if the punishments handed out were sufficient, this external series of events coloured the surrounding discourse around the Patriots and Brady himself. As the investigation, press conferences, and media coverage piled on, all of this activity off the field tinted how events would be perceived on the field. When the Patriots and the Colts were scheduled to play the following season, NBC “had at its disposal one of the world’s most time honored of storylines” of “revenge” (Leibovich 107) and the game was framed as “Deflategate Bowl” and a chance for the Colts to avenge their loss. As discussed in previous chapters, Brady’s suspension for the first four games of the 2016 season was a notable narrative framing device at the beginning of the season. The investigation and suspension stemming from Deflategate, something that occurred off the field before the 2016 games were played, were used as the narrative scaffolding for potential higher level storylines about Brady and the Patriots performance for the season. Although Deflategate lasted a total of 544 days, from Kravitz’s initial tweet to Brady announcing that he will no longer contest the NFL’s punishment (Reimer), its effects on the broader football discourse are still echoing with articles and timelines being published in 2021 (Trotta, Bird).

Even for something like the chat polls discussed earlier, there were no shortages of predictions in pre-internet televised sports whether in the newspaper the day before, at the

analysts' desk before the game, or on barstools amongst friends. While it is true that a live chat or a tweet thread does allow viewer-viewer interaction, this is not something new, but rather something that records what was previously ephemeral. Fans and spectators have discussed live games and last night's game amongst themselves before the internet, in the stands, in bars, by the watercooler, etc. Ultimately, the technological affordances of streaming merely transcribe an established practice; Twitch.tv did not invent simultaneous viewer-viewer engagement.

For both traditional sports and esports broadcasting, then, both the broadcasts themselves and their social media content are bound by the imperatives of the real and cannot deviate into fiction. Thus, the ways in which spectators engage with both broadcasts are analogous and functionally similar, and the influence of online interactions are limited to the broader discourse and not the games directly and the simultaneity afforded by online interactivity is functionally no different to narrativization than the older top-down paper or web 1.0 models, all to produce variations on a small subset of possible storylines. So, what is the difference between the broadcast narrativization of traditional sports and esports?

As stated before, the broadcast is not merely a picture-perfect recreation of the action on the field but a deliberate act of mediation which interprets and narrativizes the game. Furthermore, untraditional competitions whether it be competitive eating or competitive video games, have copied the overall presentation and aesthetic of traditional sporting broadcasts. In this regard, the broadcasting of esports both on and off the "field" is overwhelmingly similar to traditional sports broadcasting. Its use of storylines, statistics, and screens all mirror the techniques and technologies of traditional sports for the same purpose

of creating an interpreted product for its viewers. Insofar as narrativization is concerned, the fact that the esports action occurs in the virtual realm or that it is streamed online has no effect. If it is a mediated broadcast of a competition, barring logistical differences in camerawork and such, the usage of the same techniques and storytelling devices results in similar products. There is no fundamental difference between sports and esports broadcasting, and the differences that exist are more akin to the differences between any other sports: football vs. basketball, baseball vs. soccer, etc. There are obviously differences in camerawork, the styles of commentary, and the statistics or graphics used, but all sports and esports broadcasting are fundamentally doing the same thing.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1

In this dissertation, the question of how sporting events are narrativized was tackled. First, a basic framework for approaching the real-time narrative of sports broadcast was developed by building on Barthes' tripartite model of narrative. By adopting a reiterative process, the modified Barthesian framework is capable of overcoming the hermeneutic circle of real-time broadcasting, where not only the whole narrative including the ending must be known to determine which parts are relevant to the narrative but also the relevant parts must be known to construct the whole narrative. This model also borrowed from Ricoeur the concepts of episodic and configurational dimensions, or what the relevant narrative events are and how they are arranged, respectively. Through the reiterative process, the analysis weeds out the narratively negligible material from the important ones, progressively building layers of narrativization until a final narrative can be identified. With respect to application to sports, due to its unpredictability the broadcast is forced to balance its desire of the imaginary and the imperatives of the real. In other words, it must find ways to tell the story it wants while still incorporating the real events of the game. It was found that the broadcasts themselves hedge their bets by laying the groundwork for multiple possible outcomes, then build on the most accurate and relevant outlines. However, because of the unpredictable nature of sports, sometimes the narrative the broadcast is building may be completely wrong. Thus, multiple readings of the text are simply necessary to first know what all the events of the broadcast are, then to construct the different layers of narrativization working towards the final

narrative for the broadcast. With the knowledge of the ending in mind, successive layers of narrativization can be built, starting from raw functions, functional clusters, storylines, and the final narrative.

The new analytic method proposed in this dissertation provides a new avenue of sports narrative analysis. The Barthesian model was limited to its three levels of function, action, and narration, which is perfectly functional in analyzing fiction, but is insufficient when narrativizing reality which necessarily includes narrative waste and more layers. By expanding on Barthes' original three levels to accommodate the varying number of narrative organizations at play in sporting broadcast and discourse, the model can adapt its narrative stratification to each case at hand. As discussed before, the narrative surrounding the WCS had more layers than its counterpart in the NFL. Furthermore, this new model is able to overcome the hermeneutic circle brought on by the challenges of real-time narration by incorporating Ricoeur's concepts of episodic and configurational dimensions. By including a reiterative component sorting the pseudo from the true narrative units at each level, this new model can not only determine what the final determined narrative is but also reveal the simultaneous process of narrativizing a live event and how the narrativization shifts according to the unpredictable external events.

The second chapter applied this narrative analysis model to traditional sports via the 2016 New England Patriots. The narrative analysis was applied to individual games to show how the broadcast narrativized the game and instances where narrativization failed because the events of the game diverged too much from the story being pursued by the broadcast. Additionally, the narrativization analysis was extended to levels above the game. On the

level of the season, a higher order narrative can be constructed by piecing together the final narratives of all the individual games. Thus, the notion of changing narrative scope and the reframing of narrative units was examined as what was once the narrative end on an individual game level becomes the building blocks on the seasonal level.

The third chapter applied the narrative analysis model to esports through the 2018 WCS performance of the Finnish player Serral. Again, individual games were analyzed to show the broadcast narrativized the games. However, because SC2 matches are organized differently than professional football, it opened up more narrative layers and further exploration of the issue of higher orders of narrativization. Not only are the matches played as best-of-3's at the very least, but there are also multiple tournaments in a single season, thus giving the WCS at least two more levels of narrativization between an individual game and a season. In exploring the multiple layers of storytelling, I discovered that as the order of narrative becomes higher and it becomes further removed from the original text of the broadcast, the imperatives of the real weaken and more narrative malleability can be achieved as sources of external narrativization can be incorporated into the narrativization. Simply put, more control can be exerted over the narrative of the season as the smaller details of individual games get lost within the increased scope. When the narrative analysis was extended to the historical context of the esport itself, it was shown that the losses Serral accrued over the year were forgotten in favour of constructing the more narratively convenient and satisfying storyline of the foreign hope. With the narrative surrounding Serral, in a sense somewhat detached from reality, the narrative of the foreign hope which exists outside of the games themselves is able to permeate into the narrativization.

The fourth chapter examined and compared the broadcasting and narrativization of football and SC2. Although it may be instinctive to assume that football, a television-based event, must be fundamentally different from SC2, an Internet streaming-based event, a thorough examination of both show that they are more similar than different. While one may be on a television and the other on a computer, both are screen mediated products. Although the logistical specifics are different, the role and function of the camera, commentary, and the overall production share the same goal of capturing, interpreting, and packaging competition into a story product. It is within this layer of mediation between the action on the (virtual) field and the screen that the narrativization occurs, and in this regard both traditional sports and esports are the same. Even in live in-person viewing experiences mediation is inescapable as both traditional sports and esports rely on screens and elements of the broadcast to convey the game to their viewers. The distinction between the two are even smaller on the screen because esports actively mimics the traditional sports broadcasts by copying broadcast techniques and storylines. While the two games do have very different rulesets, both are competitions resulting in winners and losers, which means the games can share the same limited possible storylines which can be superimposed on to them such as rivalries and comebacks. While SC2 and esports more broadly may seem like they should have some innate difference to traditional sports because of the simultaneous interactivity afforded by streaming, the broadcasts are still produced events and not individual esports content streams. The aim of the broadcast is to show the viewers an interpreted narrative of competitions, not to engage with the viewership in the same way as an individual content streamer. Furthermore, although there are live chats and forums where esports viewers can

interact with the broadcast and each other, the same exists for traditional sports, though on different platforms, and not unique to esports. While the ability to interact online is novel, in terms of narrativization, it bears little to no effect. The broader sports discourse can be affected by online interactions and engagements, but the lower level broadcast narratives still bound by the imperatives of the real of what happens on the field and not on Twitter. Higher level narratives are more prone to external narrativization, but that is not a new phenomenon introduced with online interactivity and has been around since the top-down communication format of newspapers and radio. The medium through which sports discourse primarily happens has changed but its effects have not. While the games and medium have drastically shifted, the narrativization of sporting events still operate similarly to produce the same product, an externally interpreted story the spectator can understand.

In this dissertation, a working model of how to analyze the narrativization of sports broadcast was proposed. The model was then applied to two case studies, one a traditional sport and the other an esports. In both cases, individual games were analyzed to reveal how both broadcasts attempt to tell a story in real-time without knowledge of the ending, balancing their own desire of the imaginary with the game's imperatives of the real. Above the level of the game, the broadcasts connect multiple games to form bigger narratives of tournaments, seasons, and even the sport. At these higher level narratives, the storytelling becomes more flexible as external sources of narrativization can begin to influence the narrativization. In the end, the more distant a narrative is from the source material, the more malleable it becomes. Finally, a comparison of traditional sports and esports broadcasting was done. Although football and SC2 are wildly different games, their broadcasts ultimately

do the same thing by interpreting and producing a narrative product through mediation. While the media and platforms may be different, the ways in which their respective spectators view and engage with the broadcasts are the same or have analogous parallels, showing that whether on television or the internet, the packaging of competition remains the same.

