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Enough, already

Sports, entertainment sacrificing quality for quantity

SAM MCKEWON is the Daily Nebraskan summer editor.

On Tuesday night, the first game of the Stanley Cup Finals was played. Hockey on ice. In June.

There is something very, very wrong with that picture. Hockey ought to end sometime in March, April, the latest. The sport simply seems out of place in the summer, as it is played on a surface created by wintry conditions.

But it is a sign of times that our entertainment industry is going horribly wrong by going horribly long.

Everything in the sports and entertainment system is dominated by length. More and more television programs go to an excruciating hour to keep viewers. Sports adds more and more games, more and more channels, so there is no possible way to escape your favorite year-round activity. It starts at the lowest levels and works from there.

At the core of this entire transformation is a likely culprit: money. It pays for the NBA to play basketball until the end of July. More ratings. More advertising. More everything.

Professional teams love the two-month long playoffs. Ticket prices always go up in the playoffs. Everybody wants a piece. Thousands of fans waited outside the Buffalo Sabres' arena for a ticket to the first Stanley Cup the team has ever been in. They were notified the tickets had sold out in about nine minutes. The longer the playoffs, the better.

Meanwhile, length simply cheapens quality. There's teams in the NBA and NHL playoffs

losing records, some years. Your favorite team might get in, but see how you feel when they get swept by the No. 1 seed and you spent \$100 to see that happen. (New York Knick fans please disregard).

Length cheapens entertainment. Gone is tightly written television and film scripts, at the behest of laborious film making process. Anymore, making a film costs so much that movies feel a show has to be two hours long for it to be worth anything.

Seriously, is there any real reason a show like "Buffy: The Vampire Slayer" needs a full hour to tell its story? In the 30 minutes we must fill, we just get a bunch of talky dialogue anyway.

Movies are worse. As much as I like Martin Scorsese as a director, his movies are becoming the equivalent of shopping with a woman: you browse and browse in a store for entirely too long, get nothing, and move on to the next store. His most recent effort, "Kundun" was a battle is fighting off sleep.

It ought to be a sign when every movie nom-

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inated for an Academy Award for best picture was two hours or longer. The film that won, "Shakespeare In Love" 122 minutes long (two hours, two minutes). A two-hour comedy. My God.

More and more often, length determines quality when it never should have. Of our finest literature, many of it is short. But longer and longer novels get all of the attention, for no apparent reason. In an English class of mine, I asked a classmate how long the ideal novel ought to be. She replied, "About 700 pages." "The Great Gatsby" is 216. "A Clockwork Orange" is 192. "Old Man and the Sea" is 127.

What is our obsession with length? Some link it to technology. Others, to money. Think about: are you going to pay for \$27 book if it's only 100 pages long? Not likely.

More likely, it's our devotion to indulging ourselves with information. No longer are our eyes bigger than our stomachs, but our brains are, too. Thirty minutes of news is not enough; we need 24 hours. Newspapers are following in on the act, too. I'll read features that are 100, sometimes 150 inches long. This is brutal reading. The world ought to be ending if I'm reading that in a newspaper. We want more and more information than we can handle: more images, more pages, more playoffs, more bang for our buck.

And when television and film give us what we want, we're bored or too full to care. Pretty soon, somebody will be inventing a doggie bag for your brain.



MATT HANEY/DN