

**Sport, Youth Culture and  
Conventionality 1920-1970  
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Involvement of Americans in either spectator or participant sport was rather limited until the decade of the Twenties. When America entered World War I, the only professional sport attracting large audiences on a regular basis was baseball. Amateur sport was in a more advanced state of development and enjoyed far greater popularity than professional sport, but still its following was limited. And, where recreational sport existed, it generally did so without the stimulus of public financial support.

Decidedly, the popularity of sport during the 1920's far exceeded the amount of interest recorded at anytime previously. And, without question, involvement in it and concern for it grew steadily, if not spectacularly, from then until the surge of activity during the 1960's elevated sport to a place in life that was an eminently more important one than what had been the case in earlier decades. The emergence of extensive occupation with sport was not without meaning or consequence, no matter the value of arguments about the worthwhileness of the activity itself.<sup>1</sup>

Historians have displayed but very little interest in why sport registered such a tremendous gain in appeal in the years between 1920 and 1970. Sport historians simply regard the answer as being too obvious to be worthy of additional consideration. The development, as they view it, was nothing more than a natural consequence of increased leisure and affluence. This interpretation is properly described as the "inevitable thesis." And, despite the fact that it does not deal successfully with the Great Depression, several recessions and the set-back in relative popularity of sport among diversions brought about by the introduction of such amusements as radio, motion pictures and television, the "inevitable thesis" is widely accepted.<sup>2</sup>

Only a few social historians have given any attention at all to sport. Most of those who have single out the dynamics of mass consumption as being the most important factor in the increased role of sport.<sup>3</sup> They point to the decade of the

Twenties as the period that marked the beginning of the consumption based society. The dramatic expansion in sport that took place at the same time is viewed as but another example of the influence of a consumption mentality on the development of a new life style. According to the mass consumption thesis, American values were successfully manipulated by providers of goods and services.<sup>4</sup>

The first writer to call attention to the Twenties as a unique period with a style all its own was Frederick L. Allen, a journalist turned historian.<sup>5</sup> His *Only Yesterday* was published in 1929, thereby denying him the advantage of reflection upon subsequent developments. Despite this, Allen correctly perceived that changes experienced in the ten years following World War I were significant ones. Indeed, his assessment was so accurate that academic historians have since declared the Twenties to be the “formative years of American society.”<sup>6</sup>

*Only Yesterday's* theme is that a revolution in morals took place during the 1920's. The visible evidence was the apparent discarding of old values in favor of less substantial ones. The “new order”, Allen wrote, transformed America into a three-ring circus consisting of sex scandals, sensational crime and sports spectacles.<sup>7</sup> His explanation for the development was that a people disillusioned by war and emotionally drained from spent reform efforts were quick to reject the past and look to a future that was based upon personal prosperity and fun. As a result, commitments to the advancement of society were put aside in favor of individual gain and self-gratification. If Allen is correct, sport prospered because it satisfied needs that were new.

The question addressed in this article is whether the rise of sport really represented a break with the past. In dealing with it, attention shall be confined to the topics of youth culture<sup>8</sup> and conventionally morality.<sup>9</sup> They provide excellent foci for a consideration of the relationship between values embraced by society during the pre and post World War I eras and the role played by sport in each. The conclusion reached is that rather than representing a break with the past, sports' prosperity was primarily the product of employment of a nineteenth century creation in responding to the pressures of modern America. Among the stresses faced in the new age were the emphases upon identification with youth and the fun morality. Sport, due to its nineteenth century endowments, was both a youthful activity and a perfectly acceptable way to enjoy one's

self. Thus, increasing numbers of Americans found that by turning to sport it was possible to be a part of the new while embracing old values.

Long before the arrival of the Twenties sport involvement was thoroughly intertwined with images of youth and commitment to an absolutist moral philosophy.<sup>10</sup> And, following World War I, sports' role as a means of providing identification with youth culture and conventional morality became increasingly important as the amount of sport involvement expanded. Thus, sport represented a devotion to the past and not revolutionary zeal for a new life style. This is not to say that a revolution in morals did not take place during the Twenties. The point is that sport was a haven for those fun-seekers whose values remained with the traditional. It could serve as such because the goodness of sport had been made very real.

The high regard for sport that existed in 1919 had not been present a century earlier. But, between 1850 and 1890 sport gained widespread acceptance as activity that was extremely constructive. The benefit of exercise was one recognized value but the more important values by far were seen as contributions that involvement made to character development, citizenship training and cultural assimilation. Once successfully endowed with such positive and desirable benefits, sport was assured a place in American life. Seen as a solution to many of the evils that threatened individual and society, its promotion was enthusiastically undertaken by college presidents, school administrators, social workers, reform leaders, public officials and churchmen. In the main, emphasis was on involving youth in wholesome play, although YMCA's, YWCA's, settlement houses, churches and industries did provide similar opportunities for adults. Sport, then, was fully recognized as the province of youth. Schools and colleges had the most complete sports facilities to be found anywhere in the country. And, where sport expanded to such other locations as resorts, country clubs and athletic clubs, youths were largely responsible for its introduction and sponsorship. Nothing was more characteristic of youth than regular and enthusiastic involvement in vigorous sport.<sup>11</sup>

With the establishment of an inextricable relationship between youth and sport during the nineteenth century, it only remained for society to come to value youth more highly for sport to become the recipient of greater attention. This happened and adoption of the symbols of youth reached rage pro-

portions in the Twenties, with the result that before the decade had come to an end, youth culture was a well-advanced development. Youth represented both success and promise. No other time in life offered an equal chance to enjoy fun things and carefree hours. Among the other desirable things that it represented, youth was health, ebullient energy and physical attractiveness. It was also the period of life when opportunities to enter preferable trades, businesses and professions were great.<sup>12</sup> With so much to offer, youth was a time to rush into, prolong or return to, thereby encouraging non-youth to avoid looking or acting their own age.<sup>13</sup>