So, what does the work expounded in this project mean for narrative studies at large? First, the new model of live narrativization proposed in this work provides a novel way to analyze the phenomenon of real-time storytelling. Instead of relying on previous models of narrative aimed at fiction with its neat boundaries of authorial intent and control, the new model uses a self-reflexive and reiterative method to correct itself just as a live broadcast does. The flexibility and accommodability of the model give it a clear advantage in analyzing live narrativization which itself must be flexible and accommodating as it seeks to build a narrative yet without an ending. Although in this project the model was applied to football and SC2, as the discussions on the commonality of story structures suggested, the model proposed here could be applied equally effectively to any other traditional sport or esports, or for that matter any competitive structure. In future work, the model and its application here could be the starting point for any kind of competition, sports or not. The lessons garnered through this project could be applied to any type of live broadcasting or storytelling. In cases where the narrativizing entity does not know how things will turn out, the new model could be a helpful tool for examining how the narration balances the unpredictability of live events and its desire for narrative coherence. Additionally, the work done in this project bridges a crucial gap between narratology and sports studies. While there has been some work on

storytelling in sports, it focuses on athletes as heroes or the final narrative product with little attention paid to the process of narrative formation. Through not only a new model of analysis but also its application to two widely different competitions, this project has shown the delicate balancing act undertaken by broadcasters attempting to build sports narrative and has shown the various ways the broadcast corrects or even outright fails to narrativize properly. By expanding on the process behind the final narrative, the work done here can serve as a springboard for studying how the narrative impulses so imbedded in sports is brought out to light.

Furthermore, a more nuanced understanding of storytelling, broadcasting, and the interplay between the two may have wide-reaching industry applications. Although the imperatives of the real still applies, a thorough study of narrativization may help production teams design for better and more compelling storylines in the future. The exploration of the use of external media and the role of mediation especially may be a good starting point for the future of the esports industry. As the industry continues to mature, its dependence on traditional sports models of viewership and production may not be enough to distinguish it as a separate endeavour.

5.2

So, what does the future hold for traditional and esports broadcasting? Technological progress will certainly increase the visual fidelity of broadcasted material with higher resolutions or even the adoption of virtual reality, but on its own it will not lead to any significant changes in how sporting broadcasts are produced or consumed. In fact, both the NHL and the NBA have begun experimenting with virtual reality (VR) broadcasts (NHL

Public Relations, Oculus Blog) and the NFL has tried VR pre- and post-game segments as well (nflcommunications.com). As new and exciting the potential of VR may be in what it promises to deliver “a game-changing, new hockey experience” where fans will be feel “the excitement of the fans, speed and finesse of NHL’s teams, big hits, epic matchups and goals... as if they were in the arena,” (NHL Public Relations) it is doubtful if this technology can “transfer the unparalleled joys of watching hockey in an arena to someone’s rec room” and “recreat[e] that personal experience for the fan” (Wyshynski). Whether as an active prosumer or a passive viewer, the spectator is privy to the excitement and the atmosphere of the live experience, while the home viewer is privy to the plethora of visual broadcast techniques and commentary which inform and heighten the viewing experience. The use of VR in sports broadcasting seems to combine the worst of both worlds: it is the “live experience” without the crowd or the atmosphere, and it is televised viewing without the full gamut of its storytelling tools. Even if the VR user had access to the broadcast’s commentary, there would be a disconnect between what the viewer sees and hears because there is no guarantee that the viewer’s own perspective would match the commentary’s perspective. Ultimately, the adoption of VR would only affect the visual fidelity of the broadcasts while retaining the same broadcasting paradigms. It is merely adjusting the quality of delivery while still delivering the same product.

Although the similarities between the broadcasting of traditional sports and esports have been extensively discussed, it may be of use to also explore the potential avenues in which esports in the future could be differentiated in its execution and delivery. The lack of differences to traditional sports in historical and contemporary esports production seems to

be a result of, or at least a consequence of, the fact that esports has largely modelled itself on its predecessors. All the arguments made about football and SC2 could just as easily apply to hockey and League of Legends, or basketball and lacrosse. Especially considering that traditional sports are now readily available to stream over the Internet, the distinction between traditional sports and esports broadcasting is becoming more negligible and may erase the distinction between television sports and internet sports altogether. Furthermore, the potential narratives will remain the same as long as the broadcasters use the same scripts and story structures. Treating television broadcasting as old media and internet streaming as new media for sporting events may be an incorrect way to conceptualize them. Regardless, there is “no actual performance of e-sports outside of computation and media,” (*Raising*, Taylor 210) making esports an endeavour that is entirely facilitated through digital media. This also means that as a computer-mediated activity, esports is also privy to factors and affordance simply not available to traditional sports which have to be played in the real world.

Therefore, to distinguish itself from traditional sports, it stands to reason that esports should take advantage of features available to its medium that cannot be found elsewhere. In other words, esports could use whatever features are unique to the digital medium unavailable to traditional sports to produce different narratives and broadcast experiences. To really change what esports broadcasting is, esports must differentiate itself from traditional sports by taking advantage of aspects of digital mediation, which may include altering not only the delivery of content but also the conditions of play.

Interactivity, specifically, is one feature that is both integral and unique to the “computation and media” of streaming. Although some aspects of interactivity were brushed

aside because of their overlap with the kind of interactivity extant in traditional sports through social media and such, the scope of that discussion was strictly limited to the “traditional esports event broadcast” which are “institutionalized stages upon which professional game competitions take place at specific venues and during specific times” (Jang et al. 94). For all intents and purposes, esports remains to be a “simplistic one-way broadcast via the internet rather than a television network” (91). While viewers are free to engage with each other, whether in a bar or on a forum, they are still “talked at” by the one-way structure of broadcast. The separation of these two communicative arrays and the retention of the top-down broadcast-viewer structure is why even when streamed online, traditional sports and esports broadcasting currently are still stuck in their old media ways. And as “the interactive, mobile, and user-generated (new media and Web 2.0) technologies” (Andrews and Ritzer 360) bring traditional sports online, the differences become even smaller. On the other hand, broadcasts of “streaming esports games” (Jang et al. 91) of “individual peer-to-peer live broadcasting using esports games as content” is associated with the type of interactivity not found in produced events like “including a user-generated content culture” and “multiple interactions” between “streamer-viewer-viewer”. This kind of broadcasting is characterized by “individual user-generated content... on live stream platforms (e.g., Twitch and YouTube) with high levels of interaction and communication that take place between individual content creators and their viewers via a live chat service”. The interactions which amplify viewer agency is unique to streaming content and its medium. Viewers watching a football game simply cannot talk to players on the field, cheering and jeering notwithstanding, nor can they talk to the commentators covering the game. The

reason why sporting event broadcasts are still entrenched in the top-down broadcaster-viewer structure is that the broadcast is a heavily produced affair and not a democratic process. A team of producers, editors, cameramen, and commentators need to work together to produce the final product and ultimately the viewer is a “prisoner to sports producers, directors and commentators, with sound and vision subject both to technological and to resource limitations as well as to the whims of one person in a control van” (Barnett 155).

So, if the free interaction between content producer and viewer is a trait unique to esports content streaming, how could this trait be used to produce a broadcast experience notably different from that of contemporary traditional sports? Perhaps the two types of streaming, the “streaming esports games” and “esports event broadcast,” can be combined so that there is no distinction between the streamer and the broadcast. Such a change could allow viewers to be active participants in the unfolding gameplay, thus making the broadcast a true cooperative prosumer experience rather than “a simplistic one-way broadcast via the internet rather than a television network” (Jang et al. 91). While theoretically, this sounds easy enough, it would be difficult implement practically, especially for competitions. How could an unequal number of participants and unequal conditions be justified in a tournament? What would allowing the spectators into that process look like?

In the context of streaming, the collaborative back-and-forth communication between streamer and viewer is not uncommon. A streamer may ask the chat for suggestions on strategy or playstyle and act accordingly. In doing so, the interacting spectator is truly participating in the creation of content “co-constructed *through* the artwork and via the transformative work of play” (*Watch*, Taylor 28). Although it a non-competitive game and

setting, one notable example of this crowd-sourced cooperative play streaming would be “Twitch Plays Pokemon⁸⁵” (TPP). First started in February of 2014 with a playthrough of Nintendo’s and Game Freak’s 1998 game *Pokemon Red*, TPP is an anonymously run Twitch stream where the viewers input commands through the live chat to control the game.

Pokemon Red was designed as a single-player role-playing game so having thousands of people simultaneously inputting often contradictory commands made the gameplay much more difficult. The game which was meant for a “single player mapped to a single agent” (St. Clair 702) had “at its peak... over 100,000 people simultaneously giving instructions” (703) and set the Guinness World Record for the “most users to input a command to play a live streamed videogame” at 1,165,140 for the complete playthrough of *Pokemon Red* (Guinness World Records). With so many people vying for control, progress was slow and it was “a terrible way to play a video game,” (St. Clair 703) but it illustrates the potential for massive co-constructed play. Albeit a slightly extreme example, this kind of cooperative play can only be facilitated and occur in digital spaces without an analogue in traditional sports. An arena filled with thousands of fans may cheer and jeer, but they lack the ability to directly control the players within the game. Especially considering more novel conceptualizations of esports which theorize it as “an assemblage of consumption practices, where consumers actualize and sustain the eSports phenomenon through their engagement with the interconnected nexuses of playing, watching and governing eSports” (Seo and Jung 637) seems to imply an innate quality of viewer engagement. Furthermore, applying this kind of “co-constructed” and “transformative work of play” would be not viable in competitive

⁸⁵ <https://www.twitch.tv/twitchplayspokemon>

settings because any sort of outside help would easily be labeled as unfair. One of the seven characteristics of modern sports is the “equality of opportunity to compete, and in the conditions of competition,” (Guttmann 16) so having potentially two unequal sides with an unequal number of participating audience members violates the doctrine of fair play.

