Sport Management Library

Financing Sport

Dennis R. Howard
John L. Crompton

FINANCING SPORT

by
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and
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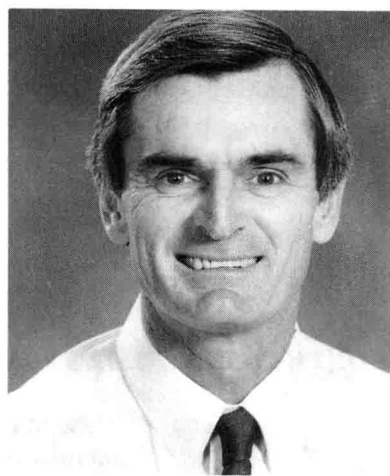
Dennis R. Howard, Ph.D., is Head of the Graduate Program in Sport Management at The Ohio State University. Prior to coming to Ohio State in 1992, he served on the faculty at the University of Oregon for 13 years. Dr. Howard has authored or co-authored 3 books and numerous articles in sport and leisure management publications. His research focuses on the financing and marketing of sport. He has served as a featured speaker at numerous professional conferences and consults with a variety of sport and leisure organizations. He is a Fellow in the American Academy of Leisure Sciences and serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Sport Management* and *Leisure Sciences*. A native of the San Francisco Bay Area, Dr. Howard earned degrees from the University of Oregon, University of Illinois and Oregon State University.



John L. Crompton, Ph.D., is a Professor in the Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University. He received his basic education at Loughborough College and Loughborough University in England and at the University of Illinois. Subsequently, he was a principal in the largest sport and recreation consulting organization in the United Kingdom. He came to Texas A&M in 1974. For some years he taught graduate and undergraduate courses in both the Department of Marketing and the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, but now teaches exclusively in the latter Department. Dr. Crompton's primary interests are in the areas of marketing and financing recreation, sport and tourism services. He is author or co-author of 5 books and a substantial number of articles and monographs in the recreation, sport, tourism and marketing literatures. He has received a variety of national awards recognizing his work from professional associations and has delivered keynote addresses at national conferences in a number of countries.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are particularly conscious of the debt we owe to the many colleagues and students whose encouragement, enthusiasm, and contributions have been critical to our completing this 3-year project. Dr. Janet Parks, Editor of the Sport Management Library Series deserves special mention. She provided the initial stimulus for the text by inviting us to write it. Her unflagging support, timely and insightful reviews, and constant encouragement were crucial to keeping us on task.

Our work has been influenced by many students who have participated in our classes since this project began. Their constructive criticism stimulated us to revise and clarify many of our ideas. Former graduate students Allen Brooks, Pam Gill, Bruce Javitz and Dan Mahony were particularly helpful in gathering reference materials.

Special thanks to Trevor Slack at the University of Edmonton and Scott Branvold at Robert Morris College for their review of our original manuscript. We are also particularly grateful to Denny Hoobler, Director of Development in the Athletic Department at Ohio State University, Mark Jennings, Director of Men's Athletic Fund Raising at the University of Iowa, Pat Ogle, Executive Director of Fresno State's Bulldog Foundation and Laura Clontz, Director of Development in the Department of Athletics at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, all of whom shared their expertise and information with us in the preparation of Chapter 13 on Fund Raising. The contributions of Paul Krebs, Associate Director of Athletics and Ann Chasser, Director of Trademark and Licensing at Ohio State University to Chapters 1 and 6, respectively, are also greatly appreciated.

Throughout this book we have relied on a number of journalists who provide insightful commentary on the business of sport. While we reference their work throughout the text, we would like to give special recognition to Murray Chass, Michael Ozanian, Murray Sperber, Stephen Taub and Andrew Zimbalist. Their thoughtful analysis on the problems and issues confronting the managed sport industry provided important context for this text.

Finally, our sincerest thanks go to our wives Lin and Liz and our sons, Tim and Dan, and daughters, Christine and Joanne. It was only through their support that this book was written.

PREFACE

Managers of the managed sport industry are confronted with the certain reality of doing more with less. The declining availablity of many traditional revenue sources, coupled with rapidly escalating costs, has placed sport managers under intense pressure to obtain the financial resources necessary to sustain their organizations. It is our view that, now more than ever, managers must assume a proactive rather than a reactive role in confronting the fiscal challenges facing them. Organizations that will flourish will have managers who adopt an entrepreneurial approach, relentlessly seeking out new resources as well as aggressively exploiting existing sources to ensure that their constituents, clients, and/or fans receive the most effective service or experience possible.

