

The Public Acceptance of Sports in Dallas, 1880-1930

*Harry Jebson, Jr.**

Whether modern America emerged from a search for order, from the complaints of the average citizens during the depression of the mid-1890's, or from the machinations of businessmen who tried to control competitive forces, the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sought both new and different ideas, systems, and values in establishing an improved living environment. The industrial revolution changed the nation's life style and created new economic leaders, new values, and new fears. It also caused Americans to emphasize many aspects of life which previously had played a minor role in society.

As the transformation from an agrarian into an industrialized nation occurred, many leaders tried to establish order and to prevent discontent. But the inability to find answers to some of the critical questions created by industrialism brought a change in the philosophy of government at all levels. Government's role gradually shifted away from a passive, Darwinian laissez-faire toward an active, problem-solving role in society. While the dominant Protestant mind of the nineteenth century stressed the competitive nature of man, the reformer of the early twentieth century attempted to ameliorate some of society's ills through the collective wisdom of the public sector rather than continued dependence on the will of the individual, of the corporation, or of natural laws.¹

By the first decade of the twentieth century many prominent Americans, thinking that problems could be solved through activity and experimentation sought new institutions, laws and guidelines which would solve specific problems. In business, the enforcement of anti-trust laws ostensibly stimulated renewed competition in industries where monopoly dictated price and survival. Women tried to loosen the tight reins which men had over their lives. Suffrage, expanded property rights, and great protection at work as well as in the divorce courts are examples of hard earned victories won by those who fought

*Mr. Jebson is an Associate Professor in the Department of History and Director of Urban Studies at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. The author wishes to express his appreciation for a grant from Organized Research Funds of the College of Arts and Sciences at Texas Tech University.

for an expanded role for women. The new dynamics of government, generally referred to as “progressivism,” also found a positive role for sports in the public sector. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Americans increasingly participated in sports, but they did so with their own resources. Gentlemen raised horses, many groups participated in tavern games and recreations, and a broad spectrum of people enjoyed the excitement and profits of the cockfights. Golf, tennis, and baseball, among several other sports, flourished in the late nineteenth century under the auspices of private promoters or with the resources of those who played.² The public sector, by and large, played a small role in sports. But during the first decade of the twentieth century, a significant alteration of policy began at the urban level. Sport became a positive force which might allay discontent. Cities across the nation began to provide athletic fields, equipment, training, leadership, and encouragement for a broad spectrum of the population. Though the initial goal was an improvement of living conditions and upward mobility for those living in the deteriorating sections of American cities, the movement soon broadened to encompass nearly every social and economic group which lived in the metropolis.

The growth of sports in the relatively young city of Dallas, Texas shows that this phenomena was a national event, occurring in western and southern cities concurrently with its appearance in the older American cities. Dallas began in 1842 when John Neely Bryan established a trading post on the Trinity River. By the Civil War, the struggling village had less than 1,000 residents. And rapid expansion did not begin until 1872 when a state legislator duped the Houston and Texas Central Railroad into Dallas. Competing with several other north Texas communities, Dallas had less than 3,000 citizens when the railroads came. By the turn of the century however, the population had grown to 43,638 and by 1920 its 158,976 residents made it the second largest city in the state.

Dallas’ prosperity came from the rich cotton farming lands which surrounded the city. Businessmen within the city successfully exploited the hinterland and created a growing metropolis. By the late 1880’s, the State Fair of Texas, reputedly the largest agricultural gathering in the Southwest, had brought implement dealers, seed companies, and machinery production to Dallas rather than to Marshall, Sherman, Corsicana, or the many other competitors which once fought for the supremacy of the north Texas plains. By the First World War, Dallas bankers had customers throughout the region. The milling, processing, and selling of cotton had concentrated in the city, making Dallas the business center of agriculture in north Texas.³