Yet, an example of something similar exists in the world of motorsports. In an example of massively mediated online cooperation, in Formula E, an FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile) sanctioned championship for electric cars, has a feature called “FANBOOST”. Fans can vote online or through the official app and the top five drivers who received the most votes are rewarded with a five-second speed boost which they can deploy at their discretion in the second half of the race (Formula E). Through what essentially amounts to a popularity contest, fans are directly able to influence the race by giving certain drivers a concrete advantage, violating the equal conditions of competition. In other traditional sports, it would be like if the more popular football team were granted an extra fifth down on a play. Although some may think that similar analogues have existed prior, like the “home field advantage” of having thousands of supportive fans, in these cases the fans cannot directly change the capabilities of the competitors like in Formula E. In effect, there are an unequal number of players mapped to the same number of agents, giving selected agents an advantage inaccessible to others as a multitude of fans can help their preferred drivers. On a much smaller scale, in traditional sports, an analogous example made news when the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) made a rule change in 2020 that allowed some minor coaching by the player's coach ranging from “verbal words of encouragement” to “hand signals” from the stands (Cambers), effectively mapping two

players to a single agent. Up until the rule change, any coaching was banned because ostensibly a player competing independently would be at a disadvantage compared to a player and a coach working in tandem. So, it can be said that there are some precedents for less independent and more co-constructed competitions.

So, then, one possible avenue for esports to distinguish itself would be to fully embrace its capability to digitally mediate crowd participation into competitions. Rather than relying on intangible feelings about whether cheering the right way could influence a win in a localized arena, with Formula E's FANBOOST the fans' "cheering" are digitally mediated and transformed into countable votes on the deracinated and global arena of the internet where they are tallied to give the most popular players, the ones with the loudest "cheers," a quantifiable advantage on the racetrack. The fans no longer have to wonder if they had an impact; they know they did. Short of letting fans walk onto the field, traditional sports have no equivalent affordance. Maybe the future of esports is one where the line between player and viewer becomes increasingly blurred. Perhaps the current paradigm for competitions, digital or not, are firmly entrenched in the framework of "modern sports" (Guttman 15) as defined by the "distinguishing characteristics" of "secularism, equality of opportunity to compete, and in the conditions of competition, specialization of roles, rationalization, bureaucratic organization, quantification, the quest for records" (16). And in this light, the tallied votes of FANBOOST may be an extension of the "quantification" of sport reaching to its audience and not merely the players. As discussed earlier, esports have been explicitly imitating traditional sports. But now, just as modern sports evolved from its pre-modern roots of "religious rituals and ceremonies" and "as a means of worship," (23) a contemporary

model might need to be more accommodating of digital mediation and interaction. While understandably such encroachment onto the sanctity of the “equality of opportunity to compete, and in the conditions of competition” may appear unfair, as an endeavour which can “never be without computer-mediated aspects,” (Hamari and Sjoblom 213) it may be time for esports to embrace its medium to the fullest. In the digital realm of esports, the “*personal* stream subgenre... on the opposite end of a continuum from highly managed *event* streams typical of large, corporate-sponsored e-sports competitions,” (St. Clair 704) the distinction between the two types could be collapsed. The sort of simultaneous interactivity found in *TPP* can only exist in digitally mediated spaces. The future of esports may be more cooperative than traditional sports. If this collapse of competitor and spectator can be facilitated through digital means, perhaps this avenue of thinking could lead to a truly new media esports.

It may be worth noting the use of crowdfunding in competitive tournaments. Although it does not affect the actual competitive play, it could serve as a steppingstone or a template for the future of mass participation in competitive esports. In Valve’s *DOTA 2* yearly tournament “The International,” the game studio and publisher released the Compendium⁸⁶, now renamed the Battle Pass⁸⁷, where fans could buy in-game cosmetics and other features for a price where 25% of the sales go to increasing the prize pool of the tournament. Starting in 2017, Blizzard began doing the same thing with the release of the War Chest, where players could also buy in-game cosmetics with a portion of the proceeds

⁸⁶ <http://www.dota2.com/international2014/compendium/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.dota2.com/international/battlepass/>

going to the prize pool of the WCS Global Finals⁸⁸. While it must be stressed that unlike FANBOOST, the sales of these digital goods do not influence the competitive game setting apart from increasing the total prize pool of their respective tournaments, the crowdfunding of tournaments is yet another example of the quantification of fan engagement.

Although there may be some reservations about the validity of altering the game for the broadcast, there has been an extensive history of many different sports that have changed their rules for the benefit of television as a medium. Whether it is due to the time constraints of network programming or to artificially produce more exciting content for the television market, tweaking the games themselves is not rare. Sports organizers can influence the narrativity of events through changes to the game itself. While a league cannot simply force teams or players to produce more dramatic results (such instances of “fixing” the game would be illegal), it can amend the rules to create in-game situations that are more likely to produce more drama. Since the narrativization must follow the imperatives of the real, the game can be changed as to provide the preferred imperatives instead. Since the sporting event cannot be changed directly, the event is changed indirectly through the rules governing it. Although “[t]elevision constantly attempts to build our expectations and to frame our perceptions,” it “ultimately does not control the event itself” upon which the broadcast is based (Whannel 139). As much as the camera can heighten the tension, what it can “never do, of course, is legislate for drama that is not there. If a match is tedious, or a race is all but won with fifteen laps still to go, even the most sophisticated camerawork cannot instill drama where none exists” (Barnett 156). Although the possible variations of stories are limited by

⁸⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83CXdcBzJeE&ab_channel=StarCraft

the competitive format, the actual content within can be made more narratively interesting by in several different ways. The game can be made to accommodate the building of tension by increasing the unpredictability during gameplay, provide a more satisfactory ending, or speeding up the overall pace of the game.

A viable way to increase the tension is to alter the conditions of play such that it leads to more variability or unpredictability and thus suspense. Sports are inherently dramatic and the conditions of play can be reconfigured to emphasize that drama. Sports have “a dramatic plot structure built into them” (“Theorizing,” Real 31) and as “highly dramatic events, sports share much in common with fictional narratives” (Raney 77). Not only is the “actual sports action, when caught on screen, is invested with the quality of dramatic fiction” (Rowe 159) but the drama is enhanced through the broadcast which is under the “constant temptation to exaggerate certain elements of a contest which might serve to heighten tension and evoke a dramatic atmosphere” (Barnett 167). One way in which the drama can be heightened is through an increased sense of suspense through the unpredictability inherent in sports, which is an integral aspect of what makes sports suited for television in the first place. It is precisely because “sports also possesses the highly desirable quality of novelty and unpredictability” (Rowe 31) that it is ideal for televised storytelling. Since “anything can happen and sometimes does” that this “very quality of unpredictability is what makes it so attractive to many broadcasters” (Schultz). Regardless of how sports are mediated, for “all of the layer-on-layer of organization that sports have acquired, especially in recent years, the actual sporting activity has retained one special nucleus: *indeterminacy*. You can never predict the result with unerring success” (Cashmore 5). The randomness innate to a sporting competition

means that the “results of a competition can never be determined in advance, even when the odds overwhelmingly favor one party over another. Athletic competition is an area where fairytale endings occasionally do come true. Every underdog has a shot at winning” (5). While the spectators know that at the end of each game there will be a winner and a loser, they do not want to know who will win or how. This balance between an expected outcome and an unknowability of how that outcome is reached is exactly what makes a narrative interesting and “followable” because following a story is “not significantly different from following a game in progress” in that “as in being a spectator at a match, there must be a quickly established sense of a promised although unpredictable outcome” (“History and Fiction,” Mink 46). The “open-ended dramatic, narrative sequence of the event” (“Theorizing,” Real 21) and the “uncertainty of the outcome” makes “live sports drama a powerfully emotional television experience”. In the realm of sport and television, it is “their uncertain variables, their conditional elements and incidental moments which, within televised sport, create narrative pleasures” (Boyle and Haynes 77). The tension of the sports drama hinges on its unpredictability and it is “crucial that at any given point in an enacted dramatic narrative we do not know what will happen next” (MacIntyre 215). In other words, the spectator knows the rules of the game but does not know how the match will unfold within the bounds of said rules.

To maximize the indeterminacy, and potential viewership, the rules can be amended in several different ways to increase tension. Fully aware that sports broadcasts were shows and thus had to “compete more successfully with other forms of entertainment,” (Rader 140) organizers and leagues implemented changes to make it more exciting and to produce a more

viable product. In fact, one reason the sports media “don’t like teams that win every match” is because they “flatten” and “drive out the tension” (Phillips 15) out of the potential drama. For example, “both football and baseball tinkered with the fundamental nature of their sports” and “reordered the delicate balance between defense and offense”. For football, “critics in the 1970s frequently charged that the pro game lacked the excitement, intensity, and glamour of the college sport” (Rader 149) as the “appearance of ever larger, speedier, and better-trained defensive players reduced offensive capabilities”. To combat this, the NFL “permitted pass defenders to chuck, or bump, a potential receiver only once... and allowed offensive linemen to extend their arms and open their hands to protect the passer” (150) in effect implementing a “form of legalized holding”. Under the new rules, “NFL offenses went wild. Previously blocked passing lanes suddenly opened up; quarterbacks dropped back only a few steps from the line of scrimmage and threw quicker, more closely timed patterns”. By changing the conditions in which the more narratively favourable imperatives of the real could be produced, the NFL created a higher scoring and a more exciting product.

In another example, in 2018 the FIA called for high degradation tires in Formula One (F1) racing. Tire degradation “determines how long a tyre will be used and defines its window of peak performance” (Saunders and Edmondson). High degradation tires, then, force drivers to manage their speeds and pit stops because they wear out faster. The FIA was clear that its “intent [was] to create the maximum number of race strategies yielding race times such that multi-stop strategies provide just enough potential of a beneficial outcome to encourage the greatest variety in the racing spectacle” (FIA). In other words, these tires were meant to force drivers to be more strategic in their races, which in turn would provide more

tension and excitement to produce a better broadcast product. However, the adoption of these tires backfired as they “largely failed to increase the amount of variety in race strategies” (Rencken and Collantine) as teams preferred to “manage their pace” to save the tires from wearing out. Although the high degradation tires were “intended to produce a big enough variation in lap time that they increase overtaking opportunities,” they were “prone to overheating when a driver is attacking” and ultimately led to less aggressive driving (Noble). So, in 2019 FIA announced that it was looking to have more durable tires that would “enable people to fight each other without degrading or only giving a short interval for the person attacking to attack” (qtd. in Noble). So, the material specifications of the sport were changed back and forth to try to force outcomes which would have narratively more exciting imperatives of the real.