This book is intended to provide students in professional sport curricula and professional practitioners with the first comprehensive coverage of the many traditional and innovative revenue acquisition methods available to sport organizations. Along with conventional income sources, such as tax support, ticket sales, concessions and fund raising, readers will receive in-depth exposure to more recent innovations related to licensing sport products, media sales, and corporate sponsorships. The book does not include material on budgeting procedures or financial analysis techniques. The focus of this text is on resource acquisition; thus, financial management and budgeting are outside its scope--they are operational tools used to manage the resources rather than acquire them. We believe the material in this text to be very different from what has appeared in both other general finance texts and in the existing sport management literature.

It is our hope that through the "nuts and bolts" treatment of each revenue acquisition method, augmented by numerous examples of their application, readers will feel confident in their ability to transfer the techniques to actual practice. Although the preponderance of examples used is drawn from the context of intercollegiate and professional sport, because to date that is where they are most commonly found, it is hoped that the reader will also be able to see how the concept or technique being illustrated could be adapted to other segments of the managed sport industry.

The creation of this text has been a collaborative effort. Every aspect of the organization, research, and writing of the book has been a joint endeavor between the two senior co-authors. John Crompton's academic training and personal experience in the areas of economics and general finance led to his assuming primary responsibility for writing the chapters dealing with public investment issues (chapter 2), economic impacts (chapter 3), and sources of public sector funding (chapter 4), as well as the section on corporate sport sponsorship (chapters 9-12). Drawing on his long-time association with the managed sport industry and his teaching and research interests in sport finance, Dennis Howard took the lead in developing the introductory chapter (chapter 1) and chapters dealing with various applied aspects of revenue acquisition, including joint venture partnerships (chapter 5), ticket operations (chapter 6) and fund raising (chapter 13). He also provided

overall coordination of the text. However, throughout the development of the text, each of us has made significant contributions to the work of the other.

In those areas where neither co-author felt he possessed the necessary expertise to handle a topic in sufficient depth, an effort was made to identify the most knowledgeable expert on the subject. We were very fortunate to persuade two eminent authorities in their respective specializations to contribute chapters to our text. Dickie Van Meter, who is currently the president of the fastest growing sport licensing firm in North America, Licensing Resource Group, Inc., agreed to provide a chapter (7) on licensing sport products, a relatively new and potentially substantial source of income for sport organizations.

Chris Bigelow, the president of The Bigelow Companies, a leading foodservice and merchandise consultant to stadiums, arenas, and sports teams across the country, contributed a chapter (8) dealing with the many critical issues managers face in developing and operating a concessions and souvenir sales program. Their contributions substantially enhance the final product . From no other source will students and sport managers obtain such crucial "trade secrets" and insights into how to maximize the potential of licensing, media, and concession sales for their organizations.

This text is aimed at upper division and graduate students in professional preparation curricula in sport management. Much of the material has been tested in our own classes and has been revised in response to feedback. Because of the mounting fiscal pressures facing many sports organizations, we believe that many practicing professionals also will find the book a valuable resource. At every opportunity we have shared the content of the book with interested practitioners, whose enthusiastic reactions have given us confidence that the book can truly assist and advance the practice of professional sport managers.

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CHAPTER 1

THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGE

THE FINANCIAL STATUS OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS
THE IMPACT OF TITLE IX
THE FINANCIAL STATUS OF PROFESSIONAL SPORTS
MAGNITUDE OF COSTS AND REVENUES
FACING THE FUTURE: MEDIA REVENUES AND ESCALATING SALARIES
Media Revenues
Escalating Salaries
CONFRONTING THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGE
ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT
SUMMARY

Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, the reader should be able to:

1. **recognize the social and economic factors confronting sport managers compelling them to "do more with less."**
2. **understand that the current operation of sport organizations is shaped largely by income generation and cost containment strategies.**
3. **understand the impact of Title IX on the financing of collegiate sports.**
4. **explain the current income and cost structure of professional sport in North America.**
5. **discuss the role of a sport manager as an *entrepreneur*, searching out and exploiting opportunities which will enhance the service capabilities of the organization.**

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CHAPTER 1

THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGE

Never before have sport managers faced as many complex challenges as confront them today. An increasing number of managers face the daunting challenge of coping with a situation in which traditional revenue sources are declining at the same time that costs are rapidly escalating. This "double whammy" is placing great pressure on administrators of sport programs. In recent years, traditional sources of revenue--tax support, media revenues, and in many cases, gate receipts--have all declined. Many sport organizations are sustaining substantial budget cuts, forcing changes in their traditional patterns of operation. Maintaining programs even at current levels requires that sport managers learn to do "more with less."

