

Cockfighting Industry: An In-Depth Analysis

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Sports of violence involving animals, such as dog fighting and bullfighting, have been looked down upon by certain groups. Certain parts of Spain have eliminated the practice of bullfighting, a sport embedded in Spanish culture. Countries such as the United States have made these practices illegal, e.g. dog fighting. Puerto Rico, on the contrary, protects similar activities, specifically that of cockfighting. Activities of cockfighting are dated to 4,000 BC. It is not until the 17th century, through Spaniard colonization, that cockfighting activities are introduced to Puerto Rico (Mensaje del secretario, 2007). Children's books and school textbooks share this custom through stories and folklore such as the popular "El Jibaro", by Manuel Alonzo. Although cockfighting is not a sport discussed during casual conversation or over dinner such as basketball or football in the United States, its presence and influence in Puerto Rico should not be undermined.

Cockfighting in Puerto Rico and other countries has been briefly examined from a sociological and folklore perspective (Dundes, 1994; Orihuela & Solano, 1995). "Cockfighting: A Case Book" compiles existent folklore writings on cockfighting in different countries along with anecdotes from different sources. References of cockfighting may briefly occur in topics of violence in sport sometimes categorizing it as a blood sport (Jewell, Moti & Coates, 2011). Although scarce, scientific research has looked at the participants of cockfighting events (Orihuela and Solano, 1995; McCaghy & Neal, 1974) and cultural significances of sports such as cockfighting (Gaitan, 2000). The economic influence of this sport in Puerto Rico has been estimated by journalistic sources. Some have estimated the referred industry to generate multimillion dollars in the United States where such practice is illegal (Jewell & Coates, 2011). While a journalistic source estimates roughly 150,000 employments and \$400 million related to this activity (Vargas, 2010) another source estimates it at 100,000 thousand employments and 30 million dollars in gambling (Neumann, 2010). The ambiguous estimates of the industry could raise the question of a true understanding of this industry and all its facets. This dearth of knowledge limits a more complete and accurate study of the influence of this sport, job creation and tourism impact among others. For this reason, an in-depth examination of cockfighting is necessary.

The researchers of this study conducted open-ended in-depth interviews with stakeholders of the cockfighting industry in Puerto Rico including, trainers, breeders, administrators and government officials. The purpose of this study was to understand the cockfighting industry, its facets and stakeholders. This was a qualitative study guided by research questions. The first set of questions inquired the participant's involvement in the sport and perception of the sport. The second set of questions involved the nature of the sport, its operations and its multiple facets. The interviews allowed for culture of cockfighting to be understood. The relationship between culture and this sport emerged and its role and evolution understood. The emergence of sub-industries as a result of the cockfighting industry surfaced. Sport tourism and its legal uniqueness was also explained.

The regulations for rooster activities known as "actividad gallistica" outlines three principle areas: sport/competitive, cultural, and economic. The existence of over 120 registered coliseums for cockfighting in Puerto Rico suggests this as an important and involved activity. People from different countries come to Puerto Rico to participate in cockfighting events. Furthermore the feedings and other involvements are imported from outside of Puerto Rico. Such participation takes the industry of cockfighting from local to an international stage. An interesting fact is that a coliseum for cockfighting is located in the midst of the tourist area in Puerto Rico just a few yards from the prestigious Ritz Carlton Hotel. Its location could imply significance in terms of the impact on tourism and by consequence the impact on the local economy.