Another way to improve the narrative product is to provide a definitive ending. As discussed heavily in prior chapters, the sense of an ending is critical to narrative formation. As is the case with many rule changes, “[p]rincipally for the benefit of television, in 1974 the NFL ordained that a sudden death overtime be played to decide the winner of games that were tied at the end of regulation play” (Rader 152). Although there have been numerous tweaks since then, the overtime period of the game is played in a sudden death format and the rules stipulate that “if the team that gets the ball first scores a touchdown on the opening possession” (NFL Football Operations). However, because first possession is decided by a coin toss, “many argue the existence of that rule gives too much value to something as random as a coin toss” (Haislop). Thus, a team could lose in overtime without ever having had possession of the ball. Regardless of whether the rule makes the outcome too random or

not, the implementation of any sort of overtime eliminated the possibility of games ending in ties. Although technically a tie is a valid way to end a game, producing a clear winner and a loser is more narratively satisfactory as it “instantiates the most basic narrative pattern: the fight of the hero and the anti-hero” or “how one team overcame the other” (Ryan 144). By providing a clear resolution, the overtime forces the completion of the “dramatic plot structure built into [sports]” (“Theorizing,” Real 31) and “perfectly fulfil[s] television’s demand for narrative content”. Since games now could not end ambiguously, the imperatives of the real could provide a definite endpoint in the broadcast from which the story of the game could be retold.

Another way to heighten the narrative excitement of sports is to maintain increased tension by reducing what could be called down time. While Barthes proclaimed that “[a]rt does not acknowledge the existence of noise,” (Barthes 245) there is plenty wasted in a live broadcast. So, to have the most exciting narrative product, sports organizing bodies strive to minimize the “noise” which slows down or deflates its tension. Often, the elimination “noise” means reducing the sequences of non-action in play. In one example of its many attempts in its perpetual quest to speed up the game, in 1963 the MLB “simply told the umpires to call pitches strikes that had formerly been called balls. By reducing the likelihood of walks and increasing the incidence of strikeouts, the change would presumably quicken the pace of the game” (Rader 142). Similarly, in 1995 the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) “reduced the time allowed in preparing to serve by five seconds to 20 seconds, so speeding up the game” (Cashmore 338). It is important to note that the drive to make more streamlined content was “clearly motivated by television’s needs”. Whether a

pitch or a serve, longer gaps between tension-building action means that the audience may lose interest and tune out. Additionally, broadcast content has a limited amount of time scheduled to air. An errant match that goes unexpectedly long could disrupt the network's other scheduled programming. It may be worth noting that both baseball and tennis are sports that have no time limits and are played until the game is resolved.

As the many examples above demonstrate, sporting competitions are not set in stone and are continuously changed. Organizers and leagues are not hesitant to even potentially affect the integrity of the game to produce a better narrative product. Just as these sports have amended themselves to better fit the medium of television, why should not esports amend itself to better fit the medium of the internet? If “sport studies has not adequately addressed how new digital technologies and new networks and modes of engagement are changing the cultural work of contemporary mediated sport,” (Brookey and Oates 5) what, then, does the future hold for sports broadcasts? To truly progress from the current state of esports broadcasting, the industry must move past the current framework of sports and embrace its digital medium akin to how *Twitch Plays Pokemon* facilitated mass public inputs or how Formula E adopted online voting. It may look like a combination of the two: the internet-mediated viewer inputs from *TPP* paired with the translation of fan inputs into concrete effects on the competition like in Formula E. Perhaps more votes in the live chat could award a player with more resources and units or provide a team with more time to meet its objectives. Understandably, a certain amount of backlash would be expected in allowing spectators to play a direct role in the games at hand, but large scale changes have precedents. Is the adoption of co-constructive play that much more disruptive than the NFL introducing

overtime? Or the FIA forcing drivers to pit through the mandated use of what are essentially suboptimal tires? Just as major traditional sports have adjusted some fundamental aspects of their games to produce a better narrative product, without taking advantage of the online medium esports is doomed to stay an echo of traditional sports.

Bibliography

- @bkravitz. "Breaking: A League Source Tells Me the NFL is Investigating the Possibility the Patriots Deflated Footballs Sunday Night. More to Come.", Jan 19, 2015, www.twitter.com/bkravitz/status/557053826415755265.
- AfreecaTV. "[GSL Vs. the World 2018] Grand Finals Stats Vs Serral Set1-Set2.", Aug 5, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LgooMMVmS8&ab_channel=%EC%95%84%ED%94%84%EB%A6%AC%EC%B9%B4TV%28AfreecaTV%29.
- . "[GSL Vs. the World 2018] Grand Finals Stats Vs Serral Set3-Set4.", Aug 5, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVI8YJ8qI4o&ab_channel=%EC%95%84%ED%94%84%EB%A6%AC%EC%B9%B4TV%28AfreecaTV%29.
- . "[GSL Vs. the World 2018] Grand Finals Stats Vs Serral Set5-Set7.", Aug 5, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJJeA2j2nww&t=2341s&ab_channel=%EC%95%84%ED%94%84%EB%A6%AC%EC%B9%B4TV%28AfreecaTV%29.
- Amazon Staff. "Just Announced: The 2020 NFL Schedule for Prime Video and Twitch.", Aug 5, 2020, www.aboutamazon.com/news/entertainment/just-announced-the-2020-nfl-schedule-for-prime-video-and-twitch.
- Andrews, David L., and George Ritzer. "Sport and Prosumption." *Journal of Consumer Culture*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2018, pp. 356-373, doi:10.1177/1469540517747093.
- Aristotle. *Poetics*. Penguin, New York, 1997.
- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2009.

- Banks, Don. "NFL Conference Title Round Snap Judgments.", Jan 22, 2017, www.patriots.com/news/nfl-conference-title-round-snap-judgments-288676. Accessed Aug 21, 2020.
- . "NFL Divisional Round Playoffs Snap Judgments.", Jan 16, 2017, www.patriots.com/news/nfl-divisional-round-playoffs-snap-judgments-287576. Accessed Aug 21, 2020.
- . "Snap Judgments, Week 5: Houston Texans Looking Like Impostors.", Oct 09, 2016, www.nfl.com/news/snap-judgments-week-5-houston-texans-looking-like-impostors-0ap3000000718219. Accessed Aug 20, 2020.
- . "Snap Judgments, Week 7: Vikings can't Stay Unbeaten.", Oct 23, 2016, www.nfl.com/news/snap-judgments-week-7-vikings-can-t-stay-unbeaten-0ap3000000726766. Accessed Aug 20, 2020.
- . "Snap Judgments, Week 8: Panthers Win with Familiar Ways.", Oct 30, 2016, www.nfl.com/news/snap-judgments-week-8-panthers-win-with-familiar-ways-0ap3000000731072. Accessed Aug 21, 2020.
- . "Snap Judgments, Week 9: Steelers Fail again on the Road.", Nov 06, 2016, www.nfl.com/news/snap-judgments-week-9-steelers-fail-again-on-the-road-0ap3000000735062. Accessed Aug 21, 2020.
- . "Snap Judgments: Falcons, Rams have Statement Wins.", Oct 02, 2016, www.nfl.com/news/snap-judgments-falcons-rams-have-statement-wins-0ap3000000714471. Accessed Aug 20, 2020.
- . "Super Bowl Snap Judgments.", Feb 06, 2017, www.patriots.com/news/super-bowl-snap-judgments-291011. Accessed Aug 21, 2020.

---. "Week 1 Snap Judgments.", Sept 12, 2016, www.facebook.com/notes/don-banks/week-1-snap-judgments/1329891070369231/. Accessed Aug 20, 2020.

---. "Week 15 Snap Judgments.", Dec 20, 2016, www.patriots.com/news/week-15-snap-judgments-283851. Accessed Aug 21, 2020.

---. "Week 16 Snap Judgments.", Dec 26, 2016, www.patriots.com/news/week-16-snap-judgments-284906. Accessed Aug 21, 2020.

---. "Week 17 Snap Judgments.", Jan 02, 2017, www.patriots.com/news/week-17-snap-judgments-285851. Accessed Aug 21, 2020.

Barge, Andrew. "How the @Patriots #SB51 Victory Conversation Happened Live on Twitter.", Feb 6, 2017, blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/events/2017/how-the-patriots-sb51-victory-conversation-happened-live-on-twitter.html. Accessed May 17, 2021.

Barnett, Steven. *Games and Sets: The Changing Face of Sport on Television*. BFI Pub, London, 1990.

Barthes, Roland. "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative." *New Literary History*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1975, pp. 237-272.

Bernstein, J. M. "Grand Narratives." *On Paul Ricoeur*. Edited by David Wood. Routledge, London, 1991.

Billings, Andrew C. *Routledge Handbook of Sport and New Media*. Routledge, New York, 2014.

---. *Sports Media: Transformation, Integration, Consumption*. Routledge, New York, 2011.

Birrell, Susan, and John W. Loy. "Media Sport: Hot and Cool." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1979, pp. 5-19, doi:10.1177/101269027901400101.

Bolter, J. D., and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1999.

Boyle, Raymond, and Richard Haynes. *Power Play: Sport, the Media and Popular Culture*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009.

Brookey, Robert A., and Thomas P. Oates. *Playing to Win: Sports, Video Games, and the Culture of Play*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2015.

Brooks, Peter. "Freud's Masterplot." *Yale French Studies*, vol. 55-56, no. 55, 1977, pp. 280-300, doi:10.2307/2930440.

Brosig, Julian. "Lamboking.", www.twitch.tv/lamboking. Accessed June 6, 2021.

Cambers, Simon. "WTA to Allow Coaching from Stands in Trial Period.", Jan 27, 2020, www.espn.com/tennis/story/_/id/28571753/wta-tour-allow-coaching-stands-2020-trial-period. Accessed May 31, 2021.

Cashmore, Ellis. *Making Sense of Sports*. Routledge, London, 2005.

Chatman, Seymour B. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y, 1978.

