The term “Baller” is one of the oldest slang terms still used heavily today. Originally it was used as an Ebonics or African American Vernacular English (AAVE) term to identify a particular cultural identity. But, it has evolved and expanded significantly since its inception. In the sporting context, the term Baller describes Black American (mostly male) athletes who carry a unique set of cultural practices, posture, attitude, style, and set of beliefs that have, in large, been influenced by traditional Black expressions and lived experiences. This presentation, first, explores the foundations of the term Baller by historically mapping it from its origins in “the streets” (i.e. the social-economical experiences of lower-class) and through the rise of hip hop. Secondly, this presentation uses content analysis of culture materials to examine the way Baller identity is used by contemporary Black American athletes to a) express themselves, b) reimagine their identity, and c) resist cultural erasures of white supremacy.

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