

SECOND EDITION

# SOCIAL ISSUES IN SPORT

RONALD B. WOODS



# **Social Issues in Sport**

**SECOND EDITION**

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Human Kinetics

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# PREFACE

**T**his book critically and factually examines the sport of today's society, particularly in the United States. I have compared the historical development of sport with our modern sport world. As you will see, sport participation and spectatorship in America have significantly changed and now lean toward a corporate model of sport.

In the past 50 years, major changes in society spilled over into the world of sport. Racial barriers gave way to dominance by African Americans in sports like basketball and football, while Latinos now account for a third of Major League Baseball players. Women and girls participate more in sports and agitate for equal opportunities as participants and spectators. The Special Olympics and Paralympics have become major sport events for people who have mental and physical disabilities. Finally, consumer sports are accommodating a surging population of older adults who look to sport to enhance their personal fitness, quality of life, and social interaction. Each of these changes promotes new sport outlooks and strategies and offers hope for the continued expansion of sport for every person.

Methods of studying sport have become more rigorous and insightful as sport sociology has advanced as a science. University courses are plentiful for students wishing to study the sociology of modern sport, and hundreds of researchers and professors study the relevant issues. This book presents the controversies and the status of sport in a sociological construct without dwelling on the theoretical constructs. This text is a look at sport taken by a longtime sport participant, observer, fan, teacher, coach, administrator, and critic who has tried to maintain a balanced approach to sport.

## Intended Audience

This is a book for people who are looking at sport objectively for the first time. It seeks to help you understand sport, its place in society, and possible changes it may need to make in order to maintain a positive future. I hope you will become better acquainted with the historical and current roles of sport in society. Regardless of your major course of study, if you are a sport participant or fan, you

will find the information illuminating and in some cases surprising.

As you understand more about the sport world and its interaction with our society, you will be better equipped to decide what role sport will have in your life and within your family. Whether you are a competitive athlete, enthusiastic participant, or spectator, after reading this book you will likely enjoy sport more, appreciate the challenges sport faces, and be able to better evaluate the decisions of sport leaders. Sport can help unify or divide society, but clearly it has a better chance of helping if more people understand its value and limitations.

Although this book is based on research and reflects various social theories, it was not written for academic colleagues and does not break new theoretical ground. Rather, it is intended to encourage students to delve more deeply into the issues and contradictions that characterize what sometimes is a love-hate affair between sport and many of us.

## Text Organization

Part I presents a framework for studying sport in society, defining terms and establishing the purpose and importance of sport study. It also looks at the overall field of sport science and how sport research contributes to knowledge within sport.

Part I also presents sociological methods for studying sport to help you understand how knowledge is gathered and analyzed. It describes social theories and the ways in which these theories help in the study of sport.

Part II examines the scope of modern sport and how it affects society. It clarifies the parallels and differences between sport participants and sport spectators, showing how popular sport differs between these two groups. It also examines and compares growth trends in various sports and distinguishes people who play participation or recreational sports from those who are devoted to high-performance sports. Part II also presents the business side of sport at the professional and collegiate levels and discusses the issues of spending public funds for private gain. It considers how finances affect athletes, coaches, owners, and participants individually and collectively. These discussions will help you



appreciate the huge economic investments made in sport and the influence of money on sport policies and programs.

Additionally, part II outlines the powerful symbiotic relationship between media and sport. It acknowledges the influence of sport media personalities and journalism and the continuing challenges of including minorities and females more often in sport media.

Part III looks at sport as an institution and how it functions within other institutions such as colleges and the Olympics. Youth sports outside of the school setting have become an adult-organized activity for kids that permeates every community. Interscholastic sport teams continue to grow and prosper but face the challenges of integrating opportunities for girls in accordance with Title IX and constant funding pressures. Collegiate sports struggle to find their way under the economic pressure to support programs for a relatively few elite athletes who may or may not be comfortable in the academic setting.