Cheung, Gifford, and Jeff Huang. *Starcraft from the Stands*, ACM, May 7, 2011, doi:10.1145/1978942.1979053

Clayton, John. "Ranking all 51 Super Bowls: Patriots' Comeback is Best Ever.", Feb 5, 2017, www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/14660038/ranking-all-51-super-bowls-new-england-patriots-comeback-atlanta-falcons-ranks-best-ever. Accessed Oct 20, 2020.

Congalton, K. J. "Competitive Eating as Sport." *Sporting Rhetoric*. Edited by Barry Brummett. Peter Lang, New York, 2009.

Curts, Jeff. "The Sweet Sounds of Summer: Listening to Baseball on the Radio.", July 13, 2010, www.bleacherreport.com/articles/419945-the-sweet-sounds-of-summer-listening-to-baseball-on-the-radio. Accessed May 17, 2021.

D'Andrea, Christian. "All 4 of the Browns' Quarterbacks were Injured by Week 5.", Oct 9, 2016, www.sbnation.com/nfl/2016/10/9/13219756/2016-nfl-football-cleveland-quarterbacks-injured-cody-kessler-charlie-whitehurst-terrelle-pryor. Accessed Nov 13, 2020.

Davis, Jim. "The Best Signs and Costumes Patriots Fans Brought to Sunday's Game - the Boston Globe.", Jan 24, 2018, www.bostonglobe.com/sports/patriots/2018/01/24/the-best-signs-and-costumes-patriots-fans-brought-sunday-game/877Yx5lQ0wUDuKF8MB7inN/story.html. Accessed May 17, 2021.

De Fina, Anna. *Analyzing Narrative: Discourse and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. Edited by Alexandra Georgakopoulou. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012.

Dota, 2. "Dota 2 - the International 10 Battle Pass.", www.dota2.com/international/battlepass. Accessed June 30, 2021.

---. "Dota 2 - the International Compendium.", www.dota2.com/international/compendium. Accessed June 20, 2021.

Erzberger, Tyler. "Moment of the Year: Serral Becomes First Non-Korean to Win WCS.", Dec 14, 2018, www.espn.com/esports/story/_/id/25535120/espn-esports-awards-moment-year-serral-becomes-first-non-korean-win-wcs. Accessed May 17, 2021.

- ESL. "More than a Game - Joonas "Serral" Sotala | StarCraft II.", Feb 4, 2018,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBxAoPwI62o&t=161s&ab_channel=ESL.
- ESPN. "Bengals Vs. Patriots - Game Summary - October 16, 2016 - ESPN.", Oct 16, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874736. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Bills Vs. Patriots - Game Summary - October 2, 2016 - ESPN.", Oct 2, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874663. Accessed Aug 27, 2020.
- . "Dolphins Vs. Patriots - Game Summary - September 18, 2016 - ESPN.", Sep 18, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874541. Accessed Aug 26, 2020.
- . "Jets Vs. Patriots - Game Summary - December 24, 2016 - ESPN.", Dec 24, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874516. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Patriots Vs. 49ers - Game Summary - November 20, 2016 - ESPN.", Nov 20, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874700. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Patriots Vs. Bills - Game Summary - October 30, 2016 - ESPN.", Oct 30, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874619. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Patriots Vs. Broncos - Game Summary - December 18, 2016 - ESPN.", Dec 18, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874711. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Patriots Vs. Browns - Game Summary - October 9, 2016 - ESPN.", Oct 9, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874519. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Patriots Vs. Cardinals - Game Summary - September 11, 2016 - ESPN.", Sep 11, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874539. Accessed Aug 26, 2020.

- . "Patriots Vs. Dolphins - Game Summary - January 1, 2017 - ESPN.", Jan 1, 2017,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874642. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Patriots Vs. Falcons - Game Summary - February 5, 2017 - ESPN.", Feb 5, 2017,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400927752. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Patriots Vs. Jets - Game Summary - November 27, 2016 - ESPN.", Nov 27, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874680. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Patriots Vs. Steelers - Game Summary - October 23, 2016 - ESPN.", Oct 23, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874506. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Rams Vs. Patriots - Game Recap - December 4, 2016 - ESPN.", Dec 4, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/recap?gameId=400874718. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Ravens Vs. Patriots - Game Recap - December 12, 2016 - ESPN.", Dec 13, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/recap?gameId=400874661. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Seahawks Vs. Patriots - Game Summary - November 13, 2016 - ESPN.", Nov 13, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874536. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Steelers Vs. Patriots - Game Summary - January 22, 2017 - ESPN.", Jan 22, 2017,
www.espn.com/nfl/game/ /gameId/400927750. Accessed June 13, 2021.
- . "Texans Vs. Patriots - Game Summary - January 14, 2017 - ESPN.", Jan 14, 2017,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400927746. Accessed Aug 28, 2020.
- . "Texans Vs. Patriots - Game Summary - September 22, 2016 - ESPN.", Sep 22, 2016,
www.espn.com/nfl/game?gameId=400874551. Accessed Aug 27, 2020.
- "Fanboost.", www.fiaformulae.com/en/championship/fanboost. Accessed May 31, 2021.

FIA. *Invitation to Tender for Sole Supply Contract Cancels and Replaces the Version Published on 19 July 2018.*

legal.fia.com/web/apeloffre.nsf/66BB645500234AEAC12582CF0035D224/\$FILE/2018%20F1%20Tyre%20tender%20final%20document%20revised.pdf?openelement. Accessed June 2, 2021.

Fisher, Walter R. *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action.* University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, S.C, 1987.

Freitas, Evan. "Are You Ready for some Thursday Night Football?", Sept 6, 2019, blog.twitch.tv/en/2019/09/06/are-you-ready-for-some-thursday-night-football-55c850b197da/. Accessed May 19, 2021.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism.* Atheneum, New York, 1969.

Garber, Greg. "In this NFL Game, Silence was Golden.", Dec 10, 2010, www.espn.com/espn/otl/news/story?id=5906858. Accessed May 17, 2021.

Genette, Gerard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method.* Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1979.

Greimas, A. J. "Narrative Grammar: Units and Levels." *MLN*, vol. 86, no. 6, 1971, pp. 793-806, doi:10.2307/2907443.

Guttmann, Allen. *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports?* Columbia University Press, New York, 1978.

Haislop, Tadd. "NFL Overtime Rules 2020: Explaining how the OT Format Works in Football for Regular Season, Playoffs.", Oct 18, 2020, www.sportingnews.com/ca/nfl/news/nfl-overtime-

[rules-2020-football-regular-season-playoffs/14e1kdhh1g2k81cnituwu47bk8](#). Accessed June 1, 2021.

Hamari, Juho, and Max Sjöblom. "What is eSports and Why do People Watch it?" *Internet Research*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2017, pp. 211-232, doi:10.1108/IntR-04-2016-0085.

Herman, David. "How to Live-Tweet Your Game.", [media.twitter.com/en/articles/best-practice/2018/how-to-live-tweet-your-game.html](#). Accessed May 17, 2021.

Herman, David. *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2002.

hexhaven. "Serral: A Brother's Keeper - Rank 11 - Road to BlizzCon.", Oct 15, 2017, [tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/527719-serral-a-brothers-keeper-rank-11-road-to-blizzcon](#). Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "Serral: The Harbinger - Road to BlizzCon 2018 (#9).", Oct 18, 2018, [tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/538368-serral-the-harbinger-road-to-blizzcon-2018-9](#). Accessed May 17, 2021.

Hirschhorn, Jason B. "Patriots Fined, Lose Draft Picks for DeflateGate.", May 11, 2015, [www.sbnation.com/nfl/2015/5/11/8561821/patriots-punished-nfl-deflategate-draft-picks-fined](#). Accessed Nov 6, 2020.

Hogan, Patrick C. *The Mind and its Stories: Narrative Universals and Human Emotion*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

Horowitz, Evan C. "Narrative Accidents and Literary Miracles." *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2011, pp. 65-78. *CrossRef*, [muse.jhu.edu/article/430400](#), doi:10.1353/phl.2011.0005.

Howe, Connor. "Patriots' Super Bowl Comeback Win, as Told by Social Media.", Feb 6, 2017, www.sbnation.com/2017/2/6/14523690/super-bowl-51-memes-tom-brady-patriots-falcons.

Accessed May 17, 2021.

Jang, Wooyoung W., et al. "Mediating Effect of Esports Content Live Streaming in the Relationship between Esports Recreational Gameplay and Esports Event Broadcast." *Sport, Business and Management*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2020, pp. 89-108, doi:10.1108/SBM-10-2019-0087.

Jay, Kathryn. *More than just a Game: Sports in American Life since 1945*. Columbia University Press, New York, 2004.

Jin, Dal Y. "Historiography of Korean Esports: Perspectives on Spectatorship." *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 14, 2020, pp. 3727-3745.

Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending.*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1967.

King, Peter. "Monday Morning QB: Storybook Start for Bradford.", Sep 19, 2016, www.si.com/nfl/2016/09/19/sam-bradford-vikings-nfl-week-2-peter-king. Accessed Aug 25, 2020.

---. "Peter King Monday Morning QB: Playoffs are Coming.", Dec 5, 2016, www.si.com/nfl/2016/12/05/nfl-playoff-picture-week-13-raiders-chiefs-peter-king. Accessed Aug 25, 2020.

---. "Peter King's Mailbag: Steelers-Eagles Tops Week 3.", Sep 21, 2016, www.si.com/nfl/2016/09/21/pittsburgh-steelers-philadelphia-eagles-carson-wentz-ben-roethlisberger-nfl-mailbag. Accessed Aug 25, 2020.