As Dallas became the regional agricultural center, it also became the regional center for many sports. Dallas men participated in or watched horse racing,

foot racing, bicycle racing, swimming, baseball, football, rugby, bowling, boxing, wrestling, billiards, golf, tennis, dog baiting, cockfighting, water polo, and even exhibitions of “balloon jumping” and “roller skating polo.” Many of these sports gained a foothold and became a permanent part of the sport scene in Dallas while a few met a well deserved death. Though Dallasites dabbled with a variety of events, three—horse racing, boxing, and cockfighting—brought sports under public scrutiny and into controversy. All three of these popular sports had strong elements of gambling and drinking connected with them. Traditional evangelical elements which were tightly organized and vocal within Texas sought to eliminate both gaming and alcohol and as a result of that fervor attacked horse racing, cockfighting, and prize fighting. Despite the increasing attempts at the state level to eliminate these activities, Dallas civic leaders, aware of the profits which these sports accrued to their city, fought to preserve them.

Horse racing had become a staple of the Dallas sports scene as early as the 1850's. The Dallas Jockey Club was organized in 1869. Through the next thirty years, various jockey and driving clubs generally led by a social elite, the wealthy merchants and business leaders, such as the Slaughter family and W. H. Gaston, conducted racing meets. Each year after 1886, the State Fair Association, made up of the most prominent civic leaders in Dallas, sponsored an extensive October meet. Some of the outstanding horses in the Midwest, South, and Southwest met at the Fair Park track. The great pacer, Dan Patch, appeared in Dallas in 1904 and broke the track record for the mile.⁴

Attendance at and interest in racing events varied with the season and the economic situation, but one day attendance estimated at close to 20,000 at the 1888 State Fair attested to a strong interest in racing. Sportswriters sometimes complained about the paucity of Dallasites in the crowds at other times during the year but lauded the attendance by visitors to the city. These people, of course, spent much money in Dallas. The importance of racing to the Dallas economy could be seen in 1891 when the president of the State Fair Association received a salary of \$5,000 in order to reorganize the racing department and rebuild the stables which had been destroyed by fire in the spring. At no other time had this honorific position been salaried.⁵

When the state legislature outlawed race track betting in 1903, directors morbidly talked of closing the entire State Fair. Profits in fact declined precipitously, and the city bailed out the State Fair Association by buying their property in 1904. Betting became legal again in 1905, but another four year battle ensued over the issue. Directors of the fair combined with breeders to propose alternatives to betting with bookmakers, most notably parimutual wagering, but local evangelical ministers branded the fair “a sink hole of iniquity.” Pressured by religious groups, Texas legislators shut the door on race track gambling in 1909. In a city where conservative religious ideas held sway, the

Directors of the State Fair fought for a sport which had an unsavory reputation. These businessmen realized that the "sport of kings" attracted many people to Dallas. These people in turn spent money in the city.⁶

Cockfighting brought a large and enthusiastic following to Dallas. When a large "main" was held, as it was at least once a year, cock breeders came from throughout the Southwest and as far north as St. Louis. In fact, the rivalry between St. Louis and Dallas breeders became a drawing attraction which brought the "sporting element" to Dallas. The cocking mains often ran for nearly two weeks. Several "main" fights between organized groups would be held daily. These highly publicized duels between breeders from different cities or between individual breeders received broad coverage complete with a description of the weight, record, and reputation of the birds as well as the odds and amounts bet on that day's main. "Hack" fights between birds of lesser quality were held at night and though they drew a smaller crowd, betting interest remained high.⁷

Though cockfighting undoubtedly started in the 1840's when the settlement of the Dallas region began, organized cockfighting in Dallas appeared by 1883. Cockfighting proved to be an event of considerable interest to the populace of Texas. By 1888 the sport had achieved a degree of legitimacy in Texas cities. The Dallas *Morning News* reported that

There is hardly one of the older counties in the state that one or more persons do not raise game chickens and fight them. Game chickens, race horses, and fine dogs always . . . had warm places in the hearts of Southern gentlemen. And the same feeling seems to live in the hearts of their descendants.⁸