The globalization of sport reflects our increasingly smaller world. International competition has increased as American sports have been exported around the world, and soccer has finally begun to take hold in North America. The Olympic Movement has propelled certain sports to international prominence and has taken on an originally unintended economic and political significance. Including professional athletes in the Olympic Games has changed the nature of the Games and focused world attention on developing elite athletes who can compete for a gold medal.

Part IV of this text focuses on the interaction between culture and sport. Beginning with good sporting behavior and progressing to race, ethnicity, gender, and social class, this section lays out the significance of social issues in our sport world. The changing role of women and African Americans in society has revolutionized sport, while ethnicity and social class continue to be powerful factors in who plays or watches sports, in general and in particular.

Religion and politics interact with sport today, as they have for centuries. Both have affected the growth of sport and have used sport to their advantage. Athletes use religion in their sport, and religious organizations use sport to promote their purposes. Government uses sport to promote identity and unity, social values, and nationalism.

A chapter unique to this book, "Special Populations and Sport," looks at groups who are physically disabled, mentally disabled, or aging and recognizes the effects of major societal changes regarding these populations in the past 25 years. As baby boomers

age and life expectancy increases, we are seeing a significant change in our population demographics, with more of our population represented by older adults who view sports as recreation and as a tool for a healthier lifestyle. Similarly, since the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, people who are physically or mentally disabled have seen their sport participation opportunities expand exponentially.

A new chapter in this revised edition is "Development Through Sport." The increasing emphasis worldwide on using sport for the development of peace and understanding among people of various countries is explored, along with the emphasis on youth sport programs that seek to assist at-risk youngsters in academics, discipline, moral development, socialization, and avoiding a life of crime.

Deviant behavior in sport includes problems of violence, hazing, performance-enhancing drugs, and eating disorders. These behaviors are found among athletes of every age and affect individuals, teams, and institutions. Gambling on sport is also a growing concern despite the firm stand that organized professional and collegiate sports take against it, and unregulated Internet gambling on sport continues to be a problem.

Another chapter unique to this book, "Coaching Sport," acknowledges the influential role of coaches. As sport changed, so did the coaching profession, demanding higher standards in performance sport. Yet unsolved are the challenges of recruiting and training thousands of volunteer youth sport coaches needed each year, although some people are working to promote national and statewide standards for coaches.

The final chapter in this text looks to the future of sport in North America. Performance sport continues to compete with participation sport. Many youth have moved toward extreme sports that suit their needs better than the traditional, adult-organized sports. Older adults look to sport to enhance a longer life. American sport continues to face issues of finances, opportunities for women, and growing minority populations that are changing the face of society. The struggles among these interest groups will likely play out over the next 50 years.

## Updates to the Second Edition

At the start of each chapter, this edition adds opening vignettes—a brief story or example that shows how the topics covered in a particular chapter relate

to a real-life or hypothetical situation. These vignettes provide a bridge into the chapter content and help prepare the readers for what is to come.

This new edition features updated sidebars that reflect the changes in the world of sport during the past five years. Current athletes, experts, and pop cultural trends have replaced the themes featured in the first edition. Some “Activity Time-Outs” from the first edition that have proved to be particularly popular with students have been retained, but many of these present new suggestions that will challenge you to delve further into topics presented in each chapter.

As mentioned previously, there is also a new chapter in this book—“Development Through Sport.” In this chapter, readers will gain a better understanding of how sport can be used within a country to attract young people to programs that also help them build academic and social skills successfully. Another promising trend is the use of sport between countries to develop respect and empathy for people in other cultures, particularly youth.

Throughout all of the chapters, the essential statistics that enable us to analyze trends in sport participation, popularity, gender, race, and social class balance have been updated. Information on the business of sport also includes the latest available financial numbers that help us evaluate the reach and influence of sport and sport consumers.

## Learning Tools

To facilitate student learning, each chapter starts with “Student Outcomes,” which outline the chapter topics. Key terms are highlighted in bold-faced print and included in a glossary for easy reference. Each chapter ends with a summary of its main topics. Throughout the text, you will enjoy various sidebars:



“In the Arena With . . .” sidebars highlight key players in sociological change in sport.