- . "Peter King's MMQB: Dolphins, Giants are Streaking.", Nov 21, 2016,
www.si.com/nfl/2016/11/21/miami-dolphins-new-york-giants-nfl-week-11-peter-king. Accessed
Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: 2016 NFL Week 1.", Sep 12, 2016,
www.si.com/nfl/2016/09/12/jimmy-garoppolo-patriots-jack-del-rio-raiders-nfl-week-1.
Accessed Aug 24, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Best Sunday of '16.", Nov 14, 2016,
www.si.com/nfl/2016/11/14/nfl-week-10-seahawks-cowboys-broncos-peter-king. Accessed Aug
25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Dak Prescott.", Oct 17, 2016,
[www.si.com/nfl/2016/10/17/dak-prescott-dallas-cowboys-week-6-nfl-ben-roethlisberger-
surgery](http://www.si.com/nfl/2016/10/17/dak-prescott-dallas-cowboys-week-6-nfl-ben-roethlisberger-surgery). Accessed Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Denver-KC Thriller.", Nov 28, 2016,
www.si.com/nfl/2016/11/28/denver-broncos-kansas-city-chiefs-overtime-field-goal-decision-nfl.
Accessed Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Holiday Weekend.", Dec 26, 2016,
[www.si.com/nfl/2016/12/26/nfl-week-16-playoff-picture-antonio-brown-derek-carr-injury-peter-
king](http://www.si.com/nfl/2016/12/26/nfl-week-16-playoff-picture-antonio-brown-derek-carr-injury-peter-king). Accessed Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Julio Jones' 300.", Oct 3, 2016,
www.si.com/nfl/2016/10/03/nfl-week-4-julio-jones-300-atlanta-falcons-peter-king. Accessed
Aug 25, 2020.

- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Patriots Win SB51.", Feb 6, 2017,
www.si.com/nfl/2017/02/06/super-bowl-51-falcons-patriots-comeback-overtime-peter-king-nfl.
Accessed Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Playoff Scenarios.", Dec 19, 2016,
www.si.com/nfl/2016/12/19/nfl-playoff-possibilities-titans-packers-week-15-peter-king.
Accessed Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: SB 51 Week Begins.", Jan 30, 2017,
www.si.com/nfl/2017/01/30/robert-kraft-patriots-nfl-super-bowl-51-falcons-peter-king.
Accessed Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: The 6-6 Tie.", Oct 24, 2016,
www.si.com/nfl/2016/10/24/seattle-seahawks-arizona-cardinals-tie-nfl-week-7. Accessed Aug
25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Tom Brady is Back.", Oct 10, 2016,
www.si.com/nfl/2016/10/10/tom-brady-new-england-patriots-returns-suspension-nfl-week-5.
Accessed Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Week 17.", Jan 2, 2017, [www.si.com/nfl/2017/01/02/nfl-
coach-firings-playoff-wild-card-schedule-peter-king](http://www.si.com/nfl/2017/01/02/nfl-coach-firings-playoff-wild-card-schedule-peter-king). Accessed Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Week 8.", Nov 1, 2016,
www.si.com/nfl/2016/11/01/oakland-raiders-overtime-nfl-week-8-peter-king. Accessed Aug 25,
2020.

- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Wide-Open Race.", Dec 12, 2016, www.si.com/nfl/2016/12/12/nfl-week-14-giants-cowboys-leveon-bell-peter-king. Accessed Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Wild-Card Weekend.", Jan 9, 2016, www.si.com/nfl/2017/01/09/nfl-wild-card-weekend-playoffs-steelers-packers-peter-king. Accessed Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King's NFL Takeways After Week 4.", Oct 3, 2016, www.si.com/nfl/2016/10/03/peter-kings-nfl-takeaways-after-week-4. Accessed Aug 25, 2020.
- . "Peter King: Tom Brady in Montana, Part 2.", Feb 15, 2017, www.si.com/nfl/2017/02/15/tom-brady-montana-part-2-nfl-patriots-peter-king. Accessed May 17, 2021.
- . "Peter King's Monday Morning QB: Brady in Montana.", Feb 13, 2017, www.si.com/nfl/2017/02/13/tom-brady-montana-super-bowl-51-nfl-patriots-peter-king. Accessed May 17, 2021.
- . "Peter King's Super Bowl Pick: Steelers Vs. Packers.", Sep 7, 2016, www.si.com/nfl/2016/09/07/super-bowl-51-prediction-peter-king-nfl-mailbag. Accessed Aug 24, 2020.
- Köppe, Tilmann. "Narrative Events." *Storyworlds*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2014, pp. 101, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:ilcs-us&rft_id=xri:ilcs:rec:abell:R05155505.
- Ledbetter, D. O. "5 Reasons Why the Falcons Collapsed in the Super Bowl.", May 13, 2020, www.ajc.com/blog/atlanta-falcons/reasons-why-the-falcons-collapsed-the-super-bowl/PvnklMRjXzc2v7RFB2PZbN/. Accessed May 25, 2021.

Leibovich, Mark. *Big Game*. Penguin Press, New York, 2018.

Lievrouw, Leah A. "New Media, Mediation, and Communication Study." *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2009, pp. 303-325, doi:10.1080/13691180802660651.

Liquipedia. "2018 GSL Vs. the World.", www.liquipedia.net/starcraft2/2018_GSL_vs_the_World. Accessed July 9, 2021.

---. "2018 WCS Austin.", www.liquipedia.net/starcraft2/2018_WCS_Austin. Accessed July 9, 2021.

---. "2018 WCS Montreal.", www.liquipedia.net/starcraft2/2018_WCS_Montreal. Accessed July 9, 2021.

---. "Bonjwa.", www.liquipedia.net/starcraft/Bonjwa. Accessed July 9, 2021.

---. "Cheese.", www.liquipedia.net/starcraft2/Cheese. Accessed July 9, 2021.

Lynch, Andrew. "NFL Players React to the Patriots' Epic Super Bowl LI Win, from Kickoff to OT.", Feb 5, 2017, <http://www.foxsports.com/nfl/gallery/super-bowl-li-new-england-patriots-tom-brady-reaction-twitter-greatest-ever-atlanta-falcons-020517>. Accessed May 17, 2021.

Liotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue*. University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Ind, 2007.

Marie-Laure Ryan. "Narrative in Real Time: Chronicle, Mimesis and Plot in the Baseball Broadcast." *Narrative*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1993, pp. 138-155.

Marriott, Stephanie. *Time and Time again: 'Live' Television Commentary and the Construction of Replay Talk*. vol. 18, Sage Publications, London.

Mattingly, Cheryl. *Healing Dramas and Clinical Plots: The Narrative Structure of Experience*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998.

McBride, Jim. "Cardinals Miss their Chance to Take Down Patriots - the Boston Globe.", Sep 11, 2016, www.bostonglobe.com/sports/patriots/2016/09/11/jimmy-garoppolo-patriots-hang-arizona/oHvMYriXenwIJ2hUrYz6tO/story.html. Accessed Sept 1, 2020.

McManamon, Pat. "Ranking the Browns' 24 QBs since 1999 from Worst to First.", Apr 6, 2016, www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/15097928/ranking-browns-24-qbs-1999-worst-first. Accessed Nov 13, 2020.

Mink, Louis O. "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension." *Historical Understanding*. Edited by Brian Fay, Eugene O. Golob, and Richard T. Vann. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1987.

---. "Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument." *Historical Understanding*. Edited by Brian Fay, Eugene O. Golob, and Richard T. Vann. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1987.

Mizenhauer. "Serral's Revolution.", Nov 8, 2018, tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/538992-serrals-revolution. Accessed May 17, 2021.

Moeller, Ryan M., Bruce Esplin, and Steven Conway. "Cheesers, Pullers, and Glitchers: The Rhetoric of Sportsmanship and the Discourse of Online Sports Gamers." *Game Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2009, http://gamestudies.org/0902/articles/moeller_esplin_conway.

"Most Users to Input a Command to Play a Live Streamed Videogame.", March 1, 2014, www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/most-participants-on-a-single-player-online-videogame/. Accessed May 31, 2021.

Murphy, Greg. "Twitter Changes the Live TV Sports Viewing Experience.", Jan 18, 2018, marketing.twitter.com/en/insights/twitter-changes-the-live-tv-sports-viewing-experience. Accessed May 17, 2021.

NBC Sports. "Mike Vrabel Recalls Bill Belichick 'Losing His Mind' Over Clock Loophole Play.", June 23, 2020, www.nbcsports.com/boston/patriots/mike-vrabel-recalls-bill-belichick-losing-his-mind-over-clock-loophole-play. Accessed May 17, 2021.

"NFL and NextVR Return for Second Season of Virtual Reality Experiences.", 2017, nflcommunications.com/Pages/NFL-and-NextVR-Return-for-Second-Season-of-Virtual-Reality-Experiences.aspx#:~:text=The%20National%20Football%20League%20and,and%20sports%20commentator%20Elika%20Sadeghi. Accessed May 26, 2021.

NFL Films. "Do Your Job 2 Bill Belichick and Patriots 2016 17 SB51.", May 11, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLqp4LhtT5M&ab_channel=SportFreaksPodcast.

---. "Patriots Unbelievable Comeback in Super Bowl LI to Beat the Falcons | NFL Turning Point.", Feb 9, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyLPJ5JWZYk&ab_channel=NFLFilms.

---. "The Stories of Super Bowl 51 that were Never Told | NFL Films Presents.", Sep 7, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eqk4LeadrCw&ab_channel=NFLFilms.

NFL Media Originals. "New England Patriots 2016 Season in Review | Inside the NFL.", Feb 2, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=3m310e0XGjU&t=52s&ab_channel=NFLMediaOriginals.

"NFL Overtime Rules | NFL Football Operations.", operations.nfl.com/the-rules/nfl-overtime-rules/. Accessed June 1, 2021.

NFL. "2016 - Patriots @ Broncos Week 15.", May 24, 2018,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv6AjOWxx-A&list=PLSpON659hcNS5uT-dXh9XuNwJi0L3pOPR&index=14&ab_channel=Adri%C3%A1nMontoyaGTZAdri%C3%A1nMontoyaGTZ.

---. "2016 - Seahawks @ Patriots Week 10 SNF.", May 6, 2018,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmTgOYLGgKY&list=PLSpON659hcNS5uT-dXh9XuNwJi0L3pOPR&index=10&ab_channel=Adri%C3%A1nMontoyaGTZ.

---. "2016 AFC Championship - Steelers @ Patriots.", Feb 17,

2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=arwmbOwbdAE&list=PLSpON659hcNS5uT-dXh9XuNwJi0L3pOPR&index=19&ab_channel=BartSimpson.

