

Notes, Commentaries, Essays

The Making of Australian Sporting Traditions 1977-87

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Before 1977 Australian sports history virtually did not exist as a field of social history (that is, within history departments) even though historians had long declared that Australia was a sport-besotted society. So far as it existed, sports history was largely the domain of journalists and amateurs¹ such as Keith Dunstan, Jack Pollard and Ray Robinson. Dunstan's sport-by-sport history,² published in 1973, is still the only history available, though two thematic studies, as much cultural and sociological as historical, were published in 1986.³

The first significant academic book on Australian sports history was published to commemorate the centenary of the 1867-68 Aboriginal tour by anthropologist D.J. Mulvaney.⁴ During the early 1970s some historians began writing sports history: W.F. Mandle⁵ published several seminal articles on the subject and some worthwhile monographs began to appear, such as Scott Bennett's biography of the sculler, Henry Searle.⁶ There was also the promise of a history of Australian Rules Football by Ian Turner, though this did not appear until a few years after his death.⁷ Scholars in other disciplines followed suit, to a lesser extent: Braham Dabscheck, for instance, wrote a number of articles on sport and industrial relations in the mid-1970s.⁸ The emergence of serious writing on sport was not an isolated development; it was, at least in part, influenced by some excellent writing on the subject overseas.⁹

The first academic move to recognize sports history emerged in what used to be known as physical education, but now human movement or kinetics, departments. John Daly, for instance, wrote a number of articles on the subject which were published in the *Journal of Physical Education* in the early 1970s.¹⁰ The former Australian Rugby player, Max Howell, was another pioneer of sports history although he was based in North America in the 1970s and wrote more initially on Canadian sport and physical education methodology. Since moving to Queensland, he has focused more on Australian sports history. While many human movement scholars lacked formal historical training, they took up the task of the promotion of sports history with enthusiasm, and made concerted efforts to collect, organize and interpret material on the subject. Conferences were organized, articles published, and eventually an academic anthology of papers, edited by Jaques and Pavia, appeared in 1976.¹¹ It was a mixed offering: some papers were well researched but others were impressionistic and celebratory.

It is not very difficult to suggest reasons why there was no sustained and broad-based effort to write sports history in various departments within the humanities and social sciences. When Colin Tatz arrived at the Australian National University in the early 1960s and asked if he could meet the people researching sport he found that 'there was disbelief all round at the question: incredulity that anyone serious, or intellectual, could be serious about sport'.¹² There was still, in 1977, a widely-held prejudice (as distinct from what Tatz refers to as the bigotry of the early 1960s) against 'history from below' which most saw as peripheral and unlikely to add anything to 'real' history. Those

who held this view supported their case further by pointing to the poverty of source material on sports history; notably the lack of manuscript material. This view was shared even by some of the early writers of sports history: Mandle commented as recently as 1982 that:

the raw material [of sports history] is intractable in a sense shared by none of the others [branches of history]. The basic documents are of a simplistic nature, the comment upon them mostly backpage panegyric. On rare and useful occasions leader-writers, non-sporting-journalists, even politicians, advert to the significance of sporting achievement. But this is barely sufficient, and hedged about with its own difficulties.¹³

There was, in addition, no existing tradition of sports history writing and, in the opinion of many, no appropriate methodology.

Mandle believed that there was another reason why Australian academics lagged behind their overseas counterparts in the serious study of sport. This was because they had absorbed 'a particular Australian viewpoint' that sport was, or should be, only a game and was not to be taken seriously. Along with this notion was an intense suspicion of and objection to professionalism in sport.¹⁴ Tatz has underlined this point, arguing that serious Australian writing on sport suffers in comparison with the rich literature of England and America.¹⁵ The Australian output includes some 'fine analyses' by Max Harris, two Aussie Rules novels by Barry Oakley, some racing novels by Nat Gould, *The Club* by David Williamson, Jack Hibbert's play on Les Darcy and some short stories by Dal Stevens. The rich English tradition in selected sports includes Robert Louis Stevenson on boating; Joseph Conrad on sailing; Izaak Walton on fishing; Robert Browning on golf; Pierce Egan on boxing; and many writers on cricket. The American list is equally impressive: Ernest Hemingway, Ring Lardner, Damon Runyon, Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, John Updike, James Michener and others have all written on sport.

Brian Stoddart has argued that sports history was also strong on the continent; in Germany, for instance, there was a long tradition, dating back to the nineteenth century, of viewing sport as a serious social activity worthy of study: 'The emergence of the gymnastics movement as a counter to national weakness, with strong emphases in the education system', led to a significant amount of scholarship exploring the 'social role of sport and physical activity'. The importance of sport in the fascist state 'provided yet another focal point for analysis'. In Germany, too, there have also been close links between history departments and physical education programmes: cross-fertilization has been achieved by history graduates moving into physical education.¹⁶

Sports history emerged as a broader, more self-conscious field in 1977 with the 'Making of Sporting Traditions' Conference at the University of New South Wales, which was the first of what were to become biennial conferences. At the fourth conference, in 1983, the Australian Society for Sports History was established and, at the fifth in 1985, it was duly constituted. *Sporting Traditions*,¹⁷ the official journal of the Society, first appeared in 1984. It became the focus of a self-conscious effort to promote this field.

