

# Americans playing less but watch more

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON—Couch potatoes rule.

Americans are spending more time watching television and surfing the Internet, and less time reading books, newspapers and magazines, according to a report being released Wednesday.

They also appear to be spending less time outside, unless they are watching others sweat.

Participation in almost every recreational sport, from golf and tennis to bowling and snow skiing, was down in 2004, even as attendance at professional sporting events

continued to climb.

Those and many other facts were included in this year's Statistical Abstract, a 1,023-page book of numbers quantifying just about every aspect of American life.

The Census Bureau assembles the statistics from a myriad of government and private sources, so researchers, academics and businesses can find them in one place.

Some sports sociologists argue that America is becoming a nation of spectators. Norman Chad thinks we already are.

"We all have televisions. They are relatively inexpen-

sive," said Chad, who writes a syndicated sports column called "Couch Slouch" about the sports he watches on TV. "We all have microwave ovens. Why do we need to go out?"

Chad, who also does color commentary for the World Series of Poker on ESPN, thinks outdoor sports are overrated.

"Ski? You know how long it takes to get to a mountain?" asked Chad. "You want to drive two hours to break your leg?"

Skiing, tennis and other recreational activities enjoyed increased popularity until

2004, when participation slipped.

Andrew Yiannakis, a sports sociologist at the University Of Connecticut, said there are several potential reasons for the decline.

"During times of security and abundance, people feel more inclined to spend money and enjoy themselves," said Yiannakis, who teaches a course called "Defining Leisure: A Sociological Perspective."

"During times of, say, political unrest, insecurity, economic downturns, people feel insecure, and their mood shifts into a negative state,"

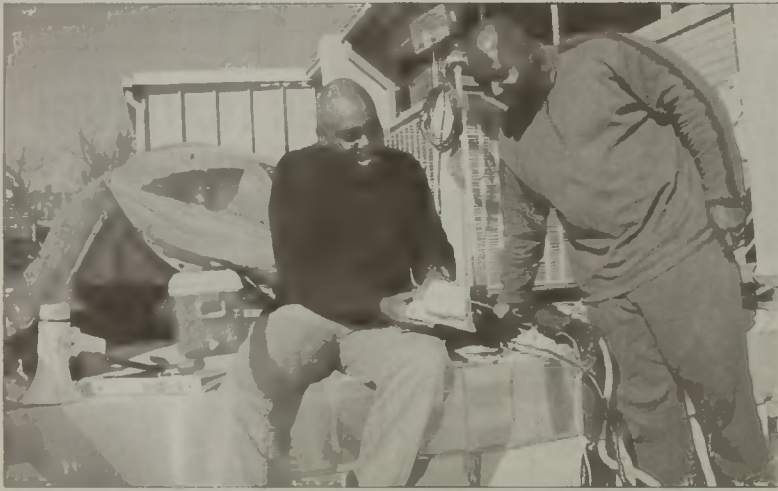
Yiannakis said. "People don't feel as good, so they shrink away from spending money and engaging in activities."

Yiannakis also said children are taught, intentionally or not, that they shouldn't play sports if they are not good at them. It happens when kids get cut from sports teams, or when coaches bench them for poor play.

"It is an elitist system that encourages the best to play and in a sense teaches the rest to be fans and spectators," Yiannakis said.

Among professional sports, baseball is still the national pastime when it comes to attendance, in part because there are 162 games in the regular season.

## ROOFTOP FUND RAISER



Al Austin, the Dowd and Stratford Richardson YMCA's senior financial development director is perched atop the roof of the Dowd YMCA at 400 East Morehead St. Austin needs to raise \$40,000 to continue community programs at the Dowd and Stratford Richardson YMCAs.

## Tips to trash or save fashion for future use

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK—Facing a closet full of 2005 styles and not sure what to do about it?

