Introduction

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OVERVIEW

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THE GROWTH OF INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY COMPLEXITY

In the fairly recent past, the late 1950s and early 1960s, the number of roles that an individual might fulfil in relation to sport was limited to those such as participant, spectator, consumer of sports news and reports mainly through the newspapers and radio, or voluntary club administrator or official. There were few professional athletes and even fewer professional administrators; the symbiotic relationship between the television companies and sport was only just emerging; and the rampant commercialisation of sport, especially football, was still some years away. The organisational infrastructure of sport was similarly simple. National governing bodies of sport and their clubs were the organisational core of the sports system in the UK; the government considered sport as an area of social activity that did not warrant treatment as a matter of public policy; and the schools were left to provide a combination of physical training and some sports. The involvement of the state in sport was sporadic, substantially limited to the occasional committee of inquiry into a sports-related problem (such as the Moelwyn–Hughes Report in 1946 which followed the collapse of safety barriers at Bolton FC’s ground), a police presence at major sports events and the Queen handing over the trophy to the winners of the FA Cup Final.

Today, however, the picture is radically different: the roles have multiplied, the infrastructure is much more complex and the state is now at the heart of sport. Individuals consume sport in a broad variety of ways through spectating, both at home and as travelling fans, and
through a plethora of specialist sports radio stations, television channels (both free-to-air and pay-to-view), Internet sites and newspapers and magazines. Far more people participate in sport and physical activity utilising publicly provided facilities (mostly built since the early 1970s), commercial facilities, especially fitness clubs (most of which date from the last 20 years), or voluntary clubs. Furthermore, as the public and commercial sectors have expanded, so too have the career opportunities in the sports industry. The limited range of administrative and officiating roles available in the 1960s has been augmented by new careers in sports development, sports science and fitness instruction, vastly expanded ranks of coaches, managers and agents, as well as the incorporation of traditional business professions, of accountancy, marketing and strategic planning into previously amateur and voluntarily run clubs and sports governing bodies.

Not surprisingly, the organisational and policy infrastructure for sport is far more elaborate, encompassing, for example, specialist sports colleges, a national curriculum for physical education, specialist elite sport regional institutes, dedicated funding programmes for sport through the National Lottery as well as other sources, an increasingly rationalised structure of governing bodies and clubs, sports media, and an elaborate governmental infrastructure comprising specialist agencies, sports councils, in each of the home countries plus one for the UK as a whole, and a Cabinet-level department.

The attitude of governments has also changed dramatically over the last 50 years or so. In the 1950s and early 1960s most governments in Europe and North America considered sport to be a matter outside the remit of the state – a matter for private decision in keeping with the idea of sport as something that took place in one’s free time. State involvement was rare, inconsistent and certainly did not constitute a ‘sports policy’. Yet today few countries do not have a recognisable sports policy supported by allocations of public funds and an administrative infrastructure to oversee implementation. Most governments support strategies designed to achieve elite success and many also support the promotion of mass participation, but sport is increasingly found at the heart of other social, economic and foreign policies. Sport is often perceived by governments as a useful instrument in achieving non-sports objectives, whether these be the social control of male adolescents, the rebuilding of social capital in fractured communities, improvement to health and the reduction in obesity, improving diplomatic relations, job creation and the economic regeneration of urban and rural areas, and the stimulation of tourism.

**THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK**

Whereas in the 1960s sport was primarily an important social phenomenon, today it is, in addition, an important economic and political phenomenon. This volume, like the first edition, is concerned to locate the individual within the complex pattern of policy
and institutions that forms the fabric of sport in the twenty-first century and to explore
the patterns of engagement between the individual and sport as mediated by an increas-
ingly complex policy and organisational infrastructure. As with the first edition, this edi-
tion is arranged around four broad themes: perspectives, inclusion, commercialisation
and international comparative context.