Several things contributed to the tremendous emphasis that Americans placed upon youth. G. Stanley Hall led the way to discovery of the age as one of life's most significant periods in 1905 with the publication of his monumental work, *Adolescence*. About the same time, the medical profession completely rejected the romantic image of aging and projected instead a scientific one. The "strictly objective" view helped relegate the elderly to a category of useless, while youth was seen as the time of accomplishment. Consequently, major employers of persons—governments, industries, and businesses—adopted youth movements as forward-looking measures, while insisting that employees of advanced age accept the rewards of retirement.<sup>14</sup>

While the influence of scholar-researchers and the medical profession was considerable, the more important factor in placing youth at center stage was the glorification of all that youth represented through the mass media. Virtually all successful radio shows, motion pictures and reading matter concentrated on the projection of youth in very positive ways. Even more appealing to the majority of Americans were advertising campaigns of firms that needed to bring their products to the attention of the mass market. Lysol advertisements proclaimed that a "woman's youth need not necessarily fade with marriage. She can stay young with her husband." And, husbands were told that the vitality of youth was contained in the breakfast foods of champion athletes and the handsome appearance of youth in the toilet articles and clothing used by sports personalities. Probably the most successful advertising effort of all was the one conducted by the Coca Cola Company in which health, beauty and fun of youth were associated with product and sport.<sup>15</sup>

Promoters of sports events capitalized on the great admiration for youth by staging contests in those sports that were

closely associated with youthful Americans. The most dramatic examples of the ways that sport profited from sponsorship were recorded at Madison Square Garden. Faced with the very real threat of bankruptcy in the 1930's, the Garden's new manager, Colonel John Kilpatrick, began to emphasize sports that were popular at schools and colleges—basketball, ice hockey, track and field athletics and tennis—in preference to the former standard promotions of boxing and bicycle racing. By so doing, he not only made the Garden a profitable business venture once again but the sports staged there were given a new vitality.<sup>16</sup>

Touring tennis tournaments, ice hockey's expansion in America and increased interest in indoor track and field athletics were but some of the direct results of the Garden's influence. College basketball's appearance in New York elevated it to major sport status and this development generated the interest that led to the formation of the National Basketball Association following World War II, the first successful professional basketball league. In like manner, the modern era of the National Football League began when George P. Marshall added the flavor of the college spectacle to the professional version of football.<sup>17</sup>

Large numbers of participants from age groups other than that of youth were first attracted to sport beginning in the Twenties. As a result of the invasions, participant sports that had belonged virtually exclusively to the late teen-early twenties years of life were being engaged in practically from birth to grave by 1970. Between 1950 and 1970 national championships for persons of advanced age were established in track and field athletics, golf, tennis, bowling, volleyball and swimming, among other sports.<sup>18</sup> Known by the various titles of seniors, masters and golden age, participation in events was limited to those persons above 30 or 35 years of age, with the requirement in some instances that the age of 70 had been passed.

It was the enthusiasm for sports of youth that prompted community recreation directors to expand operations from those of simply providing playgrounds for children to sports centers for all ages. Beginning in the Twenties, extensive sports facilities were developed and operated under the aegis of community recreation departments. Opportunities provided at these playgrounds for adults accounted for much of the increased participation in sport. While a significant

factor in the rise of sport, the entry of adults into sport was even less than that of children. Again, the development first appeared in the Twenties when parents, with assistance from various civic groups and national sports organizations, lowered the age for entry into highly structured and very competitive sports. Golden Gloves (1928), Pop Warner Football (1930) and Little League Baseball (1939). however, were but the beginning of a trend that burgeoned to include most sports by 1970. At times boys and girls were entered into national-level competitions prior to their fifth birthday.

It was also youth that brought about the most revolutionary of all changes in the resort business. From colonial days to the 1920's taking the cure at the various watering places was regarded as the best and most delightful of ways to maintain or recover health. This practice changed in dramatic fashion with the emergence of youth culture and sport, and before the end of the 1920's, sport rather than the medicinal value of water was held to be the key to health. The result was that health resorts either became sports centers or went out of business. Among the spas and health resorts that made successful transitions were Hot Springs, White Sulphur Springs and Pinehurst.<sup>19</sup> The tranquil life of purely vacation resorts also succumbed to the strenuous life, and in place of the quiet and unhurried pace that formerly had characterized Palm Beach, it was observed that "young America . . . was playing all the games with the gusto and violence of which young America has the secret."<sup>20</sup> So complete was the change-over that a writer of the 1920's declared that sport had become the substitute for Ponce de Leon's failure to find the fountain of youth.<sup>21</sup>

More than anything else the suntan came to symbolize the healthy glow of youth, and the desire to possess the outdoor appearance contributed significantly to the rapid rise of swimming as a popular participant sport. Bodies of water had been somewhat a lure for Americans during the 1800's but the appeal was minimal until the arrival of the suntan craze in the late 1920's.<sup>22</sup> It was then that Americans really discovered the sport of swimming.<sup>23</sup> Prior to the last years of the Twenties, the sun's rays had been avoided, even by swimmers, with the exception of youths. In the 1930's, however, companies that had been providing creams that would insure retention of peachy-creame complexions during exposure to the sun were busily shifting efforts to the sale of solutions that would assist the sunshine in turning the skin golden brown.<sup>24</sup> The desire for

skin the color of bronze was so great and pervasive that it outweighed considerations of far more importance than acquisition of the look of youth. Warnings from the medical profession that overexposure to the sun would result in premature aging of the skin and greatly increase the possibility of skin cancer had little effect on practice.<sup>25</sup> Rejection of warnings, according to one writer, was due to the fact "that the myth of the sun culture remains as pervasive in the United States as the cult of youth."<sup>26</sup>

Important as youth culture was to the rise of sport, conventional morality was no less a factor. In fact, the role of sport in youth culture was determined to a large extent by conventional morality because the primary motivation behind the promotion of sport among youths was interest in the protection and perpetuation of conventional values. Seen both as a means of social control and individual development, involvement of youth in sport was advocated by a range of social reformers, including Jacob Riis, Frederick C. Howe, Jane Addams and Judge Ben Lindsey. Theodore Roosevelt, probably the most vocal and influential spokesman for sport, was convinced that it provided the best possible training for youth. With enthusiastic support coming from such highly respected leaders, by 1919 sport had been wrapped in a mantle of virtuousness.

