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Football Expands Lead Over Baseball as American's Favorite Sport

College Football and Auto racing come in next on the favorite sport list

New York, N.Y. — February 1, 2010 — Football season comes to a close this week, pitchers and catchers will soon report to Spring Training, and this is the prime time for the run to March Madness. As the season for one sport ends, another begins, but there will be some disappointed fans going through football withdrawal next week. Of those who follow one or more sport, over one-third (35%) say professional football is their favorite -- an increase of 4% over last year.

Baseball comes next as 16% of sports followers say that is their favorite sport, followed by 12% who say college football. Both of these are unchanged from last year. Football leads over baseball by 19 points; its lead between 2006 and 2008 was 15 points.

Next on the list of favorites are auto racing (which includes NASCAR) at 9%, then men's professional basketball (5%), hockey (4%), men's golf (4%), and men's college basketball (3%).

These are some of the results of **The Harris Poll** of 2,276 adults surveyed online between December 7 and 14, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

Favorites among Different Groups

Each sport has groups of people who are more of a fan and also less of a fan. For professional football, African Americans are more likely to say it is their favorite (45%) as are those aged 40-49 (42%) and those aged 25-29 (38%). On the reverse side, Hispanics (26%), those aged 18-24 (27%) and Westerners (28%) are less likely to say professional football is their favorite sport.

Baseball has its own sets of fans. Hispanics (24%), Easterners (21%) and College graduates (19%) are all more likely to say baseball is their favorite sport while African Americans (7%), those with a post-graduate degree (11%) and Southerners (12%) are less likely to say so.

Younger adults aged 18-24 who might be in college or have just graduated are the most likely to say college football is their favorite sport (26%) followed by Republicans (20%) and Southerners (19%). Easterners are least likely to say college football is their favorite (3%), followed by African Americans (6%) and those aged 40-49 (7%).

When it comes to auto racing, which does include NASCAR, those with a household income of between \$35,000 and \$49,999 a year (15%), those with a high school education or less (14%) and older Americans, aged 65 and older (13%) are more likely to say this is their favorite sport. African Americans (less than 0.5%), those with a post graduate education (2%) and those aged 25-29, on the other hand, are all least likely to say auto racing is their favorite.

**TABLE 1
FAVORITE SPORT**

"If you had to choose, which ONE of these sports would you say is your favorite?"

Base: All adults who follow one or more sport

	1985	1989	1992	1993	1994	1997	1998	2002
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Pro football	24	26	28	24	24	28	26	27
Baseball	23	19	21	18	17	17	18	14
College football	10	6	7	8	7	10	9	9
Auto racing	5	4	5	6	5	5	7	10
Men's pro basketball	6	7	8	12	11	13	13	11
Hockey	2	3	3	3	5	4	3	3
Men's college basketball	6	10	8	8	8	6	4	4
Men's golf	3	4	4	6	5	6	4	4
Men's soccer	3	2	2	1	3	3	4	3
Boxing	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Horse racing	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	1
Women's tennis	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3
Swimming	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Bowling	3	5	2	2	1	1	2	2
Track & field	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	1
Men's tennis	5	4	4	4	3	3	4	1
Women's pro basketball	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	*	1
Women's soccer	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Women's college basketball	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	1
Women's golf	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Not sure	*	1	4	1	2	2	1	3
Pro football's lead over baseball	1	7	7	6	7	11	8	13

Note 1: NA = Not asked in that year. Men and women's sports were not always distinguished

Note 2: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Note 3: "*" indicates less than 0.5%

TABLE 1 (continued)
FAVORITE SPORTS

"If you had to choose, which ONE of these sports would you say is your favorite?"

Base: All adults who follow one or more sport

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	CHANGE 1985-2008
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Pro football	29	30	33	29	30	31	35	+11
Baseball	13	15	14	14	15	16	16	-7
College football	9	11	13	13	12	12	12	+2
Auto racing	9	7	11	9	10	8	9	+4
Men's pro basketball	10	7	4	7	4	6	5	-1
Hockey	3	4	5	4	5	5	4	+2
Men's college basketball	6	6	5	5	4	5	3	-3
Men's golf	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	+1
Men's soccer	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	-1
Boxing	NA	2	2	1	1	2	2	NA
Horse racing	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	-2
Women's tennis	2	2	1	1	*	1	1	NA
Swimming	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	1	NA
Bowling	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	-2
Track & field	3	1	*	2	1	1	1	-1
Men's tennis	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	-4
Women's pro basketball	1	*	*	*	*	*	*	NA
Women's soccer	NA	1	*	*	*	*	*	NA
Women's college basketball	*	1	*	1	1	*	*	NA
Women's golf	1	*	*	1	*	*	*	NA
Not sure	1	2	2	3	2	1	2	-
Pro football's lead over baseball	16	15	19	15	15	15	19	+11

Note 1: NA = Not asked in that year. Men and women's sports were not always distinguished

Note 2: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Note 3: "*" indicates less than 0.5%

TABLE 2
DEMOGRAPHIC VARIATIONS IN FAVORITE SPORTS

"If you had to choose, which ONE of these sports would you say is your favorite?"

Base: All adults who follow more than one sport

Sport	All Adults	Highest		Lowest	
	%		%		%
Pro football	35	African Americans	45	Hispanics	26
		Those aged 40-49	42	Those aged 18-24	27
		Those aged 25-29	38	Westerners	28
Baseball	16	Hispanics	24	African Americans	7
		Easterners	21	Postgraduates	11
		College graduates	19	Southerners	12
College Football	12	Those aged 18-24	26	Easterners	3
		Republicans	20	African Americans	6
		Southerners	19	Those aged 40-49	7
Auto Racing	9	Income \$35K - \$49.9K	15	African Americans	*
		H.S. or Less	14	Post Graduates	2
		Those aged 65+	13	Those aged 25-29	4

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States December 7 and 14, 2009 among 2,276 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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By Regina Corso, Director, The Harris Poll, Harris Interactive

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