Now that a decade of Australian sports history has passed, it is worth reflecting on some of the issues encountered in establishing and defining this new area and to evaluate critically what has been achieved. Any such investigation should not avoid some of the broader issues about current directions of social history, and what some people see as the problem of

fragmentation, mentioned by such diverse people as Tony Judt¹⁸ and Raphael Samuel.¹⁹ Does the emergence of another rather self-contained compartment of social history underline Judt's worst fears that historians are turning their back on broader mainstream political history and wallowing in peripheral cultural history? And does a decade of sports history support Samuel's fear that historians, attached to a sub-area, may not be communicating with other historians as much as they might? Questions then can be asked about this field which could also be posed in regard to a dozen or so areas of 'new history': such as women's, urban, oral, medical, Aboriginal histories. Investigating what has happened in sports history, then, is to study in a microcosm what is happening on one of the many fronts of the 'new history' which became prominent in history in the 1970s. The sports history movement may shed some light on what has happened in a number of other areas.

Historians of sport 'came out' at the first 'Making of Sporting Traditions' Conference at the University of New South Wales, 28-30 June 1977. Speaker after speaker testified to having harboured a desire to write about sport, but it was not until now that they were willing to come out of the closet. In the general euphoria which prevailed, there were very few doubts about the future viability of sports history writing. Perhaps it was this spirit of optimism which led to a certain vagueness about the central historiographical issue as to whether sports history was merely a service area of social history or whether it had some claims to uniqueness, which might provide the basis of its organization as a separate area of study.

The conference was dominated by historians: of the 17 papers published in the conference book, *Sport in History*,²⁰ no less than 15 were by historians, including two economic historians; the other two were written by scholars from departments of English and industrial relations. Many disciplines were unrepresented: law, psychology, political science, sociology, anthropology and geography. There was a smattering of amateur historians but there were virtually no players and officials.

Presumably the complexion of the conference partly reflected the fact that the conference organizers had limited links with scholars elsewhere who might have been interested in this endeavour. This was not the case with sociology and anthropology because, with one or two exceptions (such as Jim Mackay and Kent Pearson²¹ at Queensland), there has been very little study of Australian sport in these departments, which is quite surprising given the significant writing on the subject by sociologists and anthropologists overseas.²² The *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, founded in 1965, did not publish an article on sport until 1981, some eight years after Mandel's articles had appeared in two leading historical journals. It is also ironic given that the anthropologist D.J. Mulvaney was the first Australian academic to publish a monograph on sports history. There are plans to reissue his much-admired study of the 1867-68 Aboriginal tour. Pearson and McKay identified three reasons for the underdevelopment of Australian sports sociology. Since the discipline of sociology has only recently gained a firm foothold in Australian tertiary institutions, 'sub-disciplinary areas have been under-represented when compared with their counterparts abroad'. So while sports sociology began to blossom in the United States from the mid-1960s, most Australian sociologists still regarded the study of sport as trivial and unimportant during the 1970s. Finally, the link of sociological sports research with physical education has tended 'to be the kiss of death as far as academic respectability is concerned'.²³ However, in 1986, Geoffrey Lawrence and

David Rowe,²⁴ two sociologists based at the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education, gathered together a group of scholars, mainly from sociology and cultural studies, and produced a set of essays on Australian sport which focused on the penetration of sport by corporate capitalism and the symbiotic relationship between sport and capitalism. The involvement of sociologists in Australian sports history will add greater diversity and theoretical richness to the movement. There were also some representatives from human movement at the first conference but those who attended did so mainly as observers. They had their own organization, publications and conferences, the History and Philosophy Special Interest Group of the broader umbrella association, ACHPER.²⁵

Although everyone declared that the conference was a great success and the organizers set out to plan a second at the University of New South Wales, the future of sports history as an organized movement was far from certain. The euphoria of 1977 disguised, rather thinly, a definite defensiveness and uncertainty about the respectability of this new area, a 'chip on the shoulder' which most sports historians carried until recently. There was also the problem that many of the 80 or 100 who attended each conference were 'oncercs' or, at best, 'twicers'. They gravitated to sports history for a year or two to write some article, or a chapter of a book, before moving on or back to their longer-term interest. For Michael McKernan, one of the conference organizers, the study of sport and war was one facet, and became one chapter, of his larger work on *The Australian People and the Great War*.²⁶

