



Hometown Teams: How Sports Shape America **Exhibition Outline**

Introduction

Hometown sports are more than just games—they shape our lives and unite us and celebrate who we are as Americans.

- Americans today have a wider selection of sports to play and watch than ever before. What has occurred in our hometowns is nothing less than an American sports explosion.
- The essential qualities of sports – competition, fair play, and the zeal to win – embody the American spirit.
- Hometown teams represent the community, instill pride in it, and create a bond that is passed from one generation to the next.
- High school football and basketball games generate hometown passion and loyalty. Little League baseball games teach youngsters the fundamentals of fair play. Adult softball and bowling leagues keep us connected to the games we enjoyed in our youth. On a broader level, university and professional teams stir our support and make lifelong, dedicated fans out of many of us.
- Our connection to sports spans generations. It all begins in our hometowns at an early age. We put balls in the hands of infants and register our sons and daughters for development leagues and clinics. Later, they play on town teams. Many young athletes will go on to play high school and even college sports.
- As older adults, we might move to the grandstand, but our desire to remain fit and competitive keep us engaged in sports beyond the role of spectator. For much of our lives, sports and hometown teams play a big role in defining who we are.

No part of American culture so colorfully and passionately celebrates American ideals as does sports.

More Than A Game/Sports Everywhere

Sports are a national obsession and have a broad cultural impact. As individuals, what sports mean to us depends on our interests and values. We play sports to stay in shape, to quench our desire to compete, to stay young, to have fun. We watch sports because we enjoy connecting ourselves to our favorite teams; when they win, we win. When they lose, we share in their defeat. In this section, we look at the many connections between sports and American popular culture.

- Real-life hometown teams, reflected in film and television – Visitors will open DVD cases to reveal the real teams, towns, and stories behind some of the most famous sports movies, like the Milan (Indiana) High School basketball team that inspired *Hoosiers*



- “Sports, You Say?” – An interactive element will show how sports imagery emerges in our language
- As an integral part of American culture, sports are often addressed by authors and artists. How do they use sports to capture our imaginations?
- Sports and the Commercial World – A wall of sports-related objects like Soccer Barbie, Air Jordan shoes, and Arnold Palmer tea will illustrate a look at how products use sports and athletes’ endorsements to hook buyers

Fields of Glory

We call them cathedrals—classic ballparks where baseball, the National Pastime is played—and where the sight of the field, the sound of the crowd, and the smell of hot dogs and popcorn—are collectively embedded in our consciousness. And it’s not just the baseball diamond. We cherish most any field, ballpark, and court where over the years athletic contests of every kind are performed and victory is either won or lost. Even less conventional sports such as fishing, skiing, and surfing possess unique places that transcend the competitive experience and become forever etched in our memories. Many times where we play is nearly important as what we play.

- The importance of hometown connections – what are the powerful local and familial connections that tie us to our local stadium or gym. An audio component will present five interviews to introduce visitors to athletes and coaches who explain why its important to play sports in their communities
- Using a stereoscope viewer, visitors will have a chance to view 10 famous American sports venues representing a diverse group of sports.

Take Me Out to the Ballgame

Not all things that are exciting in sports occur on the fields of play. On the side lines and in the parking lots, down in the box seats and up in the bleachers, the sights and sounds of fans are all part of a grand sports tradition in America. We wear our team’s colors, eager to proclaim our allegiance and support. We cheer and yell, with the hope that it will prompt our team to victory. Whether our teams win or lose, the fan experience and the traditions that go with it are a vital part of sports in our hometowns.

- A look at the origins of some popular elements of the fan experience, including the first pitch at a baseball game and the pre-game performance of The Star-Spangled Banner, will be revealed to visitors by opening stadium seat cushions on metal bleachers.
- Objects in the section include all of the fun items fan bring to games – including cowbells, thundersticks, and other gameday souvenirs.
- The sights and sounds of the big game: A look at the cheerleaders and marching bands that help bring the crowds to their feet. A tablet-based interactive stocked with fight songs, videos of cheerleaders and marching bands, and photos of fun and unusual mascots from every state will introduce visitors to the excitement of athletic events.



