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## Professional Football Continues Dominance over Baseball as America's Favorite Sport

*College football comes in third*

**ROCHESTER, N.Y. – January 27, 2009** – Whether it is the Super Bowl, the World Series, the BCS Championship Game or March Madness, every sport has its fans. But when asked to choose which one sport is America's favorite, pro football tops the list with 31% of those who follow sports, followed by 16% who say baseball is their favorite. Rounding out the top five favorite sports are college football (cited by 12%), auto racing (8%) and Men's pro basketball (6%).

These are some of the results of *The Harris Poll*<sup>®</sup> conducted online by Harris Interactive between December 9 and 15, 2008 among 2,388 U.S. adults, of whom 1,582 follow one or more sport.

Since Harris Interactive began asking this question in 1985, professional football has always been on top and its popularity is now seven points higher than it was then (up from 24% to 31%). Compared to 1985's results, baseball has dropped seven percentage points (from 23% to 16%), and men's tennis has dropped four percentage points (from 5% to 1%). Professional football isn't the only sport to gain in popularity. Auto racing has increased its popularity by three percentage points (from 5% to 8%) as has hockey (up 3 percentage points from 2% to 5%).

### Demographic Variations

The survey also finds some sizable differences between different segments of the population:

- Pro football is most popular among those with household incomes of \$50,000 to under \$75,000 (43%), African Americans (42%), those aged 30-39 (39%), and Easterners (34%). Those with a post-graduate degree education (20%), Westerners (23%), those aged 65 and older (26%) and Hispanics (27%) are least likely to call football their favorite sport;
- Baseball is most popular among Westerners (21%), those aged 65 and older (21%) and Hispanics (20%). Those aged 30-39 (8%) and African Americans (8%) are least likely to say baseball is their favorite sport;
- College football is particularly popular among those with a college degree (21%), Southerners (20%) and those aged 25-29 (20%). Just 3% of Easterners, 4% of African Americans and 6% of Hispanics cite college football as their favorite sport; and,
- Auto racing (which includes NASCAR) is most popular among those aged 50-64 (14%), those with a High School or less education (11%) and Midwesterners (10%), while it fares worst among African Americans (1%), those with a post-graduate education (2%), and those aged 18-24 (2%).

One thing to note is for the first time, thanks to the attention on the sport by Michael Phelps' historic 8 gold medals, swimming was included on our list of sports and 2% say it is their favorite.

**TABLE 1****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

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

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

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	CHANGE 1985-2008
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Pro football	27	29	30	33	29	30	31	+7
Baseball	14	13	15	14	14	15	16	-7
College football	9	9	11	13	13	12	12	+2
Auto racing	10	9	7	11	9	10	8	+3
Men's pro basketball	11	10	7	4	7	4	6	0
Hockey	3	3	4	5	4	5	5	+3
Men's college basketball	4	6	6	5	5	4	5	-1
Men's golf	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	+1
Men's soccer	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	0
Swimming	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	NA
Boxing	NA	NA	2	2	1	1	2	NA
Women's tennis	3	2	2	1	1	*	1	NA
Horse racing	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	-3
Bowling	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	-2
Track & field	1	3	1	*	2	1	1	-1
Men's tennis	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	-4
Women's pro basketball	1	1	*	*	*	*	*	NA
Women's soccer	NA	NA	1	*	*	*	*	NA
Women's college basketball	1	*	1	*	1	1	*	NA
Women's golf	NA	1	*	*	1	*	*	NA
Not sure	3	1	2	2	3	2	1	-
<b>Pro football's lead over baseball</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>+14</b>

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	31	Income \$50,000-\$74,999	43	Post-graduates	20
		African Americans	42	Westerners	23
		Those aged 30-39	39	Those 65 and older	26
		Easterners	38	Hispanics	27
Baseball	16	Westerners	21	Those aged 30-39	8
		Those 65 and older	21	African Americans	8
		Hispanics	20	Income \$50,000-\$74,999	10
College Football	12	College graduates	21	Easterners	3
		Southerners	20	African Americans	4
		Those aged 25-29	20	Hispanics	6
Auto Racing	8	Those aged 50-64	14	African Americans	1
		HS or less education	11	Post-graduates	2
		Midwesterners	10	Those aged 18-24	2

**Methodology**

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States December 9 and 15, 2008 among 2,388 adults (aged 18 and over), of whom 1,582 follow one or more sport. 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.

***These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.***

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Press Contact:

Harris Interactive  
Corporate Communications  
585-272-8400

[press@harrisinteractive.net](mailto:press@harrisinteractive.net)

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