Sport in History, an anthology of conference papers, was favourably reviewed in some local (*Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, *Labour History*) and North American (*Journal of Sports History*) journals. The reaction in the popular press was rather more mixed. While some magazines, including Australian *Playboy*, praised it, Peter Corris, who wrote a lively history of Australian boxing, *Lords of the Ring*,²⁷ damned the book in the *National Times* as dull and boring while a Canberra journalist took great delight in ripping into the book under the heading 'Real Live Sportsmen 1, Academic sports historians 0'. Although peeved that some writers in the popular press were not entranced by this move out of the ivory tower and failed to pick up the enthusiasm of the conference, the editors would probably accept a later comment of Stoddart that some contributors were so intent on making sport 'respectable' that they produced 'timid material in terms of intellectual adventure'.²⁸

With more careful planning and organization, the second conference seemed to represent a step towards the more serious study of sport and the conference book, *Sport, Money, Morality and the Media*,²⁹ was more tightly organized than the first volume. In other respects this conference was similar to the first though there was less of the excitement of 'coming out'. Held at the University of New South Wales (1-3 July 1979), it was again dominated by historians: the book included 12 offerings from history, including two from economic history, two from English and one from a journalist.

Although this conference was considered a success, sports history then confronted a period of administrative uncertainty and conflict, from 1979-83, when much of the initial enthusiasm waned, when the movement seemed to lose much of its initial direction and when there seemed the very real possibility that this thrust towards a new area of history would collapse. The immediate issue was whether there should be another conference and where. But behind this practical concern were broader historiographical issues which had not

been adequately addressed. There were three central issues. First, there was the question about the boundaries of sports history. Where should they be drawn? Should they include leisure and relocation? Next was the question of the relationship of sports historians to other groups with an interest in the subject, in particular human movement scholars and interested amateurs. Should they be allowed to participate on an equal basis? Also, should sports historians enter into some dialogue with those working in related fields, such as leisure and recreation studies? Finally, there was the tricky question about whether sports history should be more organized as a separate area or whether it was simply one of the more interesting themes of social history. And what was the justification of separatism?

The hesitations that followed the 1979 conference were reflected at the 1981 conference at La Trobe University and it suffered as a result. It was decided to widen the definition of sport and to take in the related areas of leisure and recreation and to encourage wider participation. Papers ranged wildly from the academically respectable, on stimulating subjects such as Japanese sumo wrestling and soccer on the New South Wales coalfields, to ones which were purely descriptive, to a public relations exercise on behalf of the Victorian government's 'Life Be In It Campaign'. Rather than adding weight and respectability to sports history, the diversity and unevenness of the conference papers diminished its intellectual thrust.

It was at La Trobe that differences between historians and human movement representatives, who were prominent really for the first time on the rostrum itself, emerged more openly. Conflict had surfaced the previous year at ACHPER at Preston Institute of Technology, Melbourne, in 1980 which historians had attended in considerable numbers for the first time. These were the first occasions when significant numbers of historians met and became aware of human movement scholars and vice versa. Trained in analytical history and dedicated to place sport in its wider social context, some historians reacted negatively to the alternative tradition of sports history nurtured in human movement departments dismissing it as largely descriptive, an exercise in fact-collecting on individual sports without sufficient analysis.

Reflecting on the Preston 'confrontation' some years later, Ray Crawford, one of the organizers, argued that the gathering achieved its aim:

I believe that the Preston 1980 conference was an important landmark and development in the sport history story. It was always my intention in putting on this conference to try and get the physical educators and the university historians on the one spot, knowing full well that there would be some problems. Whatever the criticisms and negative comments about the 1980 conference the links were made. Without Preston 1980 it may have taken a great deal longer for the various parties keen to 'legitimise' sport history to get together. Quite clearly the physical educators began to realise at Preston how much they would have to lift their game.³⁰

The 1983 Conference, originally scheduled for Canberra, was staged at the Melbourne Cricket Ground following an offer from the Melbourne Cricket Club. Melbourne was a significant watershed for the sports history movement which not only found a suitable home outside academe, at the MCG itself but offered the opportunity to invite journalists, active sports persons and club officials. The focus at this meeting was on sport and sport alone, there was no attempt to enhance 'respectability' by adding leisure and recreation.

Historians discovered at Melbourne that there was a wider audience for sports history than ever imagined. In addition to speakers from a wide range of university departments, there were significant numbers of amateur historians, club officials, sports and media persons. While historians were the largest single group in attendance, they constituted a minority. Speakers came from three constituent groups:

Historians (11)	Other Academics (6)	Non-Academics (6)
Including Economic Historians (2)	Human Movement (3) Political Science (1) Industrial Relations (1) Urban Studies (1)	Officials/Librarians (3) Journalist (1) Media representative (1) Amateur historian (1)