- Food and fun: A look at tailgating and the foods that fans enjoy at the game. Visitors will have a chance to sample the scents of the game and enjoy the aromas of cotton candy, nachos and other favorites.

Playing the Game

Playing the game is more than merely putting on a uniform and taking the field. Being an athlete requires planning, preparation, practice, and performance in order to maximize one's chances for success. Today's athletes—amateur and professional alike—are bigger, stronger, and faster than ever before. They have better equipment. In order to compete effectively, the contemporary athlete must be dedicated in ways unknown to athletes fifty or hundred years ago.

- The thrill of victory and agony of defeat: A look at the raw emotion of sport and the pressures that some athletes endure. A trophy case features trophies, medals and images of winning teams.
- Practice, preparation and planning: A look at training, player/coach relationships and preparing for a game. Visitors will explore lockers filled with images and objects that reveal the technical elements that rule our games. A video will incorporate the personal reflections of athletes on the impact of their coaches.
- Everyone Plays: A look at how the Civil Rights Movement and Title IX opened up athletics in the United States. How did "game changers" break racial, gender and ability barriers in sports? Who were some of the people who changed the game?
- Equipment: How has the equipment we use to play the game changed over the past century? How have new technologies affected our ability to play? Visitors will be able to see how football helmets, baseball gloves and soccer shoes have evolved.

Root, Root, Root for the Home Team

Everyone in America likes a winner—especially a team or athlete from our hometown. We share in their success and in many ways embrace it as our own. Sports carry over into our daily lives as well as into the character and make-up of our communities.

Local sports leagues keep us connected with each other. Booster clubs support high school athletics. Corporate sponsorships help with the financial cost of local sports teams. Parents shuffle kids to and from practice and competitions. Pep rallies bond students and community members. And then when a local team is victorious, the entire town celebrates with a parade and accolades that bring the community still closer together.

- Community pride – Parades, rallies, Homecoming – a look at the events that bind us together in support of our teams. A "utility pole" can feature flyers and handbills from local teams and sporting events and will grow in interest as the exhibition tour continues. And an open display case allows local community to show pages with parades and Homecoming events from local yearbooks.
- Supporters – A look at people and community institutions and how they support local sports. Objects include booster items from schools all over the country.



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- **Rivalries and Legacies** – A look at the powerful traditions that link schools and communities in rivalries and the legacies produced by those relationships. A video on the long history of competition between Army and Navy will reveal the importance of this national rivalry.

Sports Revolution!

Our love of sports goes far beyond the games our parents and grandparents played. Football, baseball, and basketball remain prominent in our lives, but our sports landscape is now as diverse and dynamic as the American people. We embrace sports brought to America by immigrants from around the world. We create new sports by combining our favorite elements from established games.

We've seen a sports revolution!

- **Technology** -- It's never been easier to be a sports fan. Advances in media allow us to follow our favorite teams on television, online, even on our phones. Millions of us watch, blog, and text about a game simultaneously. We can still embrace our hometown teams even if life takes us far from home. It all makes for a dizzying American sports experience.
- **Alternative and Extreme Sports** -- Americans openly embrace the opportunity to create or adopt new sports. Check out a full-size skyboard – used to surf air currents while sky diving. A “Name That Sport” interactive introduces visitors to six unique emerging sports, including SlamBall and underwater hockey.
- **The Future of Sports** – Athletes will continue to view sports as a quest to reach their best or strive to exceed their own expectations. New sports will surface, competing for fans and talented athletes. Traditional sports—those embedded in our national culture —will continue to help define who we are. And, we will still be cheering at every game for the love of our teams. A video featuring interviews with young athletes and their parents will show how sports will continue to be an important part of American life and culture.

There is no escaping sports in our hometowns, or anywhere else in America. *We* wouldn't have it any other way.

In addition, visitors will be able to take cards for one of eight sports from the exhibition's introductory section. Visitors will be asked to look for artwork on the card in the exhibition and given a question to answer. Upon finding the artwork, visitors with smartphones can scan a QR code to download the Stories from Main Street application and leave an answer to the question.