In cities, towns and villages across the nation young athletes were revered as paragons of virtue and symbols of the American way. They were clean-living, dutiful, loyal and upright, while, at the same time, strong, virile and competitive. Before contests were entered into they united in prayerful devotion and stood proudly while the strains of the Star Spangled Banner filled stadium or gymnasium. Such commitments to values in American life that were fundamental not only failed to lessen during the Twenties with increases in the number of sports participants and the revolution in morals that was taking place outside the world of sport but actually grew firmer, extended into more sports, and was evident at a larger number of levels of sport.

Owners of professional baseball teams became very protective of the clear-cut image of the sport that they had succeeded in establishing in the decade following the infamous Black Sox Scandal. Sportswriters were required to project the wholesomeness of the sport and its players in their articles or face exclusion from the baseball family.<sup>27</sup> Following World War II, professional football and basketball coaches began conducting

prayer sessions for players prior to the games, a practice that had started among schoolboys and collegians four decades earlier. By 1975, every major league baseball and football team—fifty in all—conducted Sunday Chapel services for players, with many teams having a minister in its employ.<sup>28</sup> With the prevalence of emphasis upon religion, it came as no surprise to a reporter when a professional football players looked up to the sky after a particularly effective practice punt had traveled far downfield and asked “how’d you like that one, God?”<sup>29</sup>

The deep and abiding belief of athletes in sport as a moral force gave rise to Sportianity, frequently referred to by outsiders as “Jocks for Jesus.” Sportianity had its visible beginning in 1954 with the formation of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The idea for using athletes to bring others to Christ was born with Don McClanen but the support of Branch Rickey of baseball fame and Reverend Louis H. Evans, minister-at-large of the Northern Presbyterian Church, was instrumental in bringing FCA into being. Response to the mission of the organization was immediate and widespread. By 1970, the FCA was so powerful politically that it could influence job mobility among coaches, even those in professional sports.

Unlike FCA, Athletes in Action, founded by Dave Hannah, actually sponsored amateur teams in a number of sports. Its ministry was conducted during time-outs and half-time of events, when players testified to spectators on the meaning of Christ to them personally. By 1975, AIA operations were so extensive that they required the attention of 250 staff men. Sports Ambassadors, an overseas equivalent of AIA, had as its mission the use of teams to take the message of Christianity to foreign countries. Competition between FCA and AIA, the giants of Sportianity, led to the formation of Pro Athletes Outreach. Originally viewed as a peacekeeping operation, PAO quickly emerged as a formidable factor in the enterprise of athletic ministry. Beginning under the aegis of Sports World Chaplaincy, by 1975 it had an annual budget of \$250,000 available for use in the sponsorship of speaking engagements for Christian athletes.<sup>30</sup> The displays of enthusiasm for Christianity greatly impressed Billy Graham and brought from him the remark “there are probably more really committed Christians in sports, both collegiate and professional, than in any other occupation in America.”<sup>31</sup>

Nineteenth century reformers had valued sport as a means of social control. With adequate promotion, they reasoned, it

could be made an attractive alternative to the evil influences of gambling, drinking and sex. But, once sports' purity had gained acceptance, the world of sport was rather easily extended to include the very pleasures that it had been ordained to combat. Gambling associated with some sports was made legal, while the drinking and sex engaged in as extensions of the sports' experience were regarded as acceptable or less offensive than otherwise would have been the case. In effect, the morality of sport had made the immoral legitimate, and this development contributed greatly to the rising popularity of sport during the Twenties and thereafter. Not all persons who sought forbidden pleasures had need for the protection that sports' blanket of purity offered. Those who did took comfort in the fact that more goodness than evil elevated the total experience to a place within the bounds for conduct that had been established by convention.

Blue laws that prohibited sport on the Sabbath were eased or completely erased first on participant and later on spectator sports during the 1920's and 1930's. Part of the persuasion was the goodness of sport but a more important factor in reversal of the long-standing legislation was the financial return that state treasuries would realize from Sunday events. Yet, revenue potential alone wasn't sufficient to warrant complete eradication of all restrictions on Sabbath activity, as legislators were extremely conscious of what was possible to permit without offending the sensibilities of the electorate.<sup>32</sup>

It was also the combination of the wholesomeness of sport and the revenue generating possibilities of pari-mutuel wagering that brought gambling into the open. Long regarded a dangerous evil, wagering had been relegated to back rooms, closed casinos and private clubs until legislatures acted to legalize pari-mutual gambling on thoroughbred and harness horse races, greyhound races and *jai alai* beginning in the Twenties. The actions not only testified to the great belief in the goodness of sport but also increased the attractiveness of the several sports so recognized manyfold.<sup>33</sup> Other than wagering connected with sport, society remained very defensive about the practice of gambling. That sport could be made an exception in the face of strong opposition to wagering was rather easily explained, according to at least one contemporary observer of the development. He wrote:

Somehow, over the years, it has worked. Somehow there does seem to be something different about base-

ball, or horse racing ; something cleaner, something closer to youth, something vaguely better than what we are doing at the moment. The sweep of legend and the impact of competitiveness have been such that virtually every American over the age of two, thinks, talks, watches, plays or competitively resists sports.<sup>34</sup>

The 500 million dollars that pari-mutuel wagering at horse race tracks profited state treasuries in 1970 represented only a fraction of the gambling associated with sports contests. Estimates held that more than 50 billion dollars had been wagered and 90 percent of the money had changed hands illegally.<sup>35</sup> The amount of illicit gambling was the cause of conflict between sports establishments and legislatures during the 1960's. Law-making bodies in many states wanted to extend opportunities to gamble on horse races to persons not actually in attendance at the race track and to legalize wagering on other sports. Reacting negatively to such proposals, racing interests feared that off-track betting would reduce attendance and representatives of organized baseball, football, basketball and ice hockey resisted provisions for legalized gambling on their sport on the ground that images would suffer. Despite objections, the New York State Legislature sanctioned Off-Track Betting, an example soon followed by other states. The success of off-track operations as revenue producers accelerated and magnified pressures to make available state controlled wagering on additional sports. However, with the exception of state lotteries, other forms of gambling failed to gain sufficient legislative support, thereby suggesting that indeed sport was a refuge for America's moral consciousness. Even the case of Massachusetts officials in naming the state lottery The Game was not without regard for the widespread acceptance accorded Sport.