A state association of breeders was organized in Dallas in January, 1888. No Dallasites won positions on the elected board of the association, probably because of the lack of success which Dallas breeders had in that year's "main." St. Louis and Marshall, Texas, dominated that year's events.⁹

Prize money and attendance at cockfights remained high. One breeder won \$2,500 on a main in 1886 while \$1,000 on a main was not an uncommon amount. More commonly \$25 per fight and \$250 on the main was bet. In April of 1888 the writer for the Dallas *News* noted "plenty of people, good looking birds, and loose money appears around the cocking center." Elected officials, civil leaders, "sporting elements," and almost any other type of citizen could be found at the various pits through the city during a "main." People from Marshall, Eastland, Fort Worth, Cleburne, Waco, Paris, and Houston brought birds to Dallas. Though the sport had been barred in much of the country and was under attack in others, most Dallas people seemed to have no compunctions about cockfighting. Again it took state legislative action in 1905 to end, at least legally, cockfighting in Dallas.¹⁰

While horse racing and cockfighting seemed to attract regional audiences, prize fighting, a sport barred throughout much of the country, evoked a popular response within Dallas. Bouts, generally, but not always, using the Marquis of Queensberry rules, featured local fighters as well as a sprinkling of touring fighters from other sections of the country. Most informal prize fights took place in the back rooms of Dick Flanagan and Mike Conleys' saloons, in the Opera House, in a couple of halls on Commerce Street, and eventually in the quarters of the Dallas Amateur Athletic Association. People from all walks of life encouraged the "exhibitions" at Conley's and the bouts at the halls also attracted a motley crowd.¹¹

When the Dallas Amateur Athletic Association and the Lone Star Athletic Association formed in 1889 and 1890 respectively, they sought the "better" fighting crowds and tried an entrance fee to exclude from the audience "many of the toughs who would otherwise have been there." Though this elitist tinge appeared, the sport remained a popular spectator pastime. Bouts with black boxers attracted crowds of both races, and inter-racial fights occurred as late as 1892, a time when racial separation had been widely accepted.¹²

Boxing caused yet another confrontation between sports advocates and Texas law. Ministerial associations, among other groups, had successfully promoted laws to limit prize fighting. But the amateur associations insisted that these were "professional displays of the noble art of self-defense."¹³ In 1891, when a constable stopped a fight at Oak Cliff Park, the crowd contributed the money to pay the fines against the boxers so that they would fight. Juries in Dallas, as well as in other Texas cities, which heard cases about illegal boxing generally acquitted defendants. In the death of a local boxer, Dallas Judge John H. Brown, ruled that no foul play had occurred. Another judge refused an indictment because he found the law to be inconsistent with the Texas constitution.¹⁴

The Dallas city council, in a split decision which required the mayor to vote, refused to pass an ordinance prohibiting both boxing matches and sparring exhibitions. But a crisis developed in 1895 when a local promoter, Dan Stuart, treasurer of the Lone Star Athletic Club, tried to bring the James J. Corbett-Bob Fitzsimmons heavyweight championship fight to Dallas. The city already had begun construction of a jerry-built stadium which reputedly would seat 50,000 when a special session of the state legislature, called by Governor Charles Culberson, outlawed "pugilistic encounters" and placed a two year minimum sentence on offenders. Dallasites begrudgingly obeyed the law.¹⁵

Despite the tainted reputation of these sports, Dallas citizens encouraged their existence. Businessmen, saloon keepers, and bookmakers directly profited from the people who came to Dallas to see horse races and cockfights. Many

Dallasites cheered the pugilists both in tavern and club fights. By the 1890's just as Dallas had become the regional center for agriculture in north Texas, it had become the sport center. Though horse racing, cockfighting, and boxing all experienced the wrath of "moralists," Dallas, a city with a saloon for every 126 residents in 1890, promoted the sports. It took action from the rurally dominated state legislature to eliminate or control these activities. It is an interesting paradox that found the profitability of sport in late nineteenth century Dallas derived in part from the constituents of rural legislators who sought to prohibit such sport throughout the Lone Star State.¹⁶