---. "2016 AFC Divisional Houston Texans Vs New England Patriots NFL Full Game.", June 26,

2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sfnl-DCaM-Q&list=PLSpON659hcNS5uT-dXh9XuNwJi0L3pOPR&index=18&ab_channel=Rol1504.

---. "2016 Week 1 - Patriots @ Cardinals.", June 28, 2019,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFdj7ChshBY&ab_channel=BartSimpson.

---. "2016 Week 11 - Patriots @ 49ers.", Feb 14, 2019,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQhOF3aA5ks&list=PLSpON659hcNS5uT-dXh9XuNwJi0L3pOPR&index=11&ab_channel=BartSimpson.

---. "2016 Week 12 - Patriots @ Jets.", Feb 17, 2019,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UggmyxsGFE8&list=PLSpON659hcNS5uT-dXh9XuNwJi0L3pOPR&index=12&ab_channel=BartSimpson.

- . "2016 Week 13 - Rams @ Patriots.", Feb 2, 2019,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqvaiaUek4&list=PLSpON659hcNS5uT-dXh9XuNwJi0L3pOPR&index=13&ab_channel=BartSimpson.
- . "2016 Week 14 - Ravens @ Patriots.", June 28, 2019,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoeLLseJYH0&list=PLSpON659hcNS5uT-dXh9XuNwJi0L3pOPR&index=14&ab_channel=BartSimpson.
- . "2016 Week 17 - Patriots @ Dolphins.", Feb 16, 2019,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7uGW8htv2c&list=PLSpON659hcNS5uT-dXh9XuNwJi0L3pOPR&index=17&ab_channel=BartSimpson.
- . "2016 Week 2 - Dolphins @ Patriots.", Feb 10, 2019,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=lTqzmX_9CCM&ab_channel=BartSimpson.
- . "2016 Week 3 - Texans @ Patriots.", Feb 10, 2019,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMQk9_W489s.
- . "2016 Week 5 - Patriots @ Browns.", Feb 11, 2019,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVeDs_wr7i8&list=PLdai9ZaxhjxucRY56PYk7UD7qZDZfV78N&index=7&ab_channel=BartSimpson.
- . "2016 Week 6 - Bengals @ Patriots.", Feb 12, 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mgd6W9-1suQ&list=PLdai9ZaxhjxucRY56PYk7UD7qZDZfV78N&index=7&ab_channel=BartSimpson.
- . "2016 Week 7 - Patriots @ Steelers.", June 27, 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZij-5ewzSw&ab_channel=BartSimpson.

- . "2016 Week 8 - Patriots @ Bills.", Feb 13, 2019,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtbbzX80bsE&t=48s&ab_channel=BartSimpson.
- . "Patriots Vs. Falcons | Super Bowl LI Game Highlights.", Feb 6, 2017,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=016LXFHpFCk&ab_channel=NFL.
- . "Super Bowl 2017.", Feb 6, 2017,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BWqAZtnsIQ&ab_channel=seattleseahawks.
- . "Super Bowl 51 FULL GAME: New England Patriots Vs. Atlanta Falcons.", Mar 19, 2020,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=noLK78Hgq0A&ab_channel=NFL.
- NHL Public Relations. "NHL, NextVR Partner on Unique Virtual Reality Experiences.", Jan 31, 2019, www.nhl.com/news/nhl-partnering-with-nextvr-for-virtual-reality-at-marquee-events/c-304339710. Accessed May 26, 2021.
- Noble, Jonathan. "F1 Set to Abandon High-Deg Tyres in 2021, Admits Approach was Wrong.", July 19, 2019, www.autosport.com/f1/news/f1-set-to-abandon-high-deg-tyres-in-2021-admits-approach-was-wrong-4991046/4991046/. Accessed June 2, 2021.
- O'Sullivan, Sean. "Six Elements of Serial Narrative." *Narrative*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2019, pp. 49-64. *CrossRef*, muse.jhu.edu/article/712870, doi:10.1353/nar.2019.0003.
- Oculus Blog. *Go Courtside in VR with NBA League Pass Games in Venues on Oculus Quest*, 2021. Accessed May 26, 2021.
- Olli. "Serral Wins the 2018 WCS Global Finals.", Nov 03, 2018, tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/538882-serral-wins-the-2018-wcs-global-finals. Accessed May 17, 2021.

- Oriard, Michael. *Brand NFL: Making and Selling America's Favorite Sport*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2007.
- Pandemona. [WCS 2018] *Global Finals - Finals Day*, 2018. tl.net/forum/sc2-tournaments/538845-wcs-2018-global-finals-finals-day. Accessed Apr 30, 2021.
- Petten, A. J. "The Narrative Structuring and Interactive Narrative Logic of Televised Professional Wrestling." *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2010, pp. 436-447, doi:10.1080/17400309.2010.514666.
- Phelan, James. *Experiencing Fiction*. Ohio State Univ. Press, Columbus, 2007.
- Phillips, Angela. *Good Writing for Journalists: Narrative, Style, Structure*. SAGE Publications, London, 2007.
- Price, Jason M. C. "Coding: Open Coding." *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*. Edited by Albert Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe. SAGE, Thousand Oaks, California, 2020.
- Prisco, Pete. "Matt Ryan Explains Exactly what Happened in the Falcons' Super Bowl Collapse.", July 19, 2017, www.cbssports.com/nfl/news/matt-ryan-explains-exactly-what-happened-in-the-falcons-super-bowl-collapse/. Accessed May 25, 2021.
- Pro Football Hall of Fame. "Miami's Perfect Season.", www.profootballhof.com/football-history/miamis-perfect-season/. Accessed Apr 30, 2021.
- Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. University of Texas Press, Austin, 1968.
- Puckett, Kent. *Narrative Theory*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016.
- Rader, Benjamin G. *In its Own Image: How Television has Transformed Sports*. Free Press, New York, 1984.

- Raney, Arthur A. "Fair Ball?" *Sports Media: Transformation, Integration, Consumption*. Edited by Andrew C. Billings. Routledge, New York, 2011.
- Real, Michael. "Sports Online: The Newest Player in Mediasport." *Handbook of Sports and Media*. Edited by Arthur A. Raney, and Jennings Bryant. Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ, 2006.
- . "Theorizing the Sports-Television Dream Marriage: Why Sports Fit Television so Well." *Sports Media: Transformation, Integration, Consumption*. Edited by Andrew C. Billings. Routledge, New York, 2011.
- Reimer, Alex. "The Complete Deflategate Timeline.", August 31, 2015, www.sbnation.com/nfl/2015/8/31/9213261/deflategate-timeline-tom-brady-roger-goodell-patriots. Accessed May 25, 2021.
- Reiss, Mike. "2016 New England Patriots Game-by-Game Predictions.", Apr 14, 2016, www.espn.com/blog/new-england-patriots/post/_id/4792088/2016-new-england-patriots-game-by-game-predictions. Accessed Aug 26, 2020.
- Rencken, Dieter, and Keith Collantine. "Pirelli: High Degradation Tyres "Probably Not Right" for F1.", Nov 6, 2018, www.racefans.net/2018/11/06/pirelli-high-degradation-tyres-are-probably-not-right-f1/. Accessed June 2, 2021.
- Ricoeur, Paul, Kathleen McLaughlin, and David Pellauer. *Time and Narrative Vol. 1*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984.
- Ricoeur, Paul. "The Human Experience of Time and Narrative." *A Ricoeur Reader*. Edited by Mario Valdes. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2016.
- . "Life in Quest of Narrative." *On Paul Ricoeur*. Edited by David Wood. Taylor and Francis, 2002.

- . "Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator." *A Ricoeur Reader*. Edited by Mario Valdes. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2016, <http://www.degruyter.com/doi/10.3138/9781442664883-022>, doi:10.3138/9781442664883-022.
- Ricoeur, Paul, Kathleen McLaughlin, and David Pellauer. *Time and Narrative Vol. 2*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999.
- Rowe, David. *Sport, Culture and the Media: The Unruly Trinity*. Open University Press, Buckingham, 1999.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure. *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2001.
- Saunders, Nate, and Laurence Edmondson. "F1 to Feature 18-Inch Wheels from 2021 Onwards.", July 20, 2018, www.espn.com/f1/story/_/id/24146523/f1-feature-18-inch-wheels-2021-onwards. Accessed June 2, 2021.
- Scholes, Robert, James Phelan, and Robert L. Kellogg. *The Nature of Narrative*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006.
- Schultz, Brad. *Sports Media: Reporting, Producing, and Planning*. Focal, Oxford, 2005.
- Seo, Yuri, and Sang-Uk Jung. "Beyond Solitary Play in Computer Games: The Social Practices of eSports." *Journal of Consumer Culture*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2016, pp. 635-655, doi:10.1177/1469540514553711.
- Silverman, David. "Best Game Photos, Presented by CarMax: Browns at Patriots.", Oct 27, 2019, www.patriots.com/photos/best-game-photos-presented-by-carmax-browns-at-patriots. Accessed May 17, 2021.

Silverstone, Roger. "Complicity and Collusion in the Mediation of Everyday Life." *New Literary History*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2002, pp. 761-780, doi:10.1353/nlh.2002.0045.

Simms, Karl. *Paul Ricoeur*. Routledge, London, 2003.

Smith, Michael D. "Deflategate Leads all Three Network Newscasts.", Jan 22, 2015, profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/2015/01/22/deflategate-leads-all-three-network-newscasts/. Accessed May 25, 2021.

Sobleski, Brent. "How did the Atlanta Falcons Blow Super Bowl LI?", Feb 6, 2017, bleacherreport.com/articles/2691400-how-did-the-atlanta-falcons-blow-super-bowl-li. Accessed May 25, 2021.

Soularion. "Neeb: The Fabled Ascendance.", Oct 18, 2017, tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/527815-need-the-fabled-ascendance-rank-8-road-to-blizzcon. Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "Neeb: The Fabled Ascendance - Rank 8 - Road to BlizzCon.", Oct 18, 2017, tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/527815-need-the-fabled-ascendance-rank-8-road-to-blizzcon. Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "One Eternal Moment - Serral at GSL Vs. the World.", Aug 18, 2018, tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/536548-one-eternal-moment-serral-at-gsl-vs-the-world. Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "Power Rank: WCS Leipzig 2018.", Jan 25, 2018, tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/530514-power-rank-wcs-leipzig-2018. Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "Prophecy Fulfilled: Serral's WCS Leipzig Triumph.", Feb 2, 2018, tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/530809-prophecy-fulfilled-serrals-wcs-leipzig-triumph. Accessed May 17, 2021.