Perceived detrimental effects of intoxicating beverages and sexual activity upon society, as was the case with gambling, had first stimulated interest of reformers in sport. In gaining a reputation as a social control mechanism, sport profited most from three of the several nineteenth century reform movements—temperance, purity and health. Commonalities among the three were: (1) belief in the perfectability of society, (2) acceptance of moral absolutism, (3) commitment to the need of removing the "Devil's sting" from entertainments by means of sublimation, and (4) extensive involvement of individual reformers in more than one crusade. Essentially, each of the organized efforts to better society stressed that the exercise

of individual control was the basic building block of personality, therefore measures that would assist in control of base emotions were strongly advocated.

Efforts to limit the use of alcoholic beverages began in the 1820's with the formation of the American Society for the Prevention of Licentiousness and Vice and the Promotion of Morality. This organization provided the impetus for the American Temperance Union. Following the Civil War, additional force was supplied the movement by the Women's Christian Temperance Union. With the backing of Progressive elements, the campaign to limit use of intoxicating drink escalated to abolition and culminated with ratification of the Prohibition Amendment in 1919.

Illicit sex had excited concern as early as 1721, when Bostonians "founded a spinning school to release the industrious energies of unoccupied women."<sup>36</sup> However, it was not until the early nineteenth century that moralists were fully alerted to the real dangers of prostitution. This happened at about the same time that the medical profession began to express the fear that sex, even within marriage, was a physical and emotional drain on both male and female. In response to cues received regarding ideal sexual behavior, middle class Americans began to play the role of Christian gentleman. "The Christian gentleman was an athlete of continence, not coitus, continuously testing his manliness in the fire of self-denial."<sup>37</sup>

Not coincidentally, the 1830's also marked the change in the position of the anti-slavery forces from one of gradual freeing of slaves to that of immediate emancipation. Primarily responsible for the new posture was the fear that under the protection of a plan calling for the granting of freedom over an extended period of time the morally improper sex practices among Southern blacks and whites would spread to other sections of the country.<sup>38</sup> Concern of abolitionists regarding sex matters also extended into the areas of prostitution and family life.<sup>39</sup> And, in the 1870's, former anti-slavery activists turned their attention to the abolition of white slave traffic, prostitution and other forms of immoral sex.<sup>40</sup> These efforts, too, won the support of Progressives and eventually led to the passage of the Mann Act and the introduction of a variety of state and local laws that were enacted in the interest of a more moral America."

Health, the focus of a third reform campaign, was brought to the attention of America in the two decades prior to the Civil War. Pictured as one of the nation's serious problems, proposals for improving the physical well-being of the populace included attention to diet and exercise. George Ripley and his Brook Farm colonists looked to the consumption of "aspiring vegetables" as the answer to the unhealthy state, while followers of Sylvester Graham were committed to the values of sun-drenched grains. Proponents of exercise held that physical inactivity was the primary cause of infirmities. It was a position that enjoyed the effective support of Dioclesian Lewis, Elizabeth Blackwell, Charles Fallen, Francis Lieber and Thomas W. Higginson.

The health crusade gained momentum with the decades following 1870, with the result that between 1886 and 1907 three national organizations were created for the purpose of giving it more effective attention. Much to their credit significant gains for the causes of health were registered with the passage of laws requiring health and physical education instruction in public schools by the majority of state legislatures between 1917 and 1919. The same time period also marked the beginning of the rise of public recreation. Its cause was championed mainly by the National Recreation Association, an organization that saw wholesome play and sport as the answer to a range of problems confronting individual and society.

Recognition given sport by leaders of the temperance, purity and health crusades, beginning in the antebellum period, elevated sport from worthless entertainment for gentlemen of leisure and dispicable rowdies to extremely productive activity. In arriving at a place in the center of reform matters, sport profited mainly from the advocacy of Higginson. An ardent campaigner for a variety of reform causes—particularly, abolition of slavery, temperance and health—Higginson conceptualized and then articulated for others the role of sport in the regeneration of American life. Originally attracted to sport as a form of exercise, Higginson soon expanded his views to embrace British athleticism, the use of sport in character training. It was his belief that the primary source of resistance to sport and concern for bodily health derived from religion, and he undertook the task of explaining where, how, and why the Scriptures had been misinterpreted. Because he was able to speak as a Congregational minister his effectiveness in persuading others to accept arguments presented was greatly in-

creased. So much so that “muscular Christianity” emerged as a viable American movement. Within it developed the rationale for sport as a means of personal and social improvement.<sup>42</sup>

Abolitionists displayed considerable interest in gymnastics at a very early date in the belief that exercise “like proper diet, helped in bringing the body under control and preventing it from interfering with man’s spiritual nature.”<sup>43</sup> Theodore Weld, an early proponent of manual training in academic institutions and an ardent crusader for abolition of slavery, became an instructor at Dioclesian Lewis’ Gymnastic Institute. William Lloyd Garrison sent at least some of his children to the Institute and the “Welds themselves sent the son who exhibited signs of excessive loss of seminal fluid.”<sup>44</sup> Lewis, Higginson, Graham, William A. Alcott and Charles Follen, Harvard’s first physical training instructor, wrote on the terrible effects of sexual excess and the need to suppress erotic impulses through diet and exercise.<sup>45</sup> “Dietary reform and the cult of exercise, like anti-slavery, fastened upon man’s erotic nature in order to overcome it.”<sup>46</sup> And, by the 1870’s, hope for moral perfection had been firmly linked with physical perfection.

Challenges facing reformers after 1875 were far greater than those of the antebellum period. Conditions were far more unsettled and resulting pressures posed very real threats to established social order. The area in life that was considered to be most vulnerable to change was leisure. Therefore, efforts of reformers in behalf of reinforcing social structures concentrated on it.<sup>47</sup> The expectancy was that the misuse of leisure could be controlled if not eliminated.<sup>48</sup> Increasingly, hope for maintaining traditional values came to rest with sport.