During the same time period, participatory sports increased gradually throughout Dallas. Organized sporting activities through the 1880's and 1890's seemed to be dominated by the middle and upper classes. An 1886 sample of men who participated in organized games or athletic association activities shows that 78 percent of the athletes held clerical jobs, or were small business managers or professionals. None held jobs which could be classified as semi-skilled or laborer.¹⁷

Though all sports seem to be represented in the city, baseball became the dominant organized activity. Rivalries which developed included neighborhood teams, "Live Oak Jokers," business clubs, "Texas Spring Bed Company" team, and citywide teams, made up of the best players most notably the Dallas "Clippers." By 1896 a thriving amateur league competed with the minor league Dallas entry in the Texas League for fan interest and support.

Professional baseball had come to Dallas in 1888 when Leon Vendig, a local businessman, entered a team in the newly organized Texas League. While all other franchises folded the first year, the Dallas Hams persisted and ended up claiming two league titles. Though this franchise had financial problems through the early 1890's, it became solid after 1895; and Dallas had an entry in the Texas League through the years until the Washington Senators moved to the Metroplex.¹⁸

Sports in several ways benefitted the people of Dallas. Quality bicycle and horse racing tracks solidified the city's position on the popular fair circuit. The growth of Oak Cliff, a fashionable residential suburb, came about because the Dallas Hams ball park was in that section of the city. J. T. Marsalis, a local investor, built a suburban railroad to carry fans to the ball park. He then subdivided land near the ball park and along the rail lines.

Baseball and football in particular inspired a significant booster activity in the city. The State Fair Association in 1888 hired the Dallas Hams to tour the upper South and Midwest after the Texas-Southern League folded. The tour was to advertise the State Fair.¹⁹ The Dallas heavyweight football team became the matter of pride within the city. When the team met and conquered

the University of Texas team in 1896 they were greeted with brass band and laudatory speeches. The most common cheer among the supporters of Dallas football proclaimed loyalty to the team and city:

What's the matter with the Blue?
What's the matter with the White?
What's the matter with Dallas?
Is she all right?
Is she all right; well, I should scream
There are no flies on the Dallas team. . . .²⁰

In any occasions where a Dallas team competed with Fort Worth or Houston teams there developed a demand for Dallas' supremacy. The economic rivalries which existed between Texas cities were all glamourized and magnified by the athletic rivalries.

Despite a growing enthusiasm for sports in late nineteenth century Dallas, local government and civic leaders often created obstacles which limited the informal participation of citizens in sports. Sunday blue laws kept many working class people from playing on their one day off work. Though Texas League games were played on Sunday, magistrates tried to enforce local laws which forbade baseball on Sunday. One judge indicated that he would continue enforcement as long as "gambling and other illegal practices attend it." The Colored Ministerial Alliance petitioned for tight enforcement of blue laws. And in 1892 the city council refused to allow a private park owner to open his facilities to the public on Sunday. Late nineteenth century Dallas, which did not have the large ethnic blocs which were evident in south Texas cities, most notably San Antonio, did not have a continental Sunday. It was far more dominated by evangelical Protestantism's demands for a strict Sabbath observation²¹

More direct and far sweeping attempts to regulate play came from civic leaders. The Board of Directors of the YMCA prohibited boxing on their premises. When challenged on the validity of promoting football but not boxing, they simply dismissed the questioner from the meeting. Dallas, which acquired its first park in 1876, enforced a passive use policy in the parks. In 1886, the city council refused to allow swings in City Park. They relented in 1888 and allowed two swings in a non-conspicuous area. In 1892 the council refused tennis courts in the parks and refused the Turnverein a tax exempt status, claiming it was not a non-profit organization.²²

The most obvious attempt to restrict active play came when the city council formulated its first extensive set of park useage rules. In 1894 the council provided for fines up to \$100 for people who committed any of the following offenses: playing baseball or cricket, throwing stones or missiles, using lewd language, standing on the grass, or soliciting prostitutes within the city parks.