It is this new reality that has caused managers to look beyond the traditional financing concepts and strategies that have been used and to supplement them with new imaginative approaches. It is the basic theme of this text that managers of sport organizations are required to seek out scarce resources from a wide range of possible sources and to use their marketing and financing skills to ensure that the scarce resources acquired are allocated in such a way that they yield optimum social and economic benefits. These are exactly the requirements of an entrepreneur. Indeed, we view the contemporary sport manager as an entrepreneur. Increasingly, effectiveness in collegiate and professional sports will be achieved by managers who aggressively seek out resources for their organizations. Once these resources have been identified, the effective manager will understand how best to exploit them to ensure that the organization's consumers (e.g., fans, participants, members) receive maximum satisfaction.

Although the focus of the book is on the two largest segments of the sport industry, intercollegiate and professional, the methods and strategies of revenue acquisition discussed in the following chapters can be adapted to a wide range of public and private club sport organizations. Throughout the book numerous references and examples are drawn from a variety of sport settings.

THE FINANCIAL STATUS OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

Because they have a social and educational mission, intercollegiate programs may receive tax support and donations from external sources. In the United States, institutions of higher education traditionally have been classified as either public (tax supported, state controlled) or private (independent of government). However, though they operate in different political and environmental contexts, athletic departments in private and public institutions are often indistinguishable in terms of organizational design and programs. Most athletic departments, particularly the 300 "big-school" programs in Division I of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), are structured as self-supporting auxiliary enterprises. An increasing number of athletic departments in state colleges and universities are losing their traditional direct tax support, so even within public universities many athletic departments operate essentially as private enterprises largely independent of the academic governance process of the institution.

Symptomatic of a national trend, the Illinois Board of Higher Education in November, 1992 proposed total elimination of state taxes used for sport programs at universities in the state. At stake was approximately $100 million of support for intercollegiate athletics at the state's twelve colleges and universities ("Athletic Notes," 1993). Similarly, in 1993 nearly $10 million in state support for intercollegiate athletics in the state of Washington was at risk as the legislature struggled to close a $1.8-billion budget shortfall. Elimination of the state subsidy could result in Washington State University's losing an annual subsidy of almost $1.8 million in support of its women's sport programs. Like their counterparts in private institutions, athletic programs in public colleges and universities increasingly must pay their own way, balancing their budgets through student tuition and fee contributions and revenue generated from gate receipts, donations, sponsorships, other fund raising, and in the case of larger institutions, media rights (television and radio) sales. The following scenario is becoming increasingly common:

> Students at the University of California at Davis have approved a fee increase that will keep as many as ten sports off the chopping block--at least for now. The University's sports program faced a cut of at least $600,000 next year, which would have forced the elimination of up to half of its 20 sports teams. But, thanks to an aggressive lobbying campaign by a new booster group called Students Supporting Athletics, nearly two-thirds of the students who voted agreed to pay $34 more each quarter to help the sports program, the Student Health Center, and other programs that faced cuts. The increase will remain in effect for three years, after which students will vote on continuing it. The euphoria over the referendum may be short-lived, however, given California's continuing budget crisis. The University now faces a $35 million shortfall for next year, and the plan to reduce the deficit calls for the university to phase out all money that the athletics department gets from state general funds, including most of the coaches' salaries. ("Athletic Notes," 1993, p. A30)

A great majority of the approximately 800 active members of the NCAA and 520 affiliates of the National Association of Intercollegiate Colleges (NAIA), mostly smaller colleges, are heavily subsidized, generating only modest levels of income. Even among the most prominent athletic departments, only one or two sports, generally men's football and basketball, can be considered commercial or "profit-driven" enterprises. The ability of either of these sports to generate substantial net income often is crucial to maintenance of all the other nonrevenue-producing men's and women's sports (swimming, tennis, track and field, etc.). As a result, all but a handful of institutions are struggling to break even in the operation of their total multisport programs.

Annual expenditures for intercollegiate athletics now exceed $1 billion (Raiborn, 1990). The average total annual budget for institutions with major football and basketball programs amounted to $10.75 million in 1990. The high degree of commercialization in collegiate sport is evident in the high salaries of coaches, the emphasis on television contracts, the prominence of corporate sponsorships, and the emergence of licensing agreements. For the modern sport manager, charged with maintaining the financial solvency of a college sport program, the adage "It's no longer a game, it's a business" is more true than ever. It has been noted that "the imperative to become more businesslike" is a dominant characteristic of big-time college athletics. (Hart-Nibbrig & Cottingham, 1986, p. 55).