Sports’ role as a positive force for a stable morality did not end with the arrival of the Twenties. The decade of the 1960’s was widely acclaimed as the beginning of truly enlightened approaches to marriage, family and extra-marital sex relations but the world of sport was expected to revere the traditional. When two New York Yankee pitchers announced that they were swapping families cries of indignation reverberated throughout the land. The matter would have been regarded a completely personal one but for the fact that the men involved were highly respected baseball talents. A *Sports Illustrated* editorial attempted to put the issue into perspective.

It is neither arch nor sentimental to say that thousands, possibly millions, of youngsters were stunned and distressed to hear about Peterson and Kekich. Does it

really matter? Yes, it does; it matters a great deal. An interest in sport almost always begins in childhood, and retention of that interest is, at least in part, an attempt to recapture the joys of youth. Sport is a diversion, fun, something to augment our lives or relieve the pressures. When an athlete's dirty linen is washed in public, it hurts the child in all of us.<sup>49</sup>

In the midst of a revolution in sexual attitudes and practices, sport was expected to remain an island of innocence. The editorial concluded with lines from the musical comedy *Damn Yankees* in which earthy, lecherous ballplayers told of their rejection of temptation in song.

We've got to keep our minds on the game.  
 We've got to think about the game!  
 The game! The game!  
 We've got to think about the game,  
 The game, the game!  
 Booze and broads may be great,  
 Though they're great they'll have<sup>50</sup> to wait,  
 While we think about the game!

Around the core of moral purity that was represented in the sports' contest itself, conduct that otherwise would have been viewed by society as unacceptable was legitimate merry making. Prostitutes from New York City looked forward to the annual running of the Kentucky Derby as the highlight of their social and professional life. Other fun and lucrative times came when major sports events took place in the City.<sup>51</sup> Across the land baseball games were the most popular of places to sell tickets to brothels.<sup>52</sup> For the Munich Olympic Games the American Broadcasting Company issued a guidebook entitled *Munich and the Summer Olympics as Covered Exclusively by the ABC Television Network*. It included a section headed "Ladies of the Evening" in which directions to the various houses of pleasure were provided.<sup>53</sup> The mystique of stock car racing, one writer decided, could be explained best in terms of "speed, sex, heroes, alcohol and adulation."<sup>54</sup> A party of men from New York City spent most of their in-flight time to a game at Pittsburgh discussing the merits of the host city. They rated it "as if they were servicemen on leave, the standards being the availability of good bars and fine women."<sup>55</sup> Cleveland players complained that prior to a championship football game, Baltimore fans had kept them awake all night with their drunken hell-raising.<sup>56</sup> As time for another football weekend approached, the anticipation of a man who planned to attend several games was heightened by the knowledge that "there would be more

to his weekend than football,” in that “there would be as many parties as kickoffs. . . .”<sup>57</sup>

The fun life that came to surround participant sport equaled at least that which revolved around spectator sport. Clothing with sex appeal and the encouragement afforded boy-girl relationships accounted for much of the rage for skiing that erupted during the 1930's. The sports' rapid rise in popularity was the cause of considerable speculation but most agreed that the fetching outfits and social experiences were mainly responsible for what happened. “It is a sociable sport, and healthful,” wrote one observer, “romance rides the snow trains and romance rides the thousands of ski-filled automobiles.”<sup>58</sup> Steve Hannagan was the first to recognize that the wholesomeness of sport could be used to great advantage in the promotion of resort business. The image that he projected for Sun Valley was one of clean fun with strong undercurrents of exciting social life. It was a combination that appealed to large numbers of persons. One part of the lure was the slopes and the other the lodge with its girl watchers and predatory snow bunnies.”<sup>59</sup> It was the mixture that caused managers to value handsome ski instructors who were as competent in social situations as in teaching sport skills.

Hannagan's influence upon the rise of sport went far beyond that of stimulating interest in skiing. As publicist for Miami Beach in the 1920's and 1930's, he made extensive use of sport in promoting the resort. The approach answered the dilemma in which increased leisure placed millions of moderately affluent Americans. Products of social conditioning devised in support of the work ethic, their choices for leisure were either a “melodramatic escape into excitement, or a moralistic flight into self-improvement”.<sup>60</sup> But such was not the case at Miami Beach. Instead of the either/or situation vacationers were permitted to enjoy both worlds and to do so without having to suffer pangs of conscience. Response to the kind of leisure fare offered was so great that Miami Beach emerged as the model playground for middle class Americans. This led to the creation of imitations of the resort, with the result that sport enjoyed widespread promotion by commercial interests.

Hannagan was named to his Miami Beach position by Carl Fisher following Fisher's decision that the resort needed broader-based support than what had been generated in the past. As principal developer of Miami Beach, Fisher, a former automotive parts manufacturer, had first envisaged a resort

that would serve as a retreat for industrial executives, especially those from Detroit. The thing he had in mind was a Palm Beach lifestyle but response to it fell short of expectancy and Fisher opted for a more visible playground. It was then that he asked Hannagan to take charge of publicity.

Hannagan had first entered the field of promotion as director of publicity for the Indianapolis Speedway. Fisher, builder and co-owner of the facility, convinced him to leave his newspaper job and undertake the task of attracting the public to Speedway events, Hannagan's success caused Fisher to turn to him when it became evident that Miami Beach had to be turned into something other than a sedate resort. Whereas widespread participation by residents in such general sports as polo, golf, tennis and yachting had been Fisher's dream, the new plan called for extensive sponsorship of sports spectacles. At the same time, gambling and night life expanded but the thing about Miami Beach that Hannagan stressed was the championship events in boxing, golf, tennis, motorboating and sailing and the regularly featured horse races.<sup>61</sup>

Realizing that sports events could never produce the volume of patronage that Miami Beach needed, Hannagan thought in terms of staple activities that the resort could offer. He determined that the things available and marketable were sun, sand and surf, but instead of simply relying upon the attractiveness of the natural elements, he added sex appeal to the seashore holiday. Pretty girls pictured frolicking in surf and sand appealed to editors across the country, thereby giving Hannagan extensive amounts of free newspaper space. The blending of sex appeal with moral sport popularized both swimming and waterside resorts.

