

# Future Directions Committee Report

*Background:* On appointment by President Mary Lou Remley, the following have served on the committee: Richard Crepeau, Larry Gerlach, Reet Howell, Mary Lou LeCompte, Don Mrozek (chair), David Zang. The members, save one, met at Banff; and there was subsequent correspondence and polling concerning issues. The committee circulated a questionnaire to the membership eliciting its concerns and one at the convention at Banff dealing with convention procedures in general. The members of the committee thus had general as well as particular information available from the NASSH membership. All materials collected are available, if desired, for the organization's records or for perusal by members of the Council.

*Presentation of General issues:* The Future Directions Committee and the NASSH membership as a whole shared certain concerns, and these areas are the ones in which the committee has made specific recommendations. However, the first consideration which we must state is that *there was widespread satisfaction with NASSH on the whole among those who responded to our questionnaires*. The membership feels that the purposes of the organization is basically clear and that its operations are basically sound. This conclusion is grounded on the fact that criticisms were relatively few and relatively limited in scope. Nonetheless, there were specific suggestions for change; and the committee has sought to address various of these.

*Publication*—a large degree of interest focused on the *Journal* whose appearance had been delayed at the time of our first circular; and the membership urged its regular appearance. The editor, the committee, and the Publications Board are in concurrence in this. Further, the *Journal* is now appearing with consistency. Nonetheless, we have included several clarifications concerning the area of publications, including suggestions about the pursuit of material that would have sweep as well as soundness.

*Convention*—with no disparagement of arrangements at any particular meeting, the membership and the committee were concerned to modify certain expectations of performance by the sessions of the annual convention. Apart from the hope that the *Journal* would sustain regular publication with high quality, the convention was the most often cited area of concern, particularly with respect to such matters as respect for allotted time, the need for critical interchange, the importance of time for discussion, and the like. Several suggestions appear in this area.

*New Ventures*—the committee has given some attention to the most effective links which may be forged with other organizations, or, more exactly, with sub-constituencies within other organizations. We have recommendations in this area. Further, we have considered several means of enhancing the visibility of NASSH (in a fashion consistent with its charter-mission to promote the history of sport), either through increased attention to public relations efforts, to membership and recruitment, or to specific recognition of outstanding work in the field of sport history.

*Format of Recommendations:* Attached to this set of introductory remarks is a packet of ballots. Each ballot was circulated among the members of the committee. Each member had a chance to comment and suggest amendment as well as to vote pro or con. The ballots, as presented to the NASSH Council, include both the recommendation for or against, and a summary of the added remarks from committee members. Also, since each ballot contained summary arguments for or against, these may assist NASSH Council members in their own thoughts and deliberations. The Council may wish to consider the recommendations through the format in which they were posed to the members of the committee; or, if the Council prefers otherwise, this format can serve as a point of departure.

*General:* It is clear that NASSH has passed out of its infancy; and the organization is a going enterprise. It is also clear that there are many crucial advantages in the organization as it now functions which members enjoy and wish to see preserved: an authentic interest in the history of sport, a real chance to meet people and discuss history due to the reasonable size and scale of the meetings, the receptivity of the *Journal* to manuscripts without respect to the status and background of the author, and many others. The interdisciplinary character of NASSH is much prized. Indeed, on balance, there are many important virtues which must be acknowledged and preserved.

On the other hand, there is a tendency within the organization, at least among some members to desire growth. This latter is a threat only if the growth proves to be artificial. As a result, the committee has tended to limit its suggestions for NASSH's growth to measures that will likely induce only genuinely interested students of the history of sport to join.

We may fairly interpret the sense of the membership and the sense of our own committee to be an approximation of the Biblical notion "By their fruits ye shall know them." The membership in general and the committee in particular have shied away from measures that would attempt to force growth in an artificial manner.

*Note:* The committee members will be present at the convention at Hamilton in case clarification is needed and in case there are specific requests from the Council to be considered and answered.