The three chapters that deal with different perspectives on sport (Part One) are
designed to introduce the reader to ways of understanding and investigating sport in
society. Peter Donnelly’s chapter on sport and social theory reflects the debts that social
science students of sport owe to sociology. The sociological analysis of sport is well
established and continues to generate many important insights into the relationship
between the individual and society. Peter Donnelly’s focus on the tension between struc-
ture and agency, and how the differing emphases on structure and agency affect our
analysis of issues such as sport and health or drug abuse by athletes, illustrates not only
the richness of insight that sociology can provide, but also the care that is required when
evaluating competing interpretations of behaviour. Barrie Houlihan’s review of the con-
tribution that political science can make to our understanding of contemporary sport
highlights the importance of understanding power and its distribution and use in shap-
ing modern sport and, particularly, in creating or denying individual life chances in relation
to sport. Organisational power and particularly the power wielded by the state is
shown to be a dominant element of the context of modern sport. But, as with sociology,
the reader is made aware of the competing interpretations that political science can gen-
erate and the need to temper theoretical commitment with empirical research. Martin
Polley’s chapter on history and sport provides an important reminder of the extent
to which the contemporary pattern of opportunity for sport is constrained by long-
established patterns of social relations, power distribution and institution building. It is
simply not possible to understand issues such as gender equity in sport without a knowl-
dge of the male domination of early sports organisations, nor to understand contem-
porary globalisation without an awareness of colonial history, nor the pattern of sports
opportunities in schools without an understanding of the debates between advocates of
competing conceptualisations of physical activity evident in the second half of the last
century.

The discussion of the different perspectives on sport provides an important context
for the next set of chapters comprising Part Two, which examine aspects of the opportu-
nity structure for sport. Michael Collins focuses mainly on wealth and class as factors
affecting participation, but he also provides an overview of the multiple and layered
nature of social exclusion. What is made abundantly clear is that the tackling and
removal of one barrier to participation in sport all too often merely exposes the next
barrier. Furthermore, Michael Collins and other contributors in this part of the book,
especially Tess Kay, Nigel Thomas, Ben Carrington and Ian McDonald, show clearly
the slow pace of change in challenging and lowering socially constructed barriers to
participation. Paulo David’s contribution complements Collins’ opening chapter by providing an analysis of the extent to which sport, an opportunity for enjoyment, socialising and personal development for so many young people, is, for some, an arena for the degradation, abuse and the denial of basic human rights.

Tess Kay and Ruth Jeanes trace the recent history of women’s exclusion from sport and draw attention to the variety and subtlety of the debates that seek to explain female under-representation as participants, officials, coaches and administrators. The depth and persistence of patriarchy within contemporary sport are amply exposed. Of especial significance is that the authors point to the paradox, according to which many women perceive participation in sport as ‘contradictory to femininity’, while those who do participate experience little role conflict and report a sense of empowerment reflected in increased self-esteem, personal development, physical power and well-being.

Parissa Safai picks up and develops the idea of well-being in her chapter on the relationship between sport and health. As she makes clear, the assumptions about the beneficial effects of sport have largely gone unchallenged. More specifically, she investigates the interrelationship between pain, injury, gender and elite-level sport. Her chapter is complemented by that of Kevin Young who explores the complex relationship between sport and violence. Moving beyond the limited focus of the existing literature on violence on the field of play and spectator violence, Young uncovers a much more extensive and complex pattern of sports violence. In particular, he argues that a sociological understanding of sports violence requires an examination of the interconnection between class, race and ethnicity, gender, and regionality.

In his chapter on sport and disability Nigel Thomas reviews the persisting tension between medical and social models of disability and the power of those models, almost exclusively designed by the able-bodied, to determine the parameters of sports participation. But what comes across most strongly from Nigel Thomas’s chapter is the complexity of the politics of disability sport. Not only is there a multiplicity of disability sports organisations, but there is also a marked lack of consensus regarding the strategy for widening opportunities for disability sport, in particular whether disability sport should be organised separately or work more closely with mainstream sports governing bodies. These debates take place against a backdrop of consistent and continuing success of UK elite athletes in the Paralympic Games.

The significance of acknowledging the ideological context within which issues in sport are discussed is emphasised in the contribution from Ben Carrington and Ian McDonald. In their critique of the evolution of public policy towards race and ethnicity in sport, the authors trace the slow shift away from an assumption that the route to more equitable participation lay in uncovering and addressing the constraints to be found within ethnic communities to an acknowledgement of the barriers to participation evident within sports institutions. The anti-racism efforts of major sports, such as cricket, and the impact of the New Labour government are evaluated and lead the authors to
conclude that while there is evidence of progress in tackling racism and inequity in opportunities, ‘discrimination continues to structure the reality of sport for black and ethnic minorities in Britain in complex and often contradictory ways’.

