



History of Sport and Physical Education in the United States

**Betty Spears
Richard Swanson**

**Third
Edition**

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of Sport and
Physical Education
in the United
States**

Third Edition

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**wcb
Wm. C. Brown Publishers
Dubuque, Iowa**

CONSULTING EDITOR

Physical Education

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 88-70323

ISBN 0-697-07417-X

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Printed in the United States of America

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Preface

The history of sport and physical education in the United States is a vivid story of the American people pursuing vigorous physical activities for their own pleasure and satisfaction, for health and fitness, and for the entertainment of others. In the early days of this country, neither sport nor physical education existed as we know them today. Dramatic changes have led to the modern world of amateur, professional, and recreational sport. Sport has also become the dominant component in physical education. Schools and colleges early incorporated exercise programs to improve the health of their students, at the same time that reformers extolled the benefits of exercise and fitness to the society at large. As educational philosophy changed and as organized sport became an integral part of everyday life in the United States, sport was added to school physical education programs. Dance, which was part of the early social life of this country and of the professional world of entertainment, also became an activity in school physical education. The history of these developments is the subject of this book.

Lists of scores from every Rose Bowl and major league baseball game are not included in this history, nor are precise changes in gymnastic apparatus recorded. Historians are necessarily selective in their choice of materials; we have tried, therefore, to select important information that both *describes* and *explains* the vast shift from yesterday's pastimes and concerns about health to today's complex institutionalized sport and physical education. We have endeavored to include data that furnish a comprehensive picture of sport and physical education in the United States, including men, women, whites, blacks, native Americans, and others of the diverse ethnic groups that make up the United States population. Literally thousands of sources were consulted. Wherever possible we have used primary rather than secondary sources. In some original documents, including some nineteenth-century handwritten journals, we found new and sometimes contradictory evidence. We have attempted to construct a reasonable and accurate history of sport and physical education in the United States, based on a careful selection and synthesis of the available evidence, viewed from the context of the times.

The first chapter focuses on the history of sport and physical education as part of history itself, examining basic historical assumptions and principles. Major themes, developed throughout the book, are also presented. The second chapter analyzes the beginnings of sport and physical education in the United States by examining the activities of the native Americans, the sports and pastimes of the Europeans whose descendants settled in American colonies, as well as the activities of the Africans who came to this country. American sport characteristically began with the changes brought about in each culture as people lived and worked with one another, adapting their customs and pastimes to the new life and environment in the colonies. Little, if any, physical education existed at that time.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 trace the evolution of the relatively unorganized, spontaneous pastimes and exercise programs of the eighteenth century through the first two decades of the twentieth, highlighting the emergence of structured, institutionalized programs in professional and amateur sport, public recreation, and physical education in the schools. Throughout this section the major themes continue to be analyzed to help explain the changes in the sport, educational, and recreational life of the people.

Chapters 6 and 7 deal with the influence of the Jazz Age, the Great Depression, affluence, technology, and the beginnings of a postindustrial society on sport and physical education in the United States from the first World War until the present. The major themes of the book are developed in these chapters. The final chapter examines the ancient Olympic Games in order to provide a perspective for the modern Games; it also traces the establishment of the modern Olympic Games and reviews the special character of each Olympiad from 1896 to 1984.

Sport history, like most other aspects of human activity, is affected by wars, depressions, leaders, and all that we call *history*. We have therefore treated the material chronologically, in a broad sweep from the origins of athletics, through a study of the country's evolving attitude toward sport and physical education up until the present. The Olympic Games, however, in the growing sense of American sport as part of the international scene, are treated separately.

Students will find several features of this book helpful: comparative timelines of historical events and sport history events; commentaries on the subject matter of each chapter, relating sport history to sport theory; and provocative suggestions for further reading. The extensive bibliography at the end of the book should be helpful to students and teachers alike.

The title of the third edition of *History of Sport and Physical Activity in the United States* has been changed to *History of Sport and Physical Education in the United States*. Today, sport is a pervasive force in contemporary society, both in and out of educational institutions. In schools and colleges sport is often related to physical education. Although most of the first physical

education programs did not include sport, over the years sport and physical education have become inextricably intertwined. Therefore we have chosen to shift the emphasis of this edition slightly. The latest scholarship in the history of sport and physical education is incorporated, and the material on dance has been woven into appropriate sections. The additions and revisions highlight the change in title.

The *History of Sport and Physical Education in the United States* is planned as an undergraduate textbook. It is suitable for use in advanced classes and graduate classes if supplemented by theoretical and specialized works in history, sociology, anthropology, history of sport, sport sociology, sport philosophy, education, and other relevant fields. We urge students to purchase and refer to a standard American history text. A study of the annals of American sport and physical education is even more absorbing when seen in the framework of the times, just as the political and economic history of a society is enhanced by knowing what activities people pursued for their own pleasure and benefit.

An enterprise of this nature is not the work of two people. We are indebted to many who have aided us in gathering material and preparing the manuscript. Librarians and archivists in universities, colleges, museums, cities, and towns have patiently helped us dig out facts and track down leads to new information. We greatly appreciate the time and efforts of friends, colleagues, and students who reviewed portions of the manuscript and made many worthwhile comments. The reviewers were Professors Alex G. Ober (Western Maryland College), Chet Buckley (St. Cloud State University), Sonia R. Green (University of Nebraska—Omaha), and Judith A. Davidson (University of Iowa). Finally, we are deeply indebted to Elaine T. Smith, who carefully and skillfully synthesized our individual writing styles, made valuable suggestions, and explored archives to produce still more evidence of the history of sport and physical education in the United States.

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