The equation of baseball with prostitution stands as a glaring example of the city's bifurcated view of active recreation and sports. Civic leaders in the 1890's believed that sports belonged in the private sector of the economy and that the public sector did not have responsibility to provide resources or support for any participatory sports.²³

Those who tried to stifle sports in the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries attempted to preserve their own concepts of America. The first group, the evangelicals, worked assiduously for legislated morality. Seeking to stamp out gambling, alcohol consumption, and Sunday activities, they also succeeded in removing gambling from horse racing and in forcing prizefighting and cockfighting into less visible locations. The second group believed in small, limited power, local government. These people kept sport in the private sector. While there is no evidence that either group considered sport by itself to be an absolute evil, they did perceive them to have limited utilitarian value and to carry some undesirable traits.

A public attitude and policy which viewed sports positively emerged in Dallas as the first decade of the twentieth century unfolded. The reversal came as Dallasilites began to solve social and economic problems through government action. Instead of being an obstacle to salvation or a hindrance to law and order, sports, in the rapidly growing city of Dallas, became a solution to the ill effects of inner city life. The reversal in attitudes came as the city came to grips with the least desirable aspects of urban life which had been created by the increase in industry. Dallas experienced rapid geographic expansion and population increases in the first decade of the twentieth century. The city also developed a substantial industrial core. The city's residential regions had expanded northward but still lacked many urban services, most notably parks. A highly centralized region of poverty, surrounding the cotton mills to the south of the business district, festered. The city council argued, changed often, and accomplished little. The treasury sat virtually empty, and little actual leadership could be found. Dallas had neither a political boss nor a machine but it also had little direction.²⁴

Civic leaders throughout the nation had become aware of the new form of urban government which Galveston had installed after the destructive hurricane of 1900. The city commission was seen as a system of urban management which did not depend on a large unwieldy deliberative body. Rather it concentrated responsibility into the hands of a few, selected persons who would be both deliberative assembly and administrative officers. Dallasites in 1906 rose up against their ineffective government and installed a city commission. The newly elected commission in Dallas placed much of its responsibilities into strong advisory boards. These appointive bodies wielded considerable power within the community since they consisted largely of influential businessmen. One of these boards, the Park and Recreation Board,

became a prime agent in creating enthusiasm for using sports as a means of social control within the burgeoning city.

Members of this new board, led by Emil Fretz, recognized the increasing problems of life in the "Cotton Mills district." Housing without plumbing, generally dilapidated conditions, rampant vice, and ill health persisted. Fretz and the editor of the *Dallas News*, George B. Dealey, led a drive to create a playground in that region. The idea that recreation and play could be a positive force had gained credence through the work of the Playground Association of America and "progressives" like Jane Addams and Jacob Riis, both of whom believed that some of the problems of inner city America could be alleviated through constructive recreation programs. Precedents also existed within Dallas for the institution of programs of social betterment by the public sector. In 1888 the city had received some animals and promptly opened a small zoo. Beginning in the 1890's, free concerts were regularly given in City Park. And after the turn of the century the council had allowed motion pictures in the parks.²⁵

Fretz and Dealey, who believed that playgrounds might defuse potential civil disorder and slow urban decay, crystallized the attitude that public parks should be active instead of passive places. Flowers and shrubbery looked fine, but the public's domain had to be useable and available. The Park and Recreation Board purchased four and a half acres in the Cotton Mills district in early 1909, and by Thanksgiving Day the facility was dedicated. Trinity Play Park had facilities for baseball, basketball, track, and tennis. The board salaried a director for the playground, whose responsibilities included teaching sports, running the playground for younger children, and supervising a sanitation program complete with shower facilities which had been included in the field-house.²⁶