“Pop Culture” sidebars discuss current trends in films, books, magazines, and so on that highlight sociological issues in sport.

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“Expert’s View” sidebars show how experts in sport sociology interpret sport issues, and then raise discussion points for students.



“Activity Time-Out” sidebars give students the opportunity to classify information, engage in friendly debates, or obtain interesting information.

## Instructor Resources

Several instructor resources are available to facilitate using this text in your class. The instructor guide includes chapter summaries, student objectives, chapter outlines, additional student activities, and supplemental resources. The test package has more than 190 questions, including multiple-choice and essay questions. The Microsoft PowerPoint presentation package includes more than 380 slides that outline the text in a lecture-friendly format. All of these resources are available at [www.HumanKinetics.com/SocialIssuesInSport](http://www.HumanKinetics.com/SocialIssuesInSport).

## Closing Comments

I have spent more than 40 years studying sport and applying that knowledge as a professor, a coach, and an administrator. I spent nearly 20 of those years on a college campus, teaching the psychosocial aspects of sport as well as coaching men’s tennis at the Division I and II levels. Later I worked in various administrative roles for the United States Tennis Association, the governing body for tennis in the United States. I also spent eight years on the coaching committee for the United States Olympic Committee, which embraced the challenge of improving coaching in all sports in the United States. During my career, I have also been fortunate to have traveled extensively internationally (most recently to China) and in the process learned a great deal about sport in other countries. These experiences have given me a unique perspective on sport. It is my hope that you will enjoy that perspective and yet understand where it is limited.



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I want to express my sincere thanks to hundreds of students who sparked my interest in evaluating the information on sociology of sport. They challenged me to make the information relevant to today's world of sport. In particular, the students at the University of Tampa have provided consistent feedback and creative ideas and have clearly articulated their preferences for topics of particular interest to them using the first edition of this work.

I'm indebted to Rainer Martens, who challenged me to accept this project and had confidence in me to produce a worthwhile product. Likewise, I appreciate the work of Myles Schrag, acquisitions editor, for his guidance in the conception and shaping of the manuscript. Amanda Ewing, in her role as developmental editor, offered insightful advice, helped keep me on target, and made terrific suggestions for revision for this second edition.

Finally, my wife, Kathy, has been a tireless supporter throughout the project and encouraged me every step of the way. Without her interest, patience, and personal commitment to sport, it would have been a difficult undertaking.

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## Studying Sport in Society

**T**he opening chapters set the stage for studying sport from a sociological perspective by pointing out the integral relationship between sport and society in North America. The first chapter defines salient terms such as *play*, *games*, *sports*, and *work* in terms of purpose, organization, and complexity. As sport moves from *participation sport* played by amateurs to *high-performance sport* played by professional athletes, it moves away from recreation or leisure play activities and takes on the characteristics of work.

In chapter 1 we also look at why people study sport, and we review the sport sciences that form the basis for the scientific knowledge upon which coaching and training are based.

Chapter 2 presents the typical methods of studying sport. It defines several social theories and gives examples of how they might apply to sport research and interpretation. These social theories, referred to throughout the book, provide a framework for understanding different points of view relevant to the specific topics of each chapter. While sport psychology tends to focus on one individual, sport sociology looks at groups of people and how they interact and affect one another. The chapter describes the emerging field of sport sociology and provides information on tools for learning more.





# What Is Sport and Why Do We Study It?



## Student Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you will know the following:

- The definition of sport
- The sport pyramid
- Why you should study sport
- The subdisciplines of sport science



**If you're like** most college students, you probably think that sports play a significant role in your life. In fact, you may have even chosen your university partly because of the success of its athletic teams. In the United States, it's fair to say that many of us have heard of colleges simply because of their prowess in athletics even though sports play a relatively minor role in the mission and purpose of the institution. College sport teams typically enhance school spirit and are the focus of campus social life, so they must be important. But if college sports just produce more spectators—more people who watch others performing sports—we might ask whether they are really beneficial to students. Perhaps the question should be how physically active students on campus actually are in sport and other activities that contribute to their overall health and well-being.