Consideration of the rage for swimming that developed in the decade following 1926 prompted one sportswriter to conclude that newspapers and resort developers had been equally guilty of misusing sport. He wrote: "Newspapers have been using swimmers as circulation pullers just as the real-estate promoting corporations in Florida, California, and New York have been using them (attractive girls in bathing suits) for bait for years."<sup>62</sup> Equally concerned about what he perceived to be the abuse of pure sport, another writer observed:

Swimming as a form of play stands very high. It is unfortunate that so fine a sport should be degraded but the entrance of other elements, such as sex and dress, which detract from its pure recreational value. On the

whole the reviving interest in swimming, bathing and camping, in the Boy Scout movement, in the Camp Fire Girls' movement, and in the whole outing cult in general, is a most encouraging sign. These are healthy forms of play.<sup>63</sup>

Such objections were based on the fear that the image of sport would suffer if practices continued. But, instead of eroding the high regard for sport as a bastion of conventional morality, Hannagan's use of sport not only failed to tarnish it but actually increased the importance of its role in American life.

City fathers decided that Las Vegas had far greater economic potential as a convention center and playground than simply a casino town and set about the task of changing the city's image in the 1960's. Encouragement was lent to the promotion of professional sports events and to the expansion of recreational sports facilities at hotels. But, like Hannagan, those who were responsible for presenting the new Las Vegas to the public knew that sex and night life were important aspects of holiday aspirations. Consequently, one advertisement proclaimed that "golf clubs, tennis rackets and 3,000 chorus girls' legs are moving to the tempo of America's most exciting city."<sup>64</sup> Another offered that "You'll go for Las Vegas Hook, Line, and Sinker" above pictures of fishing, chorus line and golfing.<sup>65</sup>

Las Vegas wasn't alone in recognizing that sport radiated a purity that could very effectively be employed in the leisure business. Increasingly, transportation firms and resort hotels issued descriptive materials which depicted handsome men and attractive girls engaged in social activities and sports. One advertisement was illustrated with a bright red apple among the tennis balls at the feet of a pretty girl. The caption suggested the existence of a modern Garden of Eden: "Paradise is a garden of freedom. To play. To be tempted. And never vanished."<sup>66</sup> Another resort used a tennis court scene that pictured romance with the caption "There is a lot of love in a summer of fun at Host."<sup>67</sup>

The same factors that influenced the resort business eventually impacted the development of real estate generally. One of the country's most successful property developers revealed to a reporter: "I believe in real estate with a mix—with a certain percentage of it oriented toward entertainment and leisure-time industries. In other words, real estate with sex."<sup>68</sup> Sports facilities were among his significant acquisitions. Indicative, also, of the extent to which sport served to alleviate

anxieties about pleasures was the wide-spread use of sports terminology to describe sex play. Dan Greenburg's *Scoring: A Sexual Memoir*<sup>69</sup> explained that first base (Goodnight kiss) and second base (petting outside-the-clothes above-the-waist) were but steps toward intimate victory. Greenburg's book was certainly not a revelation of hidden or obscure truths but simply a description of the known and accepted. So well understood were the double meanings in sports—sex terminology that an airline company could offer golfing vacations under the title “Hook, Slice and Score Golf Packages” with little fear that the central message would be lost. The romantic scene that appeared on the announcement brochure made it clear that one could expect to enjoy more delights than those afforded by sport.<sup>70</sup>

Forty years after Allen had determined that the rage for sport during the Twenties was reflective of an emerging new morality, sport still represented wholesomeness and constructiveness. It did so because throughout the half-century between 1920 and 1970 its future remained tied to the tried and true of past experience rather than to a searching for a better, different or more exciting leisure lifestyle. The effect was one of sport registering tremendous advances in popularity while backing through fifty years of national change. This would have been impossible had traditional values been less important to Americans and sport less a symbol of conventional morality. As a legacy of the nineteenth century reformers, sport also profited greatly from efforts that had linked it with youth. After the nation embraced youth culture and the era of mass consumption began, sport became the focus of increased attention. Thus, only the enthusiasm for sport that came during the Twenties was new. Those things that had characterized involvement in sport during the nineteenth century not only continued to do so in the Twenties but also throughout the next fifty years. In the final analysis, it must be recognized that as modern American life developed sport remained basically an unchanged part of the past.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Sloan Wilson, “Just a Big Rat Race?” *Life* 47 (December 28, 1959) 117-124; “The Ordeal of Fun,” *Look* 33 (July, 1969) 25-34.

<sup>2</sup>While in sport histories there is no explicit reference to an inevitable thesis, the concept is implicit in conclusions reached by every sport historian.

<sup>3</sup>Specific references to sport and consumption can be found in the following places: Preston W. Slosson, *The Great Crusade and After*,

Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971. p. 271; Stewart Chase, "Play", pp. 347-348 in Whither Mankind, edited by Charles A. Beard, New York: Longmans, Green, 1928.

<sup>4</sup>Excellent reviews of the Twenties are offered by: John D. Hicks, *Normalcy and Reaction, 1921-1933*, publication number 23, Service Center for Teachers of History, Washington, D. C.: American Historical Association, 1960; Henry F. May., "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43 (December, 1956) 405-427; Burl Noggle, "The Twenties: A New Historiographical Frontier," *Journal of American History* 53 (September, 1966) 299-314.

<sup>5</sup>*Only Yesterday*, New York: Bantam Books, 1959.

<sup>6</sup>George E. Mowry, editor, *The Twenties*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Allen, *Only Yesterday*, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup>The social scientists' view of youth culture is that of a subculture in which beliefs and activities distinguish members of the group from the rest of society. In this paper, however, concern is not for what sets youth apart but rather the extent to which desire to identify with youth resulted in widespread adoption of the thing perceived to be most symbolic of youth-sport. A basic understanding of youth culture itself can be gained by reading: Gary Schwartz, "Youth Culture: An Anthropological Approach," *Addison-Wesley Module in Anthropology*, No. 17, 1972, pp. 1-47. The instrumentality of sport to youth and the subsequent impact of the union of youth and sport upon the development of political systems and social institutions is considered by Ortega y Gasset in "The Sportive Origin of the State." *History As A System and Other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History*, New York: Norton, 1961 c 1941, pp. 13-40. While this paper was in the stage of galley proof, two major works were published that should be brought to the attention of readers: Paula S. Foss, *The Damned And The Beautiful, American Youth in the 1920's*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977; Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage; Adolescence in America, 1970 to the Present*, New York: Basic Books, 1977.