The "Cotton Mills" playground provided a model for the growth of the park system during the next ten years. Concomitantly with the evolution of playgrounds, the Park and Recreation Board had recognized the need to expand the number of parks in the constantly growing city. All new parks initiated after the building of the "Cotton Mills" project included active play centers including equipment and athletic fields. But before the city commission and the Park and Recreation Board increased the number of parks, they hired George Kessler, noted landscape architect from Kansas City, to prepare a comprehensive park plan. Kessler's broadly conceived scheme adamantly urged that large park properties be considered playgrounds so that "children obtain a very much greater measure of freedom on their play."²⁷

A Playground Association, backed by Dealey's newspaper and using Kessler's plan as its fuel, carried out an intense public information campaign

in support of a \$500,000 bond issue which would allow the purchase and development of new park sites. The bond issue passed and all of the properties developed with the \$500,000, except Turtle Creek Boulevard, had wading pools, playground apparatus, tennis courts, playfields, and baseball diamonds. Cliff Park, formerly a private park in recently annexed Oak Cliff, had a 400' by 125' swimming pool.²⁸

Though Emil Fretz had been the early catalyst in creating a favorable opinion toward public financed sports, Foster Jacoby made athletics a part of everyday life for Dallas young people from all sections of the city. Jacoby, who ran track at the University of Texas and at Vanderbilt University, came to Dallas in 1919 as Supervisor of Playgrounds. He left a coaching job in Nashville to return to his native Texas. By 1920 this dynamic young man had been named Director of Parks and Recreation, placing him in a position superior to Superintendent of Parks, W. R. Tietze. Tietze, a horticulturist, remained as Superintendent until he retired in 1933.²⁹

This personnel shift indicated that Dallas had committed itself to an active promotion of sports. Recreation leaders ran programs in football, baseball, basketball, track, tennis, and swimming. Athletic meets between parks and playgrounds generated fierce rivalries in tennis, swimming, baseball, horseshoes, croquet, and track. Additional staff taught drama, music, hiking, games, crafts, and dancing. By 1921 Jacoby had increased the number of play sites to thirty parks and playgrounds (including some rented grounds), two large swimming pools, and school grounds during summer months. With abundant resources throughout the city, children from all types of families took part in the play and sports programs provided by the city. Over 274,000 swam at Cliff Park in one year. By 1922 the Park Department had twenty-eight tennis courts, six football gridirons, ten basketball courts, five soccer fields, and numerous baseball diamonds. Organized baseball leagues which used park fields had 108 teams with over 2,250 players. An additional 2,800 permits were issued for games played between teams outside of normal league schedules. Tennis courts were in constant demand and football gridirons were reserved throughout the fall.³⁰

Between 1909 when Trinity Play Park was built and the depression of 1929, voters in Dallas approved the issuance of park bonds totaling \$3,125,000. Each of the six bond programs included additional sports facilities. Park department expenditures increased manyfold. Dallas spent nearly \$75,000 on parks in 1910 but only 2 percent of that went into recreation programs. By 1922 the city spent over \$197,000, and much of that money went toward organized play and sports. Jacoby, who was a gregarious man increased property holdings of the Park Department through substantial donations by prominent citizens. In 1924, for example, the philanthropic Edward Tenison family donated 105 acres which were developed as the first public golf course

in the city, complete with clubhouse and grass greens. Throughout the 1920's the expansion of sports participation had become an accepted part of the Dallas Park Department even though it carried a significant price tag.³¹

The Dallas school system also responded to sports in a similar fashion. Evidence of high school football dates back to 1900. Organized sports grew slowly until 1909 when the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs offered to donate half of the salary for a supervisor of physical education. But the school board sharply split when it discussed this controversial issue. When the board voted 3-3 on a motion to employ a supervisor, he was hired on the vote of the presiding member. In addition to that salary, however, the only money appropriated by the school board for sports was \$150 for schools to rent sport fields plus \$10 per school for equipment. Support for athletic teams in the high schools had to come from booster club or parents associations.³²