While the papers varied in quality, as at any conference, the atmosphere was stimulating. This confidence was reflected in the establishment of the Australian Society for Sports History and the decision to launch a journal, which first appeared in November 1984 under the title *Sporting Traditions*. This was an important decision because it took sports history beyond an informal biennial gathering to a more formal sub-area of history asserting its own right to separate existence. It reflected the growing confidence of sports historians. It occurred because, almost behind the scenes, sports history was making a steady, if somewhat unspectacular progress, towards respectability. There was, from the mid-1970s on, a growing number of articles and books written by Australian historians³¹ who had enough faith in this field to devote a substantial part of, and in some cases almost all, their energies to writing in this area. They were further encouraged by the publication of some outstanding and acclaimed monographs published abroad such as Tony Mason's *Association Football* and J.A. Mangan's *Athleticism*.³² The English monographs on sports history were closely tied to the burgeoning field of leisure and popular culture: from the early 1980s there were a series of impressive general histories by James Walvin, Hugh Cunningham, Robert Storch, E. and S. Yeo and J.F.C. Harrison³³ and an equally large number of more specific monographs such as P. Clark's very fine study on *The English Alehouse* and Peter Bailey's study of *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*.³⁴ Books such as these clearly demonstrated that sports history (along with leisure and popular culture) could be just as rigorous as any other branch of study, that historians were interested in placing sport in its wider social and political context, that sources well beyond the trivial could be tapped and that sport could also illuminate some hitherto-unexplored aspects of male identity and working-class culture. There was also a steady expansion in the number of honours and post-graduate theses written on sport at a number of universities.³⁵ Before 1977 theses on sport had been rare.

By this time there was a growing number of writers in the sports history field who believed that they could answer effectively previous criticisms that this was not a serious area of research. It is worthwhile, here, to pause and spell out some six areas of justification:

1. The first, which has been argued from the 1970s by Tatz and others, was that sport, like popular culture, was a central institution of Australian culture which historians could ill afford to neglect. In recent times dramatists, artists and poets have demonstrated that subjects such as surfing and the beach³⁶ and

Australia's largest sporting club, Collingwood,³⁷ were worthy subjects of study and, by implication, historians have lagged behind in confronting these important institutions.

2. Secondly, by going beyond traditional archives and by using some of the data-gathering techniques of the 'new history' – such as oral history, the use of photos, art and literature and computer data – historians of sport were creating 'new archives' which enabled them to improve upon what were thought to be 'trivial sources' a decade ago. Their task was made easier by the efforts of a number of sporting associations, most notably the Melbourne Cricket Club, to expand their archival collection.

3. Perhaps even more important was that historians of sport became more aware of the work of scholars, such as Pierre Bourdieu,³⁸ who developed useful ways of looking at 'taste', 'culture' and 'sport'. Bourdieu, along with Michel Foucault and Raymond Williams,³⁹ not only provided useful conceptual frameworks, they also argued the case that an asylum, a club or an art gallery is potentially just as 'political' and just as 'serious' as a trade union, a political party or a church.

4. Outside the university, sport – as a recognizable and separate category – became even more important in the past decade with more institutions (special government departments, sports medicine clinics, the Institute of Sport, the Australian Sports Commission, more foundations) not to mention more space in the media and much larger sums of money involved. It was estimated by 1984 that Australian business firms provided in excess of \$150 million to sport and government grants to sport had virtually trebled from 1975 to 1984, reaching a total of \$22.5 million for 1983-84.⁴⁰ There was an obvious need for historians to provide longer-term perspectives on issues such as the decline of amateurism and the rise of commercialism and professionalism in sport and to develop a serious critique of sport in Australian culture, a challenge which was taken up by Stoddart in 1986.⁴¹

5. In this age of public history there was a growing audience outside the university – officials, sponsors, mediapersons, amateur historians and the general public – who demonstrated a great interest in reading material written by professional historians on this subject.

6. Finally, as writers such as Tatz and Murray have demonstrated, sport can be part of intellectual discourse. In his work on South Africa,⁴² Tatz has demonstrated that sport is an integral part of the official ideology there and is closely tied to race and politics. Similarly, Bill Murray has shown that sectarianism and Scottish soccer are intertwined closely.

Perhaps even more important was the greater intellectual rigour and theoretical diversity of writing on Australian sport in the mid-1980s. Two provocative books appeared in 1986. Writing from a cultural progressive stance, Stoddart has challenged many of the time-worn myths of Australian sport in *Saturday Afternoon Fever*. He also took issue with those who wrote from alternative perspectives, which he referred to as conservative cultural criticism and the radical Marxist perspective, and those who still wrote within the context of the now discredited heroic and mirror views. Equally valuable was the recent work of Lawrence and Rowe, *Power Play*, where they developed a leftist perspective of some subtlety suggesting that while much of modern sport is 'grotesque', and riddled with various forms of 'gross commercialism' and exploitation, it could also 'transcend particular social formations' for it was exposed to a 'sometimes critical and resistant audience'.

Those who regarded sport as 'uniformly good or bad' failed to appreciate the 'complexity of the processes which construct it.'⁴³

The publication of these books reflects several important changes in the writing of Australian sports history. Historians are becoming more conscious of the need to make theoretical perspectives more explicit and of the need to develop larger ideological structures of Australian sport. This, in turn, has brought differences of perspective into much sharper focus. Stoddart, while admiring the eloquent critique of modern sport by Tatz, 'The Corruption of Sport', has criticized it as a cultural conservative viewpoint implying that sport was once 'pure'.