<sup>9</sup>Morality is that behavior which society accepts and thereby makes respectable. Respectable behavior never has absolutely defined limits. But, while the outer limits are constantly modified by pressures resulting from social changes, a core of basic values have determined the centrality of acceptable conduct. They exist through convention and continue unchanged throughout long periods of time. Conventional morality, then, as used in this paper, is that behavior which was made respectable in the nineteenth century and remained a force in shaping conduct and practice during the twentieth century. Viewed in this way, the matter under consideration is that of sport as expression of a mainstream morality. For a discussion of conventional morality see: Jack D. Douglas, "Deviance and Respectability: The Social Construction of Moral Meanings," pp. 3-30, in *Deviance and Respectability*, Jack D. Douglas, ed., New York: Basic Books, 1970.

<sup>10</sup>Fred Erisman, "The Strenuous Life in Practice: The School and Sports Stories of Ralph Henry Barbour", *Rocky Mountain Social Science Journal* 7 (April, 1970) 29-37.

<sup>11</sup>Sebastian deGrazia, *Of Time, Work and Leisure*, New York: Anchor Books, 1964, p. 319, "In the English speaking industrial democracies 'Youth Movements' tend to be contained within the ethos of a sporting world associated with industrialism and high consumption. . . ." Ruel Denney, *The Astonished Muse*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957. p. 127.

<sup>12</sup>For an extended discussion see: "Growing Up in America," pp. 570-582 in *America As a Civilization* by Max Lerner, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957.

<sup>13</sup>Lerner, *America As A Civilization*, p. 613. "How Old Is Young?" *New York Times*, August 9, 1971, p. 50. At a White House Conference on aging the major deterrent to securing a focus of attention on the needs of the elderly was that the "country projects a youth-oriented culture. . ." Parade section, *Springfield Republican*, November 28, 1971,

5:1. For an account of the use of sport to demonstrate that age is properly determined by physical capacity and mental attitude rather than chronological years see: Gary Romberg, "The Old Boys Are Still the Best," *Sports Illustrated* 30 (March 31, 1969) 36-41.

<sup>14</sup>W. Andrew Achenbaum, "The Obsolescence of Old Age in America, 1865-1914," *Journal of Social History* 8 (Fall, 1974) 48-62.

<sup>15</sup>Denney, *Astonished Muse*, p. 99. The author feels that the campaign of the Coca-Cola Company may have been the most effective one in advertising history.

<sup>16</sup>John R. Tunis, "A Nation of Onlookers?" *Atlantic Monthly* 160 (August, 1937) 141-150.

<sup>17</sup>The foundation for professional football was constructed during the 1930's. Marshall has been given full credit for innovations taken from the college spectacle. He also shares with George Halas honor for institution of rules that made the game a more exciting one.

<sup>18</sup>Sport as youths' domain ended but not the rage for youthful sports. Professional recreation leaders recommended practically the same activities for the 65-year and over age group as they did for those in ages 20-35. Harold Meyer, "The Adult Cycle," *Annals, American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 313 (September, 1957) 58-67.

<sup>19</sup>"The Grand Old Resort Hotels," *Life* 71 (July 16, 1971) 42-52; "Paradise Regained," *Fortune* 13 (January, 1936) 34-45. Harrison Rhodes began his discussion of "American Holidays," *Harper's* 129 (September, 1914) 536-547, with the observation: "To pursue pleasure while you pretend to hunt health is one of the oldest and happiest subterfuges of the holiday-maker." In describing what various watering places had to offer clients, a writer offered: "Health is provided in California-size packages, not only by the waters but by swimming, hiking, riding, tennis and the inevitable golf." Frederick Lewis, "November Vacations at Home and Abroad," *Woman's Home Companion* 56 (October 1929), 20.

<sup>20</sup>W. L. George, "Humanity at Palm Beach," *Harper's* 150 (January, 1925) 213-222.

"Lewis, "November Vacations . . .," p. 20.

<sup>22</sup>According to Frederick L. Allen, *Since Yesterday*, New York: Bantam, 1965, p. 3, the sun-tan craze was in the flush of novelty in 1929.

<sup>23</sup>Credit for starting the sun-tan craze has also been given to American expatriates who lived on the French Riviera. Their motivations were: "desire for some way of life that had at least the appearance of youth" and a "life of the senses—a lost innocence." In all, "the tan cult is passionately concerned with the image and youth." John Ash, "The Meaning of Suntan," *New Society* (August 1, 1974) 278-297.

"Advertisements in the *Woman's Home Companion*, July, 1917, and for the same month in 1928 and 1938 illustrate the change.

<sup>25</sup>Even the value of the European practice of heliotherapy (not sunbathing but solar treatment) was suspect in 1918. "Dr. Sun," *Literary Digest* 58 (August 31, 1918) 26. The change in regard for sunbathing can be seen in the following articles: "Dangers of the Sun-Bath," *Literary Digest* 115 (January 21, 1933) 24 and E. K. Gubins. "The Seashore Can Make You Well," *Hygeia* 22 (September, 1944) 668-694.

<sup>26</sup>Lee Edson, "Warning: Prolonged Exposure to the Sun Can Be Harmful To Your Health," *New York Times*, August 8, 1971, 10:2.

<sup>27</sup>While it is unlikely that evidence in support of this point is needed, the following items might be of interest to readers. Roger Kahn, "Nice Guys Finish Last," *Nation* 185 (September 7, 1957) 108-110; Frederick C. Howe, "Leisure," *Survey* 31 (January 3, 1914) 415-446; Edward A. Ross, "Adult Recreation as a Social Problem," *American Journal of Sociology* 23 (1918) 516-528; Theodore P. Green, "America's Heroes," *The Changing Models of Success in American Magazines*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1970; Roger Kahn, "Money, Muscles—and Myths," *Nation* 185 (July 6, 1957) 11.

<sup>28</sup>Frank Deford, "Religion in Sport," *Sports Illustrated* 44 (April 19, 1976) 88-102.