**O**n Thursday, April 15, 1954, I realized that baseball was important in the world. On that day Baltimore, Maryland, got its own Major League Baseball team and opened the brand-spanking new Memorial Stadium. The Orioles, spawned from the lowly St. Louis Browns franchise, marked the entry of my home city of Baltimore into the big leagues. Although just a kid, I knew that day was special since city hall closed for half the day, most businesses shut down, and best of all, school closed for the day so that everyone could enjoy the city-wide parade.

The city of Baltimore was about to embark on its golden age of sport, concurrent with my childhood. We rooted for moderately talented sport teams at first, but soon Hall of Famer Brooks Robinson led the Orioles while the magical arm of Hall of Famer Johnny Unitas guided our football team, the Colts. Having two superstars like Unitas and Robinson performing in the same city was like having current stars Peyton Manning of the Indianapolis Colts and Derek Jeter of the New York Yankees as your football and baseball heroes. I knew right then that I was falling in love with sports.

You probably have a similar story from your childhood of your introduction to sport. Once hooked, we never quite let go of our interest, loyalty, and devotion to sport and our heroes. In fact, the word “fan” derives from “fanatic,” and that’s just what many of us have been or continue to be.

If you're like me, studying sport is fun and can also help you expand your understanding of the place of sport in North America and the world. Imagine if all sports were banned, as they have been from time to time in certain civilizations. Our lives would change dramatically in how we spend our discretionary time, money, and emotion.

Sports affect our lives every day. Strangers on the street stop to chat about their hometown sport successes, discussing the local high school, college, or professional team. Entire cities wake up the

morning after an exhilarating win by their home team and feel proud to live where they live, or wake up after a tough loss in a meaningful game and sink into mourning. Kids look up to sport heroes, memorize the lifetime statistics of each athlete, and dream of someday making it to their own fame and fortune. As they grow up, they copy the stance, mannerisms, and dress of their heroes.

Sports also affect the cultures, traditions, and values of our society. Stories in the sport world help us clarify our stance on issues such as racial equality, gender opportunity, rights of citizens with disabilities and senior citizens, class mobility, youth development through physical activity, and creating a better standard of health and fitness for everyone. We will examine these issues and more in the succeeding chapters. For now, let's focus on what sport is and how it differs from play and games.

## Sport Through the Ages

Before we can analyze the effect of sport on society (and vice versa), we need to know what sport is and why we should study it. *Sport* is derived from the Latin root *desporto*, which means “to carry away.” The term *sport* has been used throughout the ages to refer to physical activities that are competitive and organized and that divert people from everyday activities producing economic gain or sustaining life.

Sport and games have fulfilled various roles in societies throughout the centuries. The early Greek civilization used sport and games in celebrations, to honor the gods, or as part of funeral ceremonies. The great Greek poet Homer described sport in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Typical contests of physical prowess included running races, chariot races, wrestling, boxing, and leaping. Hunting was also a sport of the ancient Greeks. In the ancient city-state of Sparta, sport and games helped young men refine their wartime skills. In contrast to Sparta, the city-



state of Athens educated young men in grammar, music, and gymnastics to fully develop their physical and mental capacities. The difference between Sparta and Athens in the approach to sport was the beneficiary of the sporting skill: In Sparta the state benefited, while in Athens, sport aided the perfection of the individual man.

Other ancient civilizations showed evidence of the role of sport and games through paintings, carvings, and other historical documents. Running, swimming, and jumping have been part of every culture. Combat activities like boxing, wrestling, and other martial arts such as those originating in the Far East are part of every culture's history. Games with a ball were popular in diverse civilizations, including the Egyptians and the American and Canadian Indians, and various forms of football can be traced to ancient China.

Sport and games are still used today as celebrations and as examples of athletic prowess. But what is sport?