Buoyed up by this greater self-confidence in their own work sports historians have been able to make a more realistic, and less paranoid, assessment of their position in the profession and their relationship to other sub-fields and disciplines. At the 1984 Australian Historical Association Conference meeting Wray Vamplew explored why there had been such limited communication between sports historians and economic historians.⁴⁴ While some sports historians might have suspected that there was 'a lack of interest' at best and 'snobbishness' at worst, Vamplew was now able to suggest that there were some valid intellectual reasons why many economic historians found it difficult to cope with sport as a category because of the lack of a pertinent economic theory of sport and because of the peculiarities of the sports industry.

From about 1983 on sports historians also developed more realistic and constructive policies towards scholars in the human movement area and interested amateurs. In retrospect many believed that it may have been a mistake to accommodate all-comers on an equal basis, as happened at the La Trobe Conference. Professional historians and 'mainstream academics' (as they are called by some people in the human movement area) need not and should not apologise for playing a dominant role in the sports history movement. Articles accepted for publication in *Sporting Traditions* should be determined primarily on merit even if this means that human movement and amateur historians will be less well represented.

There are three ways to evaluate what has been achieved in a decade of sports history: the extent to which the research promise of this area has been realized; the ways in which the organization of Australian sports history differs from other emerging traditions in Britain and North America and the all important question as to whether this new field has added to or, even possibly reduced, fragmentation in the profession.

It must be admitted that the development of a distinctive tradition of writing on Australian sport is still emerging partly because many Australian historians have written on sport in other countries: Indian cricket and polo; Scottish soccer; the British turf; the Gaelic Athletic Association; South African sport and American baseball and so forth. However, significant beginnings have been made on individual sports with Sandercock and Turner, Stewart and Stremski writing on Aussie Rules; Cashman, Mulvaney, Sissons and Stoddart on cricket; Jaggard and Pearson on surfing; Corris on boxing; Fitzpatrick on cycling; Bennett on sculling; Daly on colonial sport; and Mandle's work on a variety of subjects and the two general works on sport and Australian culture by Stoddart and by Lawrence and Rowe.⁴⁵ There is the promise of a much richer yield in the future with the publication of O'Hara's monograph on gambling; Mosely's continuing work on soccer and ethnicity; Sharp's study of sporting spectacles in Sydney, 1890-1912; Vamplew's history of professionalism in Australian sport; and various other studies. There is a

significant body of articles appearing, too, in a variety of places such as Kevin Fewster's excellent 'Advantage Australia: Davis Cup Tennis 1950-59'.⁴⁶ So there is the promise of an equally rich library in the next decade. Scholars, too, in many other disciplines, such as law, geography, psychology, biology and sociology, are now taking far more interest in sport than in 1977.

While *Saturday Afternoon Fever* and *Power Play* have enhanced the debate on Australian sports history, the focus is mostly on the present and recent past. There are still significant gaps in Australian sports history: no-one has yet attempted an historical overview of Australian sport. The era which has been most neglected to this point is the period up till 1870, a critical era in the formation of Australian sports culture. While research on sport after 1870 is far more advanced, there has also been no attempt as yet to synthesize research in this or later periods. An historical overview will also address one of the central issues of Australian sports history yet to be tackled: the extent to which Australian sports and sports attachment are unique and the extent to which sporting traditions are borrowed from overseas, from England and, in more recent times, North America. Australian cultural historians have long claimed that Australians are more besotted by sport than the people of any other society, but this 'myth' has yet to be documented adequately and explained satisfactorily.

The Australian sports history movement has differed in organizational terms from its North American and British counterparts. In the former case human movement scholars led initially and professional historians joined later and have been a less dominant force, until recently, than they have in Australia. In a recent paper on the growth of sports history in North America, Alan Metcalfe⁴⁷ implied that the relationship between these two groups has not always been an easy one 'because in the final analysis the physical education historians as a group cannot compete with the historians, mainly because of background and job responsibilities'. However, the interaction between the two groups 'has had a distinct beneficial effect upon the quality of the work of physical education-trained historians'. At the same time Metcalfe hoped that professional historians may benefit from association with human movement scholars [and amateurs] since they sometimes find it difficult to get 'inside sport' or, as Dabscheck put it: 'one of the paradoxes of the growing academic interest in sport is the unwillingness of scholars to actually inquire into sport per se, rather sport is used as a vehicle through which insights into apparently more relevant phenomena can be gained'.⁴⁸

British historians have established fewer links, so far, with the general sporting public. This position has been partly thrust upon the British Society because many amateur societies (particularly cricket) have been long established and have large memberships and are not necessarily enthusiastic to co-operate with the newer and smaller British Society. Australian sports historians have found it easier to develop constructive relationships with sports' societies because amateur societies here are newer, and more open to academic co-operation, than their British counterparts. Approximately one half of the 'individual members' of the Australian Society have no current or past posting in a tertiary institution.⁴⁹ Cricket Society members, approximately 20 per cent of Society membership, constitute the largest 'amateur' membership.⁵⁰ The human movement scholars also have developed a positive approach encouraging their members to join the Australian Society for Sports History⁵¹ but at the same time retaining their own special biennial gathering under the aegis of ACHPER. At the fifth Sporting Traditions Conference (Adelaide,

14-16 August 1985) professional historians presented a little over a third of the papers; there was a rise in the number of other academic areas and interest groups represented.