The indisputable reality of modern collegiate sports is that its day-to-day governance is shaped largely by financial considerations, such as cost containment and income generation. This emphasis is not just a preoccupation of the recognized "big powers" of collegiate athletics. In the 1990s higher education in general is under intense financial pressure from the ravages of inflation and eroding support, which has led to athletic programs at small colleges being scrutinized more closely than ever before. Although they were never intended to be fully self-supporting, athletic departments at NCAA Division II and III and NAIA levels are being required to earn a greater share of their costs. Although programs at this level offer fewer or no athletic scholarships and have significantly lower budgetary expenditures related to recruiting and staffing than do Division I programs, financial self-sufficiency is virtually impossible, particularly for those programs offering football. With gate receipts contributing typically less than 20% of the total cost of intercollegiate athletics, small colleges (particularly NCAA Division III and NAIA) must rely on student tuition and/or fees for approximately half of their budgetary support (Raiborn, 1990). As many small colleges grapple with declining enrollments and rising educational costs, the pressure to reduce subsidy support levels for athletics has intensified.

The unassailable reality of collegiate sport programs at all levels today is that they are no longer able to pay their own way. According to the NCAA, almost three-fourths of the largest collegiate athletic programs are losing money (Raiborn, 1990). Even football, the "cash cow," is suffering, with 89% of all college football teams (and 75% at Division I) spending more than they make (Sperber, 1990). Evidence suggests that smaller college programs at the Division III and NAIA levels are experiencing even greater financial pressure, with from 75-90% reporting deficits (Raiborn, 1990).

The former Executive Director of the NCAA, Dick Schultz, commented that "You can probably count on your two hands the number of athletic departments that actually have a surplus annually" (Sperber, 1990, p. ix). The following data were provided by the Raiborn Report (1990):

1. Among the big-time football programs in Division IA, 45% are running deficits averaging $638,000 annually.
2. Of the Division IAA football programs, 94% are running deficits averaging $535,000 per year.
3. Of Division III football programs, 99% are incurring annual deficits on average of about $69,000.

Two factors in particular have intensified the financial pressures confronting intercollegiate athletics: escalating tuition costs and gender equity. According to the U. S. Department of Education, tuition at the average public university will rise 70-80% between 1988 and 2000 (Krupa & Dunnavant, 1989, p. 34). The same source indicates that scholarship costs at a school like the University of Alabama, for example, will increase from $3 million in 1988 to about $6 million annually in 2000. Federal (Title IX) and state legislation mandates gender equity in the provision of men's and women's intercollegiate sports, but makes no funds available to implement this worthy goal. The NCAA prescribes investment in women's sports proportionate to the number of females in the student body. Yet, due to years of neglect, women's sports at most institutions currently contribute no more than 5% to 10% of the total revenues generated by average collegiate athletic programs (Raiborn, 1990).

In a generic sense, the response options to these pressures are limited. According to Homer Rice, Athletic Director at Georgia Tech, " 'You can either create ways to add revenue, or cut costs' " (cited in Krupa & Dunnavant, 1989, p. 33). However, some are dubious that much, if any, progress will be made toward the second alternative. Deloss Dodds, Athletic Director at the University of Texas, claimed, " 'It's clear that we're not going to be able to limit spending' " for college athletics (cited in Krupa & Dunnavant, 1989, p. 33). Carrying the point further, he asserted that "There's a tendency in college athletics, like Congress, to spend if you have it" And spend they have. According to figures released by the NCAA in 1990, from 1982 to 1989, athletic department expenses for almost all NCAA affiliate athletic departments nearly doubled (Raiborn, 1990). It will be difficult to reduce the current level of costs because higher tuition costs and gender equity compliance requirements will place continued financial demands on athletic department budgets.

Certain requirements currently in place constrain cost reduction options available to many college administrators. As Sperber (1990) points out, the NCAA now requires even the smallest Division IA schools to sponsor a minimum of 13 teams (men's and women's) in 7 sports and to spend a minimum of $500,000 on athletic scholarships in nonrevenue sports. The dilemma facing the average Division I institution is that "nonrevenue" men's and women's sports generate only 8% of the athletic department's revenues, but account for 28% of its costs (Thalman, 1992). Budget cuts and deficits have caused a growing number of universities to make difficult and painful decisions:

- In 1992, California State University, Long Beach made the decision it could no longer afford to play football. According to Athletic Director David O'Brien, " 'The NCAA requirements went up to the point where to compete in Division I-A, you had to have a 30,000 seat stadium and average 17,000 attendance. The fact that we didn't have an on-campus stadium and that we were only averaging 3,200 fans a game would not allow us to do that' " (cited in Foster, 1992, p. 36). Rather than opting to drop a level to Division I-AA, Long Beach State decided to cancel the program altogether. " 'We just felt like we would be better off dropping the sport, and hopefully, when things get better, we can bring it back' " (cited in Foster, 1992, p. 36).
- Other schools at the brink have made compromises to save football. Towson State University and Western Kentucky University have dramatically scaled down their programs by moving toward a nonscholarship emphasis. The change could result in savings of as much as $400,000 to $1,000,000 a year for each institution, respectively. (Foster, 1992).
- Even schools rich in football tradition face crossroads decisions regarding the future of their football programs. Southern Methodist University, struggling to recover from the NCAA "death penalty" that prevented the Mustangs from playing football in 1987 and 1988, suffered a reported $4.8 million loss in 1991. The NCAA's harshest sanction was handed down in 1987 for player payouts. Although the decisions are painful, in the face of a growing budget deficit, SMU officials are seriously considering options ranging from reducing or eliminating scholarship athletics to dropping to a lower NCAA division of competition. (Foster, 1992).

The situation confronting the University of Oregon Athletic Department is illustrative of the wide difference between revenue and nonrevenue sports. In 1992, football and men's basketball generated $6.8 million in gross revenues against $4.9 million in expenditures. The other 12 nonrevenue sports earned a total of $270,000, while their aggregate costs amounted to $2.3 million. According to Sandy Walton, Senior Associate Athletic Director, " 'football and basketball can't continue to carry them (nonrevenue sports) at levels that are being mandated. If it weren't for institutional support [State Board of Higher Education appropriation] we wouldn't be making it.' " (cited in "Rich Brooks," 1992, p. 8G). The mounting insolvency of most college athletic departments has focused attention on the need to rein in escalating expenses. The NCAA established a special committee to identify various ways athletic programs could realize cost savings. One option given serious consideration was to replace the traditional practice of awarding athletic scholarships to cover the complete cost of tuition and room and board with a substantially less costly aid package based on the financial capability of each athlete's family. Serious challenges face the radical shift from "full ride" to "need-based" athletic scholarships. Dick Schultz, the NCAA Executive Director from 1988 through 1993, expressed concern about the equity of a financial aid package based on need, commenting that " 'Some athletes would receive no aid. So then you get into a fairness question. Just because this individual's parents saved their money, it will cost them as opposed to somebody else that hasn't been so frugal' " (cited in Moran, 1992b, p. B5). In spite of this concern, it is clear that college

presidents are likely to view this proposal as a viable approach to controlling the single greatest expense of college athletic programs.

NCAA Attempts to Cut Costs

After a nine-month study of the financial crunch confronting collegiate athletic programs, the NCAA's Special Committee to Review Financial Conditions in Intercollegiate Athletics proposed a series of cost-cutting recommendations. According to Big Ten Commissioner and Committee Chair Jim Delany, if these recommendations are adopted, Division IA athletic programs could save between $200,000-400,000 a year. Under the proposal, maximum roster sizes for Division IA and IAA football programs would be reduced about 10%, limited to 105 and 90 players, respectively by 1994. Division IA schools offering the maximum 85 scholarships in 1995 (down from 92 in 1993) would be restricted to 20 walk-on players. Division IAA football programs would be limited to granting 63 scholarships and a maximum number of 27 walk-ons. Other Committee recommendations include ("Update," July 21, 1993, USA Today, p. E2).:

1. Cutbacks in the number of visits by recruits and the number of coaches who recruit off campus, and elimination of the specialized football recruiting coordinator.

2. An end to off-campus scouting of football and basketball opponents, leaving coaches to rely on film.

3. An end to team getaways in local hotels the night before home games and the elimination of off-season training-table meals for athletes.

In what may become a trend, particularly among Division IAA schools, university presidents of the eight Big Sky Conference institutions imposed dramatic cost containment requirements on their league's football programs. Faced with declining state funding and demands for gender equity, the presidents mandated a reduction of six football scholarships a year per school, beginning in 1994. League schools will be limited to 45 scholarships each by the 1996-97 season.

The Impact of Title IX

In an environment of rising costs, athletic administrators are now also being required to confront the enormous financial implications of finally complying with Title IX. A series of dramatic events in the early 1990s required colleges to make a serious commitment to addressing the gender equity issue. For almost two decades after the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act in 1972, many college athletic programs paid only lip service to the notion of equal treatment of sexes. Then, beginning in 1991, in quick succession, three developments gave Title IX great momentum (Moran, 1992a, p. B26):

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