In their chapter on physical education and sport, Kathy Armour and David Kirk provide ample illustration of the extent to which contemporary practice in physical education has been shaped by the sharply contested history of the subject. Not only was there disagreement over the form of physical ‘education’ best suited to different social classes (sports for the children at fee-paying schools and military drill for those in the state system), but there was, and to an extent still is, a fierce debate about the value of physical education within the curriculum and the relationship between physical education and sport. Of particular importance is their discussion of the contemporary emphasis on the capacity of physical education and school sport to deliver non-PE and sport objectives such as improved academic attainment and improved behaviour. The final contribution to Part Two by David Andrews, Michael Silk and Robert Pitter explores the relationship between sport, urban space, health and other socio-economic indicators. The continuing association between sports participation and socio-economic status is amply demonstrated through the examination of soccer as an element of suburban lifestyle and status segregation.

If the recurring themes that run through Chapters 4 to 12 are public policy, access and exclusion, then the next seven chapters in Part Three ‘The impact of commercialisation’ give greater weight to the significance of business for contemporary sport. Business has always been involved in sport, but the intensity and ubiquity of the business presence in sport is a phenomenon of the late twentieth century. Yet far from usurping the position of the state, business involvement with sport has prompted closer public sector involvement with the state often seeking to regulate corporate activity in sport. Leigh Robinson provides an overview of the increasingly close relationship between sport and commerce and explores not just the variety of involvement, from online betting to sponsorship, but also the impact on professional sport and the structure of the sports industry. The author explores the unique characteristics that make sport so attractive to the commercial sector and discusses whether the relationship is best described as dependence, symbiosis, manipulation, mutual benefit or exploitation. Whatever description is preferred, the reader is left in no doubt as to the significance of the sport and leisure industry to the national economy.

Some of the themes introduced by Leigh Robinson are developed in more detail in David Stead’s examination of the relationship between sport and the media. This relationship is the axis around which commercial interest in sport revolves. In addition to raising issues of audience manipulation through the media presentation of sports events, David Stead also explores the key question of access to sports products that are increasingly delivered in a pay-to-view format. The issues the author raises have a clear resonance with the earlier discussions of social exclusion. Given the pace of commercialisation and the investment by governments in national governing bodies of sport, it
is important to understand the significance of organisational change for the way in which sport is managed. John Amis and Trevor Slack not only supply a conceptual language for the analysis of sports organisations, but also provide a wealth of examples drawn from both the commercial and voluntary sectors. Of especial importance is the analysis of the change in the structure of sports organisations from voluntarily run, simply structured and poorly resourced ‘kitchen table’ bodies to professionally managed, structurally differentiated and well-resourced boardroom organisations in which volunteers play an increasingly marginal role.

The professionalisation of both the participation in, and the administration of, sport is nowhere more clearly exemplified than in relation to the issue of doping. The rewards of sporting success, the proliferation of specialists (dieticians, masseurs, coaches, doctors, physiologists, etc.) within an athlete’s entourage and the global character of the sports competition circuit have all made the successful development of an effective antidoping policy more challenging. Barrie Houlihan discusses the attempts to develop a global policy response to doping and illustrates the extent to which anti-doping efforts by sports organisations have been supported, and occasionally submerged, by the regulatory activity of states.

Mike Weed and Guy Jackson then examine the rapidly growing phenomenon of sports tourism. Following a review of the nature of tourism supply and demand, the authors explore the impact of sports tourism. As is made clear, the hosting of major sports events can have substantial impacts on the local economies and environments, a point which Holger Preuss emphasises in relation to the hosting of the Olympic Games. However, as the authors also make clear, the sport tourism market is still in its infancy and is certainly not limited to the hosting of major events. While the clear impetus for market expansion has come from the commercial sector and from governments keen to attract lucrative mega-events, there is also the potential to use sports tourism to achieve other objectives more closely associated with sport for all and fitness and health. In his analysis of the Olympic Games, Holger Preuss explores in detail the argument that the hosting of the Olympic Games is an unalloyed benefit for the local community. The author shows clearly that while one might reach a conclusion that, on balance, the net benefits of hosting the Games outweigh the costs, the beneficiaries and those who bear the costs are often different groups in a community. Not surprisingly, business interests and the local or regional state are often able to use the Games to achieve organisational objectives associated with profit or urban regeneration, but the costs are often borne by poorer local residents who are displaced to make way for stadiums and who can rarely afford the ticket price for the Games themselves. Holger Preuss’s chapter provides a powerful illustration of the close association between commercial interests and state power.