## Definition of Sport

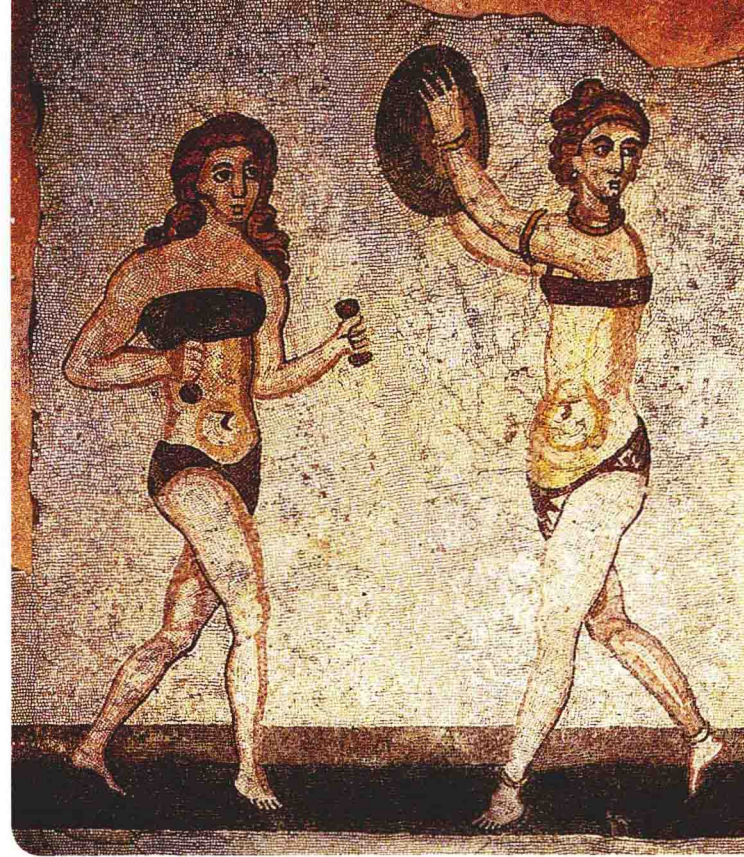
The **sport pyramid** is a helpful way to think of sports (see figure 1.1 on page 6). The pyramid contains four elements of human activity—play, games, sport, and work. These terms are often confused because of the interchange and overlap of ideas. Let's look at each element individually and then examine the interrelationships.

### Play

**Play** forms the base of the pyramid since it is the physical activity of childhood and continues throughout life in various forms. Play is a free activity that involves exploration, self-expression, dreaming, and pretending. Play has no firm rules and can take place anywhere. Other than giving pleasure, the outcome of play is unimportant. Over the years, many people have postulated theories of play, including Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1950), who described play as free of form, separate from ordinary life, and with no specific purpose. He considered games and sport to be specialized forms of play, with more formal rules and purposes and an emphasis on the outcome.

### Games

**Games** are an aspect of play that have greater structure and are competitive. Games have clear participation goals that are mental, physical, or a combination of both; are governed by informal or



Sport was an important part of many ancient civilizations, including that of the Romans. This Roman mosaic shows two female athletes, one with hand weights and the other with a discus.

formal rules; involve competition; have outcomes determined by luck, strategy, skill, or a combination thereof; and result in prestige or status. Inactive games include board games like Monopoly, card games like hearts or Texas hold 'em poker, and video games like Madden NFL or Halo. Active games include kickball, Ultimate Frisbee, paintball, touch football, and street hockey. But as these "games" have become more mainstream, naturally there has been movement to organize them with national rules and competitive events, and they have taken on the characteristics of a sport. What were once informal neighborhood or schoolyard games or activities have changed.

Complicating our understanding of "games" is the rise in the past 15 years of the X Games, a commercial sport event put on by ESPN that features extreme action sports. In fact, these "games," such as skateboarding, snowboarding, motocross, and in-line skating, are actually sports rather than games.

The category of games is broader than the category of sport (described next), and actual sporting events such as a football or hockey game are often described as games. Taken by itself, a football game is a game, but when it is part of a league with rules, standings, and sponsors, as a college football game is, it becomes sport.