St. Clair, Michael. "TWITCH PLAYS POKEMON. Based on the Videogame "Pokemon Red"." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 67, no. 4, 2015, pp. 702-706.

StarCraft Esports. "2018 StarCraft II WCS Global Finals Grand Final Pre-Show.", Nov 4, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=S79PifYuBEo&list=PLHZ-lw26q81Wx57b3a-dIOPING5ht_c3V&index=32&ab_channel=StarCraftEsports.

---. "2018 StarCraft II WCS Global Finals Opening Week - Day 1 Pre-Show.", Oct 28, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pqnhz1MDu1k&list=PLHZ-lw26q81Wx57b3a-dIOPING5ht_c3V&index=2&ab_channel=StarCraftEsports.

---. "Grand Final: Serral Vs Reynor ZvZ - WCS Montreal 2018 - StarCraft II.", Sept 12, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=co_06Hwaxzg&ab_channel=StarCraftEsports.

---. "MaNa Vs Serral PvZ - Grand Final - WCS Austin 2018 - StarCraft II.", June 4, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIqza5kdmdQ&ab_channel=StarCraftEsports.

---. "Serral Vs has ZvP - Grand Final - WCS Valencia 2018 - StarCraft II.", July 15, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJdwKmvFcEY&ab_channel=StarCraftEsports.

---. "ShoWTimE Vs Serral PvZ - Grand Final - WCS Leipzig 2018 - StarCraft II.", Jan 29, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY_GAwARnF8&ab_channel=StarCraftEsports.

---. "Stats Vs Serral PvZ - Grand Final - 2018 WCS Global Finals - StarCraft II.", Nov 4, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0UBfmOJYO4&list=PLHZ-lw26q81Wx57b3a-dIOPING5ht_c3V&index=33&ab_channel=StarCraftEsports.

---. "WCS Signature Series: Serral.", Oct 25, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=neKRnmRWmXA&ab_channel=StarCraftEsports.

- StarCraft. "StarCraft II: War Chest.", July 15, 2017,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=83CXdcbZJeE&ab_channel=StarCraft.
- . "Stats Vs Serral PvZ - Grand Finals - 2018 WCS Global Finals - StarCraft II .", Nov 3, 2018,
www.twitch.tv/videos/331332753.
- Sullivan, David B. "Broadcasting Television and the Game of Packaging Sports." *Handbook of Sports and Media*. Edited by Arthur A. Raney, and Jennings Bryant. Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ, 2006.
- Sunderland, Michael. "Baseball and the Radio.", Feb 23, 2020, www.medium.com/top-level-sports/baseball-and-the-radio-564feaf11c6f. Accessed May 17, 2021.
- Tammi, Pekka. "Against Narrative ("A Boring Story")." *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2006, pp. 19-40. *CrossRef*, muse.jhu.edu/article/244978, doi:10.1353/pan.0.0113.
- Taylor, T. L. *Raising the Stakes: E-Sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2012.
- . *Watch Me Play: Twitch and the Rise of Game Live Streaming*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2018.
- The Drive Staff. "Design: The Texas-Size HD Screens at AT&T Stadium.", Jan 8, 2016,
www.thedrive.com/design/1562/design-the-texas-size-hd-screens-at-at-t-stadium. Accessed May 24, 2021.
- Thomas, Jeanna. "Falcons Lost the Super Bowl because Matt Ryan Took that Sack.", -02-09, 2017,
www.sbnation.com/2017/2/9/14522738/falcons-lost-super-bowl-patriots-matt-ryan-sack-run-the-dang-ball. Accessed May 25, 2021.

TL.net, ESPORTS. "Serral Defeats has to Win WCS Valencia 2018.", July 15, 2018, www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/535492-serral-defeats-has-to-win-wcs-valencia-2018. Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "Serral Defeats Stats to Win GSL Vs. the World.", Aug 05, 2018, www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/536154-serral-defeats-stats-to-win-gsl-vs-the-world. Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "Serral Interview [GSL Vs. the World Finals].", Aug 05, 2018, www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/536156-serral-interview-gsl-vs-the-world-finals. Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "Serral Wins First Championship at WCS Leipzig.", Jan 20, 2018, www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/530682-serral-wins-first-championship-at-wcs-leipzig. Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "Serral Wins WCS Austin 2018.", June 03, 2018, www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/534093-serral-wins-wcs-austin-2018. Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "Serral, INno, Dark, Classic Advance in GSL Vs World.", Aug 03, 2018, www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/536104-serral-inno-dark-classic-advance-in-gsl-vs-world. Accessed May 17, 2021.

"Tom Brady Won't Further Pursue Suspension Appeal.", Jul 15, 2016, www.nfl.com/news/tom-brady-won-t-further-pursue-suspension-appeal-0ap3000000674937. Accessed Nov 6, 2020.

Trotta, Jerry. "Patriots Fans are Going to Hate these Revelations made by Reporter Who Broke Deflategate.", Jan 20, 2021, www.musketfire.com/2021/01/20/patriots-deflategate-reporter-reveals-regrets/. Accessed May 25, 2021.

"TwitchPlaysPokemon.", www.twitch.tv/twitchplayspokemon. Accessed May 31, 2021.

u/NFL_Mod. *Super Bowl 51 Game Thread: New England Patriots (14-2) at Atlanta Falcons (11-5)*, 2017.

www.reddit.com/r/nfl/comments/5sapal/super_bowl_51_game_thread_new_england_patriots/.

Accessed Apr 29, 2021.

Varotsis, George. "The Plot-Algorithm for Problem-Solving in Narrative and Dramatic Writing." *New Writing*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2018, pp. 333-347.

CrossRef, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14790726.2017.1374414>,

doi:10.1080/14790726.2017.1374414.

Vogan, Travis. *Keepers of the Flame: NFL Films and the Rise of Sports Media*. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 2014.

Vrentas, Jenny. "Edelman's Catch: Gravity-Defying, Jaw-Dropping, History Making.", Feb 6, 2017,

www.si.com/nfl/2017/02/06/super-bowl-51-julian-edelman-miracle-catch. Accessed June 16,

2021.

Waxangel. "Can Neeb be Beaten? WCS Leipzig Preview W/ Feardragon.", Jan 25, 2018,

www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/530490-can-need-be-beaten-wcs-leipzig-preview-w-feardragon.

Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "Get to Know Your WCS Challengers: Serral.", June 6, 2017, [www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-](http://www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/523653-get-to-know-your-wcs-challengers-serral)

[2/523653-get-to-know-your-wcs-challengers-serral](http://www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/523653-get-to-know-your-wcs-challengers-serral). Accessed May 17, 2021.

---. "Kingdom Come: Serral Sweeps the 2018 WCS Circuit.", Sept 18., 2018,

www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/537391-kingdom-come-serral-sweeps-the-2018-wcs-circuit.

Accessed May 17, 2021.

- . "Serral by the Numbers & Other WCS Valencia Stuff.", July 23, 2018,
www.tl.net/forum/starcraft-2/535774-serral-by-the-numbers-and-other-wcs-valencia-stuff.
Accessed May 17, 2021.
- Wenner, Lawrence A. "Media, Sports and Society: The Research Agenda." *Media, Sports, and Society*. Edited by Lawrence A. Wenner. Sage Publications, Newbury Park, Calif., 1989.
- Wesp, Edward. "A Too-Coherent World: Game Studies and the Myth of "Narrative" Media." *Game Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2014, gamestudies.org/1402/articles/wesp. Accessed July 30, 2018.
- Wesseling, Chris. "Patriots Erase Deficit, Defeat Falcons in Super Bowl LI.", Feb 5, 2017,
www.nfl.com/news/patriots-erase-deficit-defeat-falcons-in-super-bowl-li-0ap3000000783692.
Accessed Oct 20, 2020.
- Whannel, Garry. *Fields in Vision: Television Sport and Cultural Transformation*. Routledge, London, 1992.
- White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1987.
- Williams, Caitlin. "Excitement Builds as Fans Flock to Houston for Super Bowl LI." *WKRN News 2*, Jan 31, 2017, www.wkrn.com/news/excitement-builds-as-fans-flock-to-houston-for-super-bowl-li/. Accessed Apr 29, 2021.
- Wyshynski, Greg. "Why Virtual Reality is Still a Pipe Dream for the NHL.", May 14, 2020,
www.espn.com/nhl/story/_/id/29172350/why-virtual-reality-pipe-dream-nhl. Accessed May 26, 2021.

Yoon, Suh K. "A Science-Fiction Game Spurs South Korea's Net Industry." *The Wall Street Journal*, Feb 28, 2000, www.wsj.com/articles/SB951690705754082718. Accessed May 17, 2021.

Young, Jabari. "SoFi Stadium in LA Completes the Largest Video Scoreboard Ever made for Pro Sports.", July 01, 2020, www.cnbc.com/2020/07/01/sofi-stadium-in-la-completes-the-largest-video-scoreboard.html. Accessed May 24, 2021.

Appendix B

2018 Week 5 New England Patriots vs. Cleveland Browns

Game	Player	Description	Completion	Reception
1.0	Tom Brady	1st TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	2nd TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	3rd TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	4th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	5th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	6th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	7th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	8th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	9th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	10th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
2.0	Tom Brady	1st TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	2nd TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	3rd TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	4th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	5th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	6th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	7th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	8th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	9th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	10th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
3.0	Tom Brady	1st TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	2nd TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	3rd TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	4th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	5th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	6th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	7th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	8th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	9th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	10th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
4.0	Tom Brady	1st TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	2nd TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	3rd TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	4th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	5th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	6th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	7th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	8th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	9th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	10th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
5.0	Tom Brady	1st TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	2nd TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	3rd TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	4th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	5th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	6th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	7th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	8th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	9th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1
	Tom Brady	10th TD pass to Rob Gronkowski	100%	1

