

Analyzing “The Paul Finebaum Show”: Sport Media and Representations of the American South

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Abstract

The American South has been, historically, a region that is most sharply at odds with the rest of the United States (Grantham, 1994). Stereotypical representations of the South paint the region as backward, racist, unintelligent, lazy, and violent (Jansson, 2003 & 2005). These representations are created and fostered by many representational devices, including sport. Sports in the South, particularly college football and NASCAR, and the representations they create have been studied by many (Newman, 2005; Newman & Giardina, 2008; White, 2010) to reveal that sport and sport media aid in creating these stereotyped images of the American South. With this in mind, this study seeks to examine the critical roles of sport media in representing the American South through Southern football culture. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, it examines the discursive constructions of *The Paul Finebaum Show*, which is a nationally syndicated radio show that broadcasts daily on ESPN Radio and the SEC Network. Specifically, the theoretical framework of Orientalism (Said, 1978) is employed, and re-adapted in the form of internal Orientalism (Jansson, 2003 & 2005) to investigate the representations of college football fandom of the American South. The purpose is to reveal and critique sport media as a part of contemporary popular culture which participates in the knowledge construction of boundary, identity and culture, producing complex power relationships and stereotypes. This understanding of internal Orientalism is used to explore how Paul Finebaum and his radio show aid in creating an Other of the American South through the radio show’s representational power.