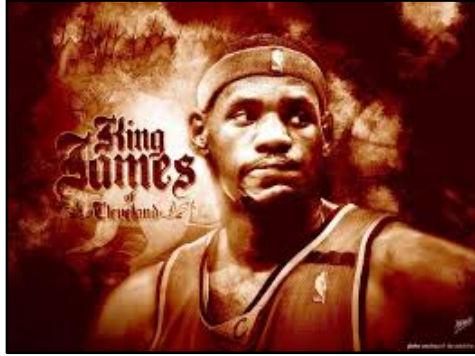


## Writing response: Branding, commodifying an athlete to sell stuff

We're going to try to weave together LeBron-Nike and our discussions these past two weeks on gender in sports and media. Your assignment is to draft a 2-page strategy memo outlining how you propose to brand (or co-brand with the athlete) U.S. women's soccer phenom **Alex Morgan**, using the Mocarski reading as a sort of template for things to think about.



At the top of your list is to **identify a narrative**, just as LeBron tapped into biblical narratives for his The Chosen One-King James-Witness-Promised Land myth. What “story” will you create for and with Alex? **Second**, as Nike considered race and stereotype, you have to consider gender and

stereotype. Are you going to play up Alex's sexuality, attractiveness, and sex appeal, risking stereotype? Or are you going to de-feminize her in ways comparable to Nike's de-racializing of LeBron, in order to appeal to a wider audience? **Third**, anticipate criticism for whatever you choose to do on gender. How will you anticipate and neutralize this criticism? **Fourth**, think about the emotional promises you want the Nike-Alex Morgan brand to communicate (see Mocarski for more on this). If a brand is a company's or brand's personality, what personality are you going to try to engineer/create and communicate for and as the Nike-Alex Morgan brand? **Fifth, and last**, consider media choices. For LeBron, Nike used (primarily) TV ads, co-creation with ESPN of TV programming (“The Decision”), and webisodes of The Lebrons. What media might you leverage to “sell” the Alex Morgan brand, and what kinds of content might you create or co-create to communicate the narrative(s) you chose up top?



Remember, the bottom line is selling stuff: The swooshification of American culture. Profits for Nike. What you come up with is in service to that profit motive. To do this, Alex has to become a commodity of herself, as Mocarski writes on page 18. She has to be safe so that she may be consumed by the masses. She will converge the independent, multi-mediated female athlete; the narrative-authoring advertising machine; and our cultural obsession with winning, physical attractiveness/sex, and sports celebrity.

**Formatting:** 12-point Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, double-line spaced. Writing counts, so proof your work.