- <sup>29</sup>Jonathan Segal, "Sports" *Esquire* 79 (May, 1973) 60-64.
- <sup>30</sup>To date two complete treatments of religion in sports have been published: William R. Hogan, "Sin and Sports," pp. 121-218 in *Motivation in Play, Games and Sports*, edited by Ralph Slovenko and James A. Knight, Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1967; Frank Deford, "Religion in Sport," a three-part series in *Sports Illustrated* 44: I, "Religion in Sport," April 19, 1976, pp. 88-102; II, "The Word According to Tom," April 26, 1976, pp. 54-69; III, "Reaching for the Stars," May 3, 1976, 42-69.
- <sup>31</sup>Segal, "Sports," p. 64.
- <sup>32</sup>William C. White, "Straws in the Wind, Bye, Bye Blue Laws," *Scribner's* 94 (August, 1933), 107-109; John A. Lucas, "The Unholy Experiment," *Pennsylvania History* 38 (April, 1971) 163-175.
- <sup>33</sup>Gambling on horse races was legal only in Kentucky and Maryland in 1917 and estimates of the amount of wagering are not available. In 1940, state governments were receiving 55 million dollars from parimutuel betting and 8.5 million spectators attended thoroughbred races. Thirty years later, revenues to state treasuries from wagering on horse races amounted to 500 million dollars and 64 million spectators attended events at thoroughbred and standardbred tracks.
- <sup>34</sup>Kahn, "Money, Muscles, and Myths", p. 11.
- <sup>35</sup>Joseph Durso, *The All-American Dollar*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971, p. 274
- <sup>36</sup>David J. Pivar, *Purity Crusade: Sexual Morality and Social Control, 1868-1900*, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973, p. 32.
- <sup>37</sup>Charles E. Rosenberg, "Sexuality, Class and Role in 19th Century America," *American Quarterly* 25 (May, 1973) pp. 131-153.
- <sup>38</sup>Ronald G. Walters "The Erotic South: Civilization and Sexuality in American Abolitionism," *American Quarterly* 25 (May, 1973) 177-201. Richard Hildreth's, *The Slave or Memoirs of Archy Moore*, 1836, was a fictional picture of Southern sexual practices that aroused the moral indignation of the abolitionists. It did not, however, approach in either popularity or influence Stowe's novel of Christian piety. Evan Brandstadter, "Uncle Tom and Archy Moore: The Anti-slavery Novel as Ideological Symbol," *American Quarterly* 26 (May, 1974) 160-174. For an account of reform interest in sport see: Bernard Mergen, "The Discovery of Children's Play," *American Quarterly* 27 (October, 1975) 399-420; Patricia A. Vertinsky, "The Effect of Changing attitudes toward Sexual Morality upon the Promotion of Physical Education for Women in Nineteenth Century America," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, VII (December, 1976) 26-38.
- <sup>39</sup>Walters, "Erotic South," pp. 190-194.
- <sup>40</sup>Pivar, *Purity Crusade*, pp. 233-236.
- <sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 3-7
- <sup>42</sup>John Lucas, "A Prelude to the Rise of Sport: America, 1850-60," *Quest* 2 (Winter, 1968) 50-75.
- <sup>43</sup>Walters, "Erotic South", p. 197.
- <sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 198.
- <sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup>Pivar, *Purity Crusade*, p. 6. For examinations of the problems and the challenges that they presented see: Rowland Berthoff, "The American Social Order: A Conservative Hypothesis," *American Historical Review* 65 (April, 1960) 495-514; Michael Kammen, *People of Paradox: An Inquiry Concerning the Origins of American Civilization*, New York: Knopf, 1972; Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1967.
- <sup>48</sup>Pivar, *Purity Crusade*, pp. 233-236.
- <sup>49</sup>"Scoreboard," *Sports Illustrated* 38 (March 19, 1973) 21.
- <sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>Lesley Oelsner, "World of the City Prostitute is a Tough and Lonely Place," *New York Times*, August 9, 1971, 33:5.

<sup>52</sup>Charles Winick and Paul Kinsie, *The Lively Commerce*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971, p. 148.

<sup>53</sup>"The Wide World of Munich," *Sports Illustrated* 37 (August 21, 1972) 9.

<sup>54</sup>William McIlwain, "Speed, Sex and Heroes," *Reader's Digest* (November, 1973) 289.

<sup>55</sup>Bruce Bakrenburg, *My Little Brother's Coming Tomorrow*, New York: Putnam's, 1971. p. 13.

<sup>56</sup>Bernie Parrish, *They Call It a Crime*, New York: Dial Press, 1971, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup>Dan Jenkins, *Saturday's America*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1970, p. 63.

<sup>58</sup>Daniel Rockford, "New England Ski Trails," *National Geographic* 70 (November, 1936) 657 and 663.

<sup>59</sup>David Boroff, "A View of Skiers As a Subculture," pp. 453-455 in *Sport, Culture and Society*, John Loy and Gerald Kenyon, editors, Toronto, Canada: Macmillan, 1969.

<sup>60</sup>Irwin Edman, "On American Leisure," *Harper's* 156 (January, 1928) 221.

<sup>61</sup>Polly Redford, *Billion-Dollar Sunbar: A Biography of Miami Beach*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970; Dickson Hartwell, "Prince of Press Agents," *Colliers* 120 (November 22, 1947) 75-78; Joe McCarthy, "The Man Who Invented America's Winter Playground, Miami Beach," *American Heritage* 27 (December, 1975) 64-70+.

<sup>62</sup>Paul Gallico, *Farewell to Sport*, New York: Knopf, 1938, p. 246.

<sup>63</sup>G.T.W., "The Play of a Nation," *Scientific Monthly* 13 (October, 1921) 255.

<sup>64</sup>*Sports Illustrated* 35 (October 25, 1971) 10.

<sup>65</sup>*Sports Illustrated* 38 (February 5, 1973) unpagged.

<sup>66</sup>*Sports Illustrated* 35 (November 8, 1971) Wes, 8.

<sup>67</sup>*New York Times*. July 9, 1972, Dec. 10, p. 10.

<sup>68</sup>Durso, All-American Dollar, p. 204.

<sup>69</sup>Doubleday Company, 1972, no page.

<sup>70</sup>Printed for American Airlines.