The final contribution to this part of the book considers the relationship between sport and the environment. Michael Collins uses a series of case studies to highlight both the positive and negative impacts of sport on the environment. Linking with a number
of conclusions from Holger Preuss’s chapter, the author examines the potential for sport, and especially the hosting of major events, to facilitate the rapid regeneration of inner-city industrial areas. In addition, Michael Collins illustrates how competing uses of the countryside for sport can be reconciled, but also how relations between sporting and non-sporting users of the countryside can break down. Acknowledging that sport can generate significant negative environmental impacts, the author makes it clear that sport can also bring substantial environmental benefits if managed sensitively. The reclamation of brownfield sites for stadiums and mineral quarries for sailing, climbing and shooting, the development of community forests and the deliberate protection of biodiversity in the design of golf courses, all attest to the potential for commerce and sport to prosper without inflicting environmental damage.

The fourth part of the book encourages the reader to consider the pattern of sport in their own country and culture in comparison to that in other industrialised countries and in other cultures and also in relation to the emergence of supranational and global institutions affecting sport. Trevor Slack and Melina Parent’s discussion of aspects of sport in the United States and Canada paints a vivid picture of the extent to which commercialisation in the United States dominates intercollegiate sport and also the degree to which the role of the public sector has been marginalised. Although the public sector is still more prominent in Canada, the trend is towards greater commercialisation and a greater reliance on voluntary community provision. Of especial interest are the problems created for professional sport in Canada as a result of the economic power of the United States. The chapter also provides an interesting insight into the privileged position ascribed to the (usually male) high school athlete and the corrosive effect on broader school values.

Murray Phillips and Tara Magdalinski provide another point of comparison in their discussion of the sports system and culture in Australia. After stripping away the rhetoric that pervades many discussions of sport in Australia, they reveal a sports system and culture which disadvantages women and discriminates against Aboriginal athletes. The authors also describe a society where the mythology of Australian sport has such a strong hold that few questioned the substantial sums of public money that were used to underwrite the Sydney Olympic Games. Not only does Australia exemplify the strengthening role of government in managing the sports system, but it also illustrates the impact of increasing commercialisation. Perhaps of especial interest is their discussion of the interweaving of immigrant identities with a sense of Australian identity.

Identity is also an important aspect of Ian Henry’s discussion of the increasingly prominent role of the European Union in sport. Given that so many of the world’s major sports events are located in member states of the European Union, the impact of EU involvement in sport extends well beyond its boundaries and comprises an increasingly important element of the context of sport for many countries. The EU has shown itself to be an effective regulator of both commercial sports interests and also of aspects of public provision.
Moreover, the EU has a strong interventionist tradition and, as the author makes clear, has ambitions to define a European model of sport which will stand in opposition to the highly commercialised North American model outlined by Trevor Slack and Melina Parent and also referred to by Leigh Robinson and David Stead.

The themes of identity and culture provide the foundation for Mahfoud Amara’s discussion of sport and Islam. After outlining key aspects of Islamic theology, the author considers the debates among Islamic scholars about the place of sport, and especially recreational and elite sport, in Islamic life. Mahfoud Amara also discusses the influence of Islamic thought on public policy for sport in Islamic countries.

The last contribution to this part and the final chapter in the book is Barrie Houlihan’s examination of globalisation and sport. In the opening section of this introduction emphasis was placed on the extent to which the context for modern sport had altered at the national level, with the steady rise in governmental interest in sport running in parallel with global commercialisation. The final chapter explores the process and outcome of globalisation and suggests that while the significance of globalising pressures is undeniable, the direction of change and the consequences for sport and for communities are far less clear. Nevertheless, while the trajectory of globalisation might be obscured, the role of the state as both an engine and a mediator of globalisation is clear.

**CONCLUSION**

At one time it was often argued that sport was an oasis in an increasingly complex and compromised society. Sporting values were clear (and laudable) and sporting practice made the concept of ‘free time’ a reality. As this volume shows, if this perception was ever valid, it certainly is no longer today. Sport, sports organisations and sports practice are at the heart of a number of major social issues either in their own right as sites of tension over social values such as gender equity, racial/ethnic equality and social inclusion, or as policy instruments of government, such as those designed to achieve economic regeneration or gain diplomatic prestige. While each of the chapters in the book can be read independently, they provide strong collective evidence of the need to see sport located at the core of our consideration of many contemporary social issues, as an integral part of the industrial economy, and an increasingly valuable political resource. In the preface to his landmark study of the relationship between cricket and West Indian society, C.L.R. James famously adapted lines written by Kipling to ask ‘What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?’ It is the foundation of this volume that not only can our understanding of sport be enriched by using perspectives developed across a range of disciplines, but also the study of sport can also cast substantial light on major contemporary social and economic issues.