Customer satisfaction is defined as a judgment of whether a product or service provided a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment (Oliver, 1997). Often, customer satisfaction is described as the link between perceived quality and post-purchase evaluations and decisions (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Customer satisfaction has been found to exhibit strong influence on intent to re-purchase and overall customer retention (Tornow & Wiley, 1991), and firms often use customer satisfaction as a primary measure of product and/or service performance (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993).

Spectator sport is often viewed as a service industry, and as such service quality has been the focus of fan satisfaction investigations (Wakefield, Blogett, & Sloan, 1993; Theodorakis & Alexandris, 2008; Greenwell, Fink, & Pastore, 2002). Traditional models of customer satisfaction in service industries have attempted to explain the relationship between satisfaction and service quality using Oliver's (1980) disconfirmation of expectations model (DEM). The DEM states that consumers approach purchase decisions with specific quality expectations. Then, following a consumption experience, that person independently perceives the quality that has been delivered. The difference between these expectations, and perceived quality, is called disconfirmation. It is argued that disconfirmation leads to satisfaction evaluations (Oliver, 1980). If perceived performance meets, or exceeds, the expected performance standard a customer has prior to consumption that customer is said to be satisfied. Conversely, if perceived performance falls below the expected performance standard a customer would experience negative disconfirmation and be dissatisfied.

Existing sport marketing literature regularly relies on the DEM to describe, and measure, customer satisfaction. For example, Van Leeuwen, Quick, and Daniel utilize the DEM in their development of their spectator sport satisfaction model (SSSM). Additionally, McDonald, Milne, and Sutton (1995) adapted Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1988) SERVQUAL scale, an instrument that measures disconfirmation, by creating an instrument called TEAMQUAL. TEAMQUAL is an instrument that is designed to uniquely measure disconfirmation in the spectator sport service environment. The use of TEAMQUAL suggests that spectator sport has clear service components that influence fan satisfaction. However, numerous researchers have shown that the unique nature of spectator sport includes other constructs that influence satisfaction. The two most important of those constructs are fan identification and the win/loss phenomenon (i.e., success). Fan identification is a construct that describes the unique manner in which sport fans socially identify with other fans and a sport team. The win/loss phenomenon refers to the overall success of a sport team, or player, as indicated by the win/loss record or the individual winning, or losing, of a team at a given event (Van Leeuwen, et al., 2002). It has been shown that the win/loss phenomenon influences spectator decisions to attend events and overall fan enjoyment (Branvold, Pan, & Gabert, 1997; Wann & Schrader, 1997), and empirical evidence shows that fan identification and product quality should be included in a satisfaction model (Yusof, See, & Yusof, 2008). As a result, Van Leeuwen, et al. (2002) argue that the sport marketing literature indicates that customer satisfaction can be described by imploring a unique version of the DEM in spectator sport.

In development of the SSSM, Van Leeuwen, et. al. (2002) argue that the spectator sport environment consists of more than just the peripheral services assessed when measuring service quality using an instrument like TEAMQUAL. The complex nature of attending a sporting event yields an experience that includes a bundle of tangible products, intangible products, and service encounters. Van Leeuwen, et. al. (2002) argue that those tangible and intangible products also influence customer satisfaction. They suggest that the SSSM encompasses all of the unique features of spectator sport consumption while maintaining the integrity of the DEM (Van Leeuwen, et. al., 2002). The SSSM includes disconfirmation of both core product expectations and performance and peripheral product expectations and performance as determinants of spectator satisfaction. Additionally, the SSSM suggests that fan identification
has direct influential relationships over core and peripheral expectations, performance, disconfirmation, and overall customer satisfaction. The SSSM advances satisfaction theory by developing a model that considers all the unique components of spectator sport. However, the continued reliance on the DEM creates an unnecessarily cumbersome description of a critical consumer process.

Cronin and Taylor (1992) argue disconfirmation of expectations does not accurately represent the cognitive consumer process that arrives at quality evaluations. Instead of arriving at a satisfaction evaluation by assessing the difference between expected quality and actual quality received, consumers simply assess the quality received (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Even if a consumer has previous experience in the same service environment, that previous experience does not influence that customer’s evaluation of a new service encounter. A sporting event spectator may compare a previous encounter with a more recent one, but that does not imply the previous encounter was influential in the assessment of satisfaction of the second encounter as the DEM would indicate. As a result, a new model of spectator sport customer satisfaction is needed that includes the more appropriate perceived quality theory.

This paper proposes a sport customer satisfaction model (SCSM) that moves beyond the DEM while making additional advances in fan satisfaction theory. First, the SCSM uses Cronin and Taylor’s (1992) performance-based theory to argue that perceptions of service and product quality directly influence fan satisfaction. The SCSM also recognizes the importance of fan identification and suggests that it has a direct relationship with satisfaction. Furthermore, Van Leeuwen, et al.’s (2002) SSSM represents core product quality and the win/loss phenomenon as distinct constructs; however, a team’s success is a significant part of the quality of the core product, the game experience (Zhang, et al., 1996). Therefore, this study proposes that core product quality in spectator sport includes the win/loss phenomenon. Empirical evidence suggests that the win/loss phenomenon and overall team quality can influence the development of fan identification (Yusof, et al., 2008). Therefore, the SCSM contends that core product quality directly influences fan identification and is the most influential determinant of spectator satisfaction. The resulting model uses a performance-based theory to suggest that service quality and fan identification directly influence fan satisfaction, and core product quality has a direct influence over service quality, fan identification, and fan satisfaction.