SPEAKERS AT THE ADELAIDE CONFERENCE, 1985

Historians (12)	Other Academics (11)	Non-academics (8)
(including 3 Economic Historians)	Human Movement (3)	Amateurs (3)
	Economics (2)	Officials (3)
	Education (1)	Librarians (2)
	English (1)	
	Geography (1)	
	Law (1)	
	Political Science (1)	
	Urban Studies (1)	

In less than two years the Society membership has expanded to over 200 persons and institutions with professional historians constituting a minority of the membership and with significant representation of other groups: interested amateurs, sports officials, sports librarians, journalists and commentators. Sports historians have discovered that there is a ready audience willing and eager to read their material and have found it worthwhile to organize conferences at places such as the Melbourne Cricket Ground (the venue for the 1983 and 1987 conferences)⁵² and at the State (South Australian) Convention Centre in 1985 rather than in university lecture theatres.

There is one significant disadvantage for sports historians in the emergence of a separate society and journal. While they may reach a broader audience outside academe, some of their work may be read by fewer colleagues within the profession simply because much worthwhile material, such as Fewster's article on tennis in the 1950s, is published in *Sporting Traditions* or some other journal of sport.⁵³ Stoddart has recognized this 'major deficiency which has still not been overcome' which 'concerns the low number of sports history articles appearing in the major general historical journals'.⁵⁴

However, while there is some danger in more and more separate organizations and journals within the profession (and perhaps a declining readership of *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, the flagship of the profession) it seems that Judt's and even Samuel's fears of fragmentation are partly based on myth and misunderstanding of the way in which these new fields operate. Sports history is not nearly so narrow, exclusive and separate as it might first seem. First of all, some of the 'Australian sports historians' were trained in Australian history (such as Turner and O'Hara) but many others come from other areas of history (Indian, French, British, American) so there is some measure of communication between scholars from differing area backgrounds. When historians now meet in sporting conferences they also enter into a wider dialogue with scholars from a variety of disciplines. The 20 articles published in the first four issues of *Sporting Traditions* further underline this diversity: they were written by representatives from history, including three from economic history (nine); economics (three); education (two); and one each from the amateur history category, geography, human movement, industrial relations, political science and urban studies.

An even more important factor is that very few historians see themselves

exclusively as sports historians and are reasonably reluctant to accept this tag. Most of them, such as Bill Murray, author of an important book on sectarianism in Scottish soccer,⁵⁵ have not cut themselves off from their other interests, in his case, French history. Others prefer to regard themselves as social historians with a special interest in the history of sport. Yet others participate in sports history as part of a sub-interest. Chris McConville, who has taken a reasonably prominent part in sports history, reading papers at the fourth and fifth conferences and publishing an article in *Sporting Traditions*, regards himself primarily as an urban studies historian with a secondary interest in sport. McConville also has an interest in oral history, reading a paper at one of their conferences.

Sports history, then, is part of a broader front, one of the strands in the 'new history'. In *New History*, by Osborne and Mandle, sports history appears alongside labour, medical, oral, urban and other branches. Appropriately, too, it is often taught in conjunction with other 'new history' themes such as O'Hara's course on 'Themes in Australian History' at Launceston C.A.E. which links sport with urban, labour and women's history along with questions of race and class. In Cashman's course on Leisure and Popular Culture, at the University of New South Wales, sport is merely one of many themes developed when exploring the culture of the 'ordinary person' in the era of the Industrial Revolution. Commercialization and professionalization of sport is compared with similar developments in some of the other emerging institutions of mass culture, such as the travel industry, the music hall and children's leisure.

The separate organization of sports history (and for that matter oral history, urban studies and so forth) does not necessarily mean that the profession is becoming more factionalized with more and more exclusive splinter groups hiving off and avoiding dialogue with each other. In fact it could be argued that the opposite is occurring. When historians 'fragment' into separate discourses on a particular theme or area they are not necessarily luxuriating in some exotic area of history or forming themselves into some self-indulgent clique; rather they are entering into creative dialogues with a broad range of groups often outside the profession itself.

In the space of a decade sports history has progressed from what many, within the profession, regarded as an eccentric and ephemeral celebratory exercise, to a respectable and growing enterprise. Numerous courses on the history of sport have now been approved at the honours and even post-graduate level⁵⁶ and sport now even rates a mention in many Australian history courses; the ARGC have awarded grants for sports history; the subject has recently been included in the NSW Higher Certificate School Syllabus;⁵⁷ and inter-university seminars meet regularly in Sydney and Melbourne.