The organization of the Triangle Athletic League, later called the Public School Athletic League, broke the barriers and thrust the Dallas School system squarely into athletics. This club, which was to be comprised of fifth, sixth, and seventh grade boys, used sports as a means of social control. Membership was encouraged because it would create "all-around" people. The 1,300 students who joined paid a five cent dues and had to sign a heavily moralistic agreement that

As a member of the Triangle Athletic League I shall refrain from the use of tobacco in any form for a period of one year from the date of signing this pledge and to refrain from the use of profain [sic] language for the same length of time.³³

Girls became only "honorary" non-participating members. Yet their presence at athletic events was encouraged by those who believed that girls would improve the behavior of boys.

Throughout the 1910's interest in sports increased in the schools. Teachers complained that more money had to be spent on sports. The need for more space caused the school board and Park and Recreation Board to begin joint planning and purchase of properties that they could share. The school board faced an increasing volume of controversial athletic matters including injuries, disruptive behavior at games, and requests for time off from classes to participate in and attend games.³⁴

By 1915 Superintendent of Schools Justin Kimbell advocated an expanded sports program. He believed that sports would prepare American boys for a war which had recently begun. It would benefit girls since many "grow to womanhood with flabby muscles and undeveloped bodies that have never had an hour of vigorous, hearty, red-blooded, wholebodied exercise in their lives."³⁵ The school board continued to wrestle with sports problems. New

schools had gymnasiums and additional supervisors of physical education were hired. The new high school in north Dallas had a swimming pool and excellent sports facilities. A full range of interscholastic sport was available to high school students by the 1920's though all were funded through booster clubs.³⁶

In January of 1926 board members, questioning the academic achievement levels of athletes, asked for a full report on athletics. The report showed that athletes performed adequately in classes, but that the financial stability of booster clubs had deteriorated. In July of 1927 Alex Spence, a board member, stated that "when it costs more to play a game than gate receipts amount to, there is something wrong."³⁷ Charges that students at local high schools were coerced into buying game tickets surfaced. A committee of the school board studied the problem and recommended that the school board assume responsibility for athletics. Debts in excess of \$6,200 existed in the booster clubs and rather than accept the possibility that interscholastic sports be discontinued, the school board absorbed the deficit and began to operate sports. Though the 1930 school board budget promised residents of Dallas a surplus in the athletic fund, the budget failed to include the salaries of the full-time athletic director, his assistant, as well as the coaches. Like the Park and Recreation Board, school board members accepted the cost of sports as a part of the public's responsibility.³⁸

Though organized sports at one time had been a privilege of the middle and upper classes in Dallas, by the middle of the 1920's sports were available to all citizens. Whereas the moralistic element at one time believed that sports belonged to the gambler, the drinker, and the idle classes, they perceived sports in early twentieth century Dallas as a solution to social problems. Organized sports created a better people and a finer city in the minds of an increasing number of civic leaders.

Sports in fact served several purposes in Dallas. Athletics restored the valued idea of play to society. Sports helped to create satisfied citizens, many of who starred or at least played in Sunday School baseball leagues, industrial basketball teams, or local tennis and golf tournaments. Sports continued to boost the economy of Dallas. The Cotton Bowl, built by the city in 1930 at a cost of \$350,943.41 and operated by the State Fair Association, attracted large crowds for college football games. The public facilities boosted the careers of at least two superior athletes. Babe Didrickson trained in Dallas, partially under the tutelage of Foster Jacoby, before her Olympic triumphs in 1932. Ralph Guldahl, United States Open Golf champion in 1937 and 1938, played the Dallas public courses in the late 1920's.