Some things are keepers and some things aren't. Here are some guidelines provided by apparel makers Worth and Ralsey, Cousin Johnny knitwear and jewelry designer Jessica Fields:

- Trash the low-rise jeans but don't buy too high a waistband either. They instantly add years onto your frame. And while you're at it, toss any tapered-leg jeans with an elastic waist; they make your bottom look wider and your stomach rounder.

- Opt for a boot cut or slightly flared ankle and be sure they comfortably fasten just beneath your belly button.

- Save your tailored white shirt. It can be buttoned up for work, worn loose in the evening or under a V-neck sweater or a soft jacket, per-

haps with crochet details, for weekends.

- Buy gold jewelry. Gold chandelier earrings, multi-length necklaces, and chunky bangles and cuffs are expected to be popular styles. Gold also complements the many white and tan garments that will be in stores come spring.

- Save your leather jacket or buy one if you don't have one. It's a classic. If you are in the market for a new jacket, consider a belted trench or one with a fur collar. Some styles can be part of an outfit, especially paired with a feminine blouse and skirt, or jeans and white T-shirt.

- Trash the ponchos. This trend is over! You'll get much more mileage out of a cardigan, particularly one with handcraft details.

- Save your metallic or skin (python, for example) accessories, but wear only one at a time.

## Study of Gullah culture is complete

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLESTON, S.C.—A study of the Gullah culture five years in the making is finally complete.

Cynthia Porcher began the study for the National Park Service by focusing on five counties — Beaufort, Charleston and Georgetown in South Carolina and Glynn and McIntosh in Georgia. Porcher did a lot of legwork to try to earn the trust of the black people in the communities. Part of the distrust was because Porcher is white, but another part was because other researchers had been there before.

"We were told very clearly that people have come here before and taken advantage of us," said Mike Allen of the Park Service.

There also was the challenge of talking about uncomfortable topics such as slavery.

"I learned a great deal about how unhappy slaves were and how there were work stoppages and slowdowns and sickouts and all kinds of things on the plantations," Porcher said. "They were not happy-clappy black faces and mammies with big smiles. There may have been people like that, who were very close to the families who owned them, but for the most part, that was a myth. And there is not enough emphasis on how much of a myth that is."

Gullahs descended from African slaves who settled on isolated sea islands and marsh areas between Wilmington, N.C., and Jacksonville, Fla., in the 19th century. The culture is known as Geechee in Florida and Georgia and Gullah in the Carolinas. The study documented sites in that area, including churches or praise houses, cemeteries, schools, settlements even large trees where Gullahs once met.

U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., who pushed for the study, has legislation pending that could create a heritage area linking these sites.

While Porcher said she thinks that's a good idea, she says preserving Gullah culture also involves preserving traditional communities by keeping them economically vital and protecting them from the ill effects of development.

"Young people within the culture frequently look at the language as some way their grandparents talk and don't realize the importance of carrying on basketry skills and net-making skills," Porcher says. "Just about everywhere we went, people said we need to teach our young people. We need to teach them the value of where they came from."

Resource Study:  
www.nps.gov/sero/planning/gg\_sr/s/gg\_res.htm

## Parks Service may take over the King Center

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA—The board of The King Center is considering transferring maintenance of the property to the U.S. Parks Service, which currently operates the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, a member said.

Former United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young said letting the federal government maintain the center would allow the King family to focus on spreading the slain civil rights leader's message of nonviolence.

Coretta Scott King founded the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta after her husband's assassination in 1968 and has traveled widely to help carry out his dreams and goals.

The center's main mission is to help end violence in the world. The task of maintaining the property ends up being a formidable responsibility," Young said, adding that millions of people visit the center each year. "That's a considerable amount of wear and tear."

Under an agreement which has not yet been reached, Young said the family would remain responsible for King's marble tomb, which rests on

The King Center grounds.

The park service operates the King National Historic Site, located across the street. The historic site includes a visitor's center, the Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church and the King birth home.

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