Bill Mandle, not one to get carried away with the claims of a new field, argued that the number of theses written by young students on sports history represented the 'true test' of its progress. For students, more than any other group, are aware of the risks involved embarking on research on a 'history of play'.⁵⁸ Significant numbers of students have now decided that the case for sports history far outweighs the arguments against which are still aired from time to time. Sports history, like Australian sport itself, has shifted radically during the past decade from a part-time amateur exercise to a more serious full-time professional pursuit.

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NOTES

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1. The term, 'amateurs', is used throughout to distinguish this group from professionally-trained historians. It is not intended to imply that the work of 'amateurs' is inferior.
2. Keith Dunstan, *Sports* (N. Melbourne: Cassell, 1973).
3. Brian Stoddart, *Saturday Afternoon Fever. Sport in the Australian Culture* (N. Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1986); Geoffrey Laurence and David Rowe (eds.). *Power Ploy: The Commercialisation of Australian Sport* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1986).
4. D.J. Mulvaney, *Cricket Walkabout: The Australian Aboriginal Cricketers on Tour. 1867-68* (Melbourne: MUP, 1967).
5. W.F. Mandle, 'Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 59, pt. 4 (December 1973); 'Games People Played: Cricket and Football in England and Victoria in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*. 15, No. 60 (April 1973).
6. Scott Bennett, *The Clarence Comet. The Career of Henry Searle 1866-89* (Sydney University Press, 1973). Wray Vamplew, who moved to Flinders University in 1975, published his book on English racing in 1976. *The Turf. A Social and Economic History of Horse Racing* (London: Allen Lane, 1976).
7. Leonie Sandercock and Ian Turner, *Up Where Cazaly? The Great Australian Game* (London: Granada, 1981).
8. Braham Dabscheck, 'The Wage Determination Process for Sportsmen', *Economic Record* 51 (1975); 'Sporting Equality: Labour Market vs Produce Market Control', *Journal of Industrial Relations* 17 (1975); 'Economics, Power and Sportsmen'. *Politics* 11 (1976); 'Industrial Relations and Professional Team Sports in Australia'. *Journal of Industrial Relations* 18 (1976).
9. Such as Dennis Brailsford, *Sport and Society: Elizabeth to Anne* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); Peter C. McIntosh, *Sport in Society*, (London: C.A. Watts, 1963); Robert Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge: CUP, 1974); James Walvin, *The People's Game: The Social History of British Football* (London: Arrow, 1975).
10. 'Australia's National Sport - Winning', *AJPE*, No. 57 (Sept. 1972). 5-14; 'Sport and Society - The Role of Sport and Games in the Social Development of Early Australia', *AJPE*, No. 55 (March 1972). 31-7.
11. T.D. Jaques and G.R. Pavia, *Sport in Australia* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 1976).
12. Colin Tatz, 'The Corruption of Sport', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Sept. 1982), 8.
13. W.F. Mandle, 'Sports History', in G. Osborne and W.F. Mandle (eds.), *New History: Studying Australia Today* (N. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1982). p.86.
14. W.F. Mandle, 'Sports History', pp.82-93.
15. Tatz, 'Corruption' of Sport', p.8.
16. Brian Stoddart, 'Historians, Sport and Real History: Some Thoughts on Progress'. unpublished paper, AIIA Conference, August 1984, p.4.
17. Two issues per year. and two bulletins.
18. Tony Judt, 'The Clown in Regal Purple: Social History and the Historians', *History Workshop*, 7 (Spring 1979). 66-94.
19. Raphael Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).
20. Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (eds.), *Sport in History The Making of Sporting Traditions* (St Lucia: UQP, 1979).
21. Kent Pearson, *Surfing Subcultures of Australia and New Zealand* (St Lucia: UQP,