Americans in the first decade of the twentieth century and continuing through the First World War period began to solve problems and create order through

practical methods and not through strict adherence to a theory of government or ideology. In 1910 Jane Addams decried the conditions which persisted near Hull House in Chicago. She believed the young to be trapped in a system which allowed few escapes. She longed “for the time when the city, through more small parks, municipal gymnasiums, and schoolrooms open for recreation, can guard from disaster these young people who walk so carelessly on the edge of the pit.”³⁸ By 1925, Norman Crozier, superintendent of schools in Dallas could state boldly that “playgrounds are cheaper than reformatories and parental schools and the upkeep is not so high.”⁴⁰ Addams’ dreams had become a reality in Dallas by the 1920’s.

The style of life changed when people moved from the small towns to the cities. Sports became a pragmatic outlet for energy as well as a means of organizing and controlling the populace in a rapidly urbanizing society. Athletics in the eyes of reformers could provide relief from drudgery, physical improvement, better citizens, and a positive outlook on life. Sports came to popularity in Dallas not as a plot but rather as a practical response to urban life. The phenomenal growth of sports in Dallas came in part from those leaders who assumed that sports were a sound, safe and healthy means of education as well as recreation. With the acceptance of this new point of view, the public sector then had an obligation to carry the gospel of sport to every citizen. And thus the public sector in Dallas transformed an interest in sport into an avidly accepted way of life by the 1920’s.

Sports became part of everyday life in Dallas not only by the individual’s quest to play, but also because of active support and promotion by agencies within Dallas. To understand the breadth of interest in sports which has been built in contemporary society, one must begin in this era when the transformation of thought began. Sport became not only acceptable but a necessary part of the American way of life. It was no longer decried because of connections with vice, but rather approached as a teacher of virtue, citizenship, and cooperation. While the adolescent and young adult increasingly had both the time and freedom to play, educators and civic leaders now wanted people to play.

Notes

1. Recent historiographical debates on the origins of Progressive reform have split on the conflicting ideas of whether society’s interest in change stemmed from broad sociological and demographic changes which substantially altered the structure of American society, see Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), or from substantial identification of complaints and political reorganizations which resulted from the depression of the 1890’s, see David Thelen, *The New Citizenship: Origins of Progressivism in Wisconsin, 1885-1900* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972). Those who believed that progressivism came from businessmen who sought a stable non-competitive America include Gabriel Kolko, *Triumph of Conservatism* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1963).
2. The best surveys of American sports remain John R. Betts, *America’s Sporting Heritage* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1974); Foster Rhea Dulles, *America Learns to Play*, 2nd ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965); John A. Krout, *Annals of American Sport* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), and John Lucas and Ronald Smith, *Saga of American Sport* (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1978).

3. The early history of Dallas can be seen best in A. C. Greene, *Dallas: The Deciding Years* (Austin: Encino Press, 1973); John W. Rogers, *The Lusty Texans of Dallas* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1960); Philip Lindsley, *A History of Greater Dallas and Vicinity* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1909).
4. Works Progress Administration, *Guide and History of Dallas* (Dallas: Typescript copy, 1940), pp. 534-535; Kenneth Foree Manuscript, A4743, Dallas Historical Society, Dallas, Texas; *Dallas Weekly Herald*, March 2, 1882, p. 4; March 16, 1882, p. 2; September 28, 1883, p. 6; Rogers, *Lusty Texans*, p. 138.
5. *Dallas Morning News*, January 20, 1888, p. 8; February 26, 1888, p. 8; April 11, 1888, p. 2; April 12, 1888, p. 4; October 17, 1888, p. 4; October 20, 1888, p. 3; October 27, 1888, p. 3; February 21, 1890, p. 8; March 26, 1890, p. 5; April 16, 1891, p. 3; April 19, 1891, p. 16; May 6, 1891, p. 5; May 14, 1891, p. 2; August 5, 1891, p. 2; April 12, 1892, p. 1; J. T. Trezvant, *A History of the State Fair of Texas* (n.p.: n.d.), p. 9.
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29. For a brief biography of Foster Jacoby, see Jebesen, et al, *Centennial History*, 2nd ed., pp. 827-829.
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