- 1979).
22. The outstanding article by Clifford Geertz, for instance, on the Balinese cockfight was published in 1975: 'Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight' in C. Geertz (ed.), *Interpretations of Cultures* (London: Hutchinson, 1975).
 23. Kent Pearson and Jim McKay, 'Sociology of Australian and New Zealand Sport' *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 17, No. 7 (July 1981), 66-75.
 24. David Rowe moved to Newcastle College of Advanced Education in mid-1986 and took up a post as Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies.
 25. Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation.
 26. Michael McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War* (London: Nelson, 1980).
 27. Peter Corris, *Lords of the Ring: A History of Prize-fighting in Australia* (N. Ryde: Cassell, 1980). Corris became rather more famous for his prolific writing on the sleuth Cliff Hardy.
 28. Stoddart, 'Historians, Sport and Real History', p.7.
 29. Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan, *Sport, Money, Morality and the Media* (Kensington: NSWUP, 1981).
 30. Letter from Ray Crawford, 14 April 1986.
 31. The books are listed separately in an appendix; some of the more important articles are mentioned in footnotes.
 32. T. Mason, *Association Football and English Society* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980); J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981).
 33. J. Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950* (London: Longman, 1978); H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); R.B. Scorch (ed.), *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982); E. and S. Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict* (Brighton: Harvester, 1982); J.F.C. Harrison, *The Common People: A History from the Norman Conquest to the Present* (London: Fontana, 1984).
 34. P. Clark, *The English Alehouse* (London: Longman, 1983); P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).
 35. At the University of New South Wales, for instance, 10 theses (8 BA Hons and 2 MA Pass) were completed and, in 1985, 1 PhD and 1 MA Hons were in progress; while at Flinders University 3 BA Hons theses have been completed and 3 more theses (BA Hons, BEd. Hons, MA) are in progress and at the University of Queensland there are 7 theses now in progress (3 PhDs, 2 MAs, 1 BA. Hons and 1 BHMS) and 2 PhDs and several MAs have been completed previously. This pattern has been repeated at other universities: PhDs were awarded at New England in 1985 and at the ANU in 1986; and another was submitted at Sydney University in 1986.
 36. Geoffrey Dutton, *Sun, Sea, Surf and Sand – The Myth of the Beach* (Melbourne: OUP, 1985).
 37. One historian, Richard Stremski, has responded to this challenge, publishing an admirable club history. *Kill for Collingwood* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986). The previously published play (and film), *The Club*, by David Williamson was based on Collingwood.
 38. See, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Aristocracy of Culture', *Media, Culture and Society* 2 (1980). 225-54; 'Sport and Social Class', *Social Science Information*, 17 (1978), 819-40.
 39. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979); *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972); Raymond Williams. *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1958) and various later works.
 40. Bob Stewart, 'Financial support'. Dept. of Sport. Recreation and Tourism and the Australian Sports Commission, *Australian Sport: A Profile* (Canberra: AGPS, 1985), pp.56-59.
 41. Stoddart, *Saturday Afternoon Fever*.

42. C. Tatz, 'Sport in South Africa: the myth of integration', *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Summer 1983), 3-18.
43. Lawrence and Rowe, *Power Play*, p.234.
44. Wray Vamplew, 'Late Kick-off: Economic History and Sports History', unpublished paper, AHA Conference, August 1984.
45. Listed in the appendix.
46. *Sporting Traditions*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (November 1985), 47-68.
47. Professor Alan Metcalfe, unpublished 'Conference Address', ACHPER, Launceston, 1986.
48. Braham Dabscheck, "'Defensive Manchester': A History of the Professional Footballers' Association", in Cashman and McKernan, *Sport in History*, p.227.
49. At the beginning of 1986 there were 205 members of ASSH consisting of 133 individual members; 16 overseas; 33 institutions and 23 students. The above calculations are based on individual memberships. At least 61 out of the individual members have occupied or now occupy academic positions.
50. In the individual members category 25 can be identified as exclusively cricket society members. This figure does not include academics who also are members of one of the various branches of the Australian Cricket Society. While this membership figure may appear impressive, it represents a very tiny proportion of Australian Cricket Society members which probably totals close to 1,000.
51. Two human movement scholars occupied important positions in ASSH after it was established. Kay Crawford, of Phillip Institute of Technology, was elected Vice President of ASSH and Ian Jobling, University of Queensland, is an Associate Editor of *Sporting Traditions* responsible for the publication of the *Bulletin*. At least 10 per cent of the individual membership of ASSH has been identified as human movement.
52. The 1987 Conference was held at the recently-opened Australian Gallery of Sport at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.
53. One solution to this problem is to publish two versions of an article. one in a sporting journal and one in a more general journal. Fewster's article was published subsequently in *Meanjin*, a Journal of Australian culture.
54. Stoddart, 'Historians, Sport and Real History', p.10.
55. Bill Murray, *The Old Firm: Sectarianism, Sport and Society in Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1984).
56. Flinders University, for instance, offers three courses, two Masters and one Honours, on sports history. There is also a multi-disciplinary course on recreation which has a sports history component.
57. Sport is one of several electives, from which four are chosen, in the 'Society and Culture' course.
58. Mandle, 'Sports History', p.93.

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The following is an extract from the first **ISHPES COUNCIL NEWSLETTER**: Wray Vamplew (Australia), the new President of the Australian Society of Sports History (**ASSH**), has expressed ASSH's intentions to establish closer links with other sports history organisations. He therefore proposes (a) a conjoint conference with **ISHPES** in 1995, (b) an exchange of journals etc., (c) an exchange of sports history news e.g. names of executive officers, forthcoming conferences, books published by members et al, (d) the advertising of each other's publications, (e) the encouragement of academic staff exchanges. (f) the facilitation of comparative research topics.

Since all these items coincide with our general **ISHPES** aims and objectives, I have answered that, except for item 1, which will have to be decided at the **ISHPES** Council Meeting, I accept these proposals for a close collaboration in the future.