For the committee:

Don Mrozek

Proposal # 1

To establish an annual award for the outstanding article published in the *Journal of Sport History* during a given year. (This would require the establishment of a committee to review the articles. Logically, the duty could be performed by the Publications Board as a body elected by the NASSH membership; or it could be performed by a committee appointed by the President. It would make sense in this latter case that the editor of the *Journal* be an *ex officio* member of the review committee, in that the editor is presently an *ex officio* member of the Publications Board.) (A simple but suitable award, such as a certificate or plaque, should be presented at the annual convention to the award winner.)

*For:* This would serve as a means of encouraging quality in the work of those who submit manuscripts to the *Journal* and of recognizing that quality. It would also serve as a vehicle for publicity outside the organization since it would be a proper focus of attention for press releases and notices to other organizations. This measure would have considerable benefit and should not promote discord since recognition of quality work is not a “zero-sum” game; the recognition of one is not a loss to the others.

*Against:* It is possible that such an award would encourage discontent among those who did not receive it, particularly if they had reason to lack confidence in the procedure for selection. This would be particularly the case if there were not sufficient confidence in the selection procedures for articles for the *Journal* since publication in that organ is the prerequisite for the consideration for the award.

ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL: YES THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY APPROVES.

NO \_\_\_\_\_

(WITH THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) It is understood that articles would be reviewed with the least possible attention to authors' identities, although this is not strictly a “blind” review.

(WITH NO REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: The opposition to this position of approval centers on the concern that politicking and resentment would be possible as a result of such an award.

Proposal # 2

To establish an annual award for the outstanding book published in the area of sport history during each calendar/imprint year. This would logically require the establishment or designation of a committee to solicit and review nominations. Logically, the duty could be performed by the Publications Board; it could also be performed by a committee appointed by the President. It would be appropriate to provide a certificate or plaque to be awarded to the winner, preferably at the annual convention. It would be possible

but not necessary that the recipient be invited to offer an address, such as one of the honor addresses, particularly if this would add to NASSH's visibility; but that should be arranged between the review committee and the Distinguished Lectures Committee on a basis of mutual agreement when circumstances seem favorable.)

*For:* This would give an opportunity to recognize work in the field and to encourage it—a central purpose of NASSH as specified in the constitution. This means of encouraging work in sport history would also provide an opportunity for the organization to publicize itself in circles that are not currently familiar with it. The cost would be marginal, and the utility of possible exposure quite great.

*Against:* It is possible that a seeming endorsement of one work would imply a less enthusiastic judgment of the other volumes published in that year; and NASSH would be ill-advised to risk a measure that could lead toward hard feelings. Further, the implication that the organization might lavish much attention on a nonmember could suggest a certain degree of ingratitude toward members of long-standing.

ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL: YES THE COMMITTEE NARROWLY  
NO FAVORED THIS PROPOSAL.

(WITH THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) The vote in favor is stronger if anthologies and textbooks are excluded (4-1-1). ALSO: THE AWARD WOULD BE OFFERED FOR A BOOK IN EACH THREE-YEAR PERIOD.

(WITH NO REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: The use of the three-year period (partly a working compromise between the extremes proposed, 1 and 5) would allow for the fact that the field of sport history is still relatively new and monographs do not appear as often in this field as they may later; but it still encourages major work in the field.

The opposition to the proposal centered on the concern over possible ill-feeling among authors not so recognized under this award.

### Proposal # 3

*To establish an annual award for the best paper submitted by a graduate student, forwarded to a committee established to solicit and review these research papers. (The President would establish a committee to solicit and review the papers which would, usually but not necessarily, have been prepared in classes in various aspects of sport history. The logical cut-off for eligibility would be each calendar year, thus allowing sufficient time for the review and preparation of submissions. A simple but suitable award, such as a certificate or plaque, should be presented to the winner who would be invited to receive the award at the annual meeting.)*

*For:* This would be another device for encouraging research and writing in sport history; and it would encourage this at an important level—those entering into the professional study of sport and society. Again, this would do no one any harm, the award recipient a good degree of benefit, and the organization as a whole a service by encouraging research and inquiry.

*Against:* As in the case of other proposals for awards, it is possible that this one could lead toward potentially invidious comparisons, which no one would wish to see develop.

ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL: YES \_\_\_\_\_

NO THE COMMITTEE OPPOSED  
THIS BY A CLEAR MARGIN

(WITH THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(WITH NO REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: The clearest opposition may be thus stated: "Professionally researched and well-written articles are rewarded sufficiently when they are selected for presentation or publication on a par with those of more experienced historians. It is better to continue rewarding good work with the recognition from and entrance into a circle of peers than to present a plaque for a type of 'junior achievement.' "

The advocates of this proposal seem agreed that the publication of a "best student paper" in the *Journal* would serve as a suitable recognition; but, as the previous statement suggests, this form of recognition already exists without other complications or procedures.

#### Proposal # 4

*To retain the number of honor addresses given at the annual convention at two from among the three available designations.*

*For:* The present procedure, as noted above, provides opportunity to honor historians and researchers currently active in the field, as well as to honor those for whom the lectures are named. There are sufficient high-caliber candidates for these honor addresses; and two each year is a reasonable number to maintain.

*Against:* To make the honor address a *true* honor both for the speaker and audience, as well as the namesake of the address, we should have one each year. The quality of each address would likely be higher, and it would be simple to rotate the title and designation of the annual honor address over a three year cycle. It would also add a certain added flexibility to the program, since a slot would thus be open which otherwise would have been occupied by the second honor address. This could conceivably be filled by a special speaker of some other sort, such as a publicly known figure who was not necessarily an academic researcher in sport history, or else filled in another fashion.

ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL: YES THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY  
APPROVES

NO \_\_\_\_\_

(WITH THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(WITH NO REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_

Proposal # 5

*The President should designate a specific individual or officer of the organization with primary responsibility for publicizing the various accomplishments, awards, and functions of the organization.* (Functioning as a “director of communications” or principal public relations officer, this person would seek to ensure that what was known within the organization was also known outside. This person could, for example, see to the circulation of press releases, often in those geographical areas where its personnel and its activities have a ready tie-in, which could afford some free publicity to the organization. Further, this person should see to it that NASSH members are encouraged to publicize their own work and their affiliation with NASSH when possible to enhance the prestige of both.)

*For:* Without an individual specifically charged to handle external communications, public relations, and publicity on a general scale and in a general format, the job will not get done; it will remain an orphan catching crumbs of time from people who are busy with other matters as their primary concerns.

*Against:* It is important that NASSH avoid the semblance and, even more, the fact of hucksterism. This sort of enterprise might conceivably deteriorate into a “selling of NASSH” in a fashion that would be unsuitable.

ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL: YES THE COMMITTEE NARROWLY  
FAVORED THE PROPOSAL  
NO \_\_\_\_\_

(WITH THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(WITH NO REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: There was wide acceptance of the principle of keeping the works of NASSH and its members visible. There was also concern to be sure that this effort does not descend into “hucksterism.”

An opponent of this specific measure suggested that the functions described in the proposal be handled by the NASSH Secretary-Treasurer.

Support of the concept of publicity was strong, although the specific mechanism proposed here received narrower approval.

Proposal # 6

There is no Proposal # 6 due to an error in numbering.

Proposal # 7

To revitalize its membership program by establishing a special task force on NASSH membership; the task force would specifically seek to contact organizations servicing junior college and secondary school teachers, seek to further the promotion of the organization through contacts with other organizations whose constituencies are made up of those with a potential interest in the history of sport, and encourage specific and regular procedures through which NASSH members might make the organization and its purposes known within their own areas. (If a "director of communications" were established as a post within NASSH, this person would be a logical *ex officio* member of such a task force.)

*For:* It is imperative that NASSH not stagnate; and it is imperative that NASSH make itself available to constituencies not currently represented in the organization which might prove interested and enthusiastic. Few active NASSH members come from junior colleges and secondary schools. Few come from fields such as classics and American studies. This situation should be remedied; and it will require a specific task force to get the job done.

*Against:* People will come to NASSH when they have reason to do so. Although we must make ourselves available, we do not need to have a bureaucracy grow up in order to see that this occurs.

ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL: YES THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY APPROVED

NO \_\_\_\_\_

(WITH THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED AMENDMENT: Realistically, this could and perhaps should be handled through the Membership Committee working actively.)

(WITH NO REQUIRED AMENDMENT:)

COMMENTS: An opponent of this specific proposal expressed fear that recruitment of marginally interested persons would dilute NASSH's quality as an organization and asked exactly what unserved constituencies would prove enthusiastic.

A proponent of the measure suggested that this function be handled by an enthusiastic and vital Membership Committee. Also, either a separate task force or the Membership Committee given this charge should "legitimate" its assistants (including any cooperating NASSH members) by such measures as having them use NASSH stationery.

Proposal # 8

*Procedures for the convention should be adjusted so as to ensure greater exchange of views and greater critical discussion at the meetings. To achieve this, we recommend:*

- A) Invite special research projects on topics for conventions as far as 2 or 3 years in the future (thus assuring encourage and support).

YES \_\_\_\_\_

NO THE COMMITTEE OPPOSED

- B) As a guideline, sessions at the conference should have critics or commentators whose purpose it is to comment on the papers presented and stimulate discussion, thus assisting both the author and the audience (this would not apply to panel discussions or special addresses).

YES THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY  
APPROVED

NO \_\_\_\_\_

- C) Open the submission procedures for papers and sessions at the convention so that NASSH members or others can propose whole topics as well as specific papers on a competitive basis. This would permit persons interested in a topic to unite in proposing a session. Note, please, that this would require such invitations to be publicized well in advance—at least a year and a half, and closer to two years, before the actual date of the convention. (The timing of announcements presupposes that the program for a given convention would be, in the main, determined at the preceding convention.)

YES THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY  
APPROVED

NO \_\_\_\_\_

- D) Although the program is, at present, handled by the President-elect (in cooperative relationship with the convention manager), it would be useful to expand the governance of the program to a Program Committee, chaired by the President-elect and with the membership of the convention manager, along with other members with expertise and interests other than those of the two present program managers.

YES THE COMMITTEE NARROWLY  
APPROVED

NO \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE NOTE THAT A DISAPPROVAL OF ALL OF THE ABOVE WILL CONSTITUTE A DISAPPROVAL OF THE CONCEPT OF CHANGE IN THESE MATTERS UNLESS YOU INDICATE OTHERWISE.)

NOTE: There was additional interest in assuring quality in the comments and criticisms, by assuring that experts serve in these roles. Also, there has been suggestion to expand the time of papers (e.g., 30 min.) and, if necessary, reduce their number to allow sufficient time for a really substantive job.

Proposal # 9

*The sessions at the convention must be constructed so as to insure discussion, but the measures developed to insure this must be applied with uniformity. We recommend:*

- A) Time limits must be adhered to strictly. No session should be permitted to run beyond its times when this infringes upon another session. Papers within sessions must be limited to their specified times. Chairpersons must force adherence.

YES THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY  
APPROVES

NO \_\_\_\_\_

- B) There needs to be a uniform policy on whether papers can be presented in the absence of their authors.

YES THE COMMITTEE IS  
DIVIDED: NO  
NO RECOMMENDATION

- C) Papers are not to be presented in the absence of their authors.

YES THE COMMITTEE IS  
DIVIDED: NO  
NO RECOMMENDATION

- D) It would be wise for a Program Committee (or the President-elect in the absence of a broader committee) to issue a standard sheet of rules and guidelines for the preparation of sessions and for the performances of functions by authors and critics and commentators. These would serve as baseline rules for the sessions, establishing expectations as to when papers would need to be completed in advance of meetings, when commentators would need to receive them, the certitude that time-limits would be adhered to, and so forth.

YES THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY  
APPROVES

NO \_\_\_\_\_

- E) A Program Committee or the President-elect in the absence of such a committee should consider encouraging the dissemination of papers prior to some sessions, or the dissemination of findings in some other fashion, in order to encourage convention participants to engage actively in discussion of papers that they have thus already seen.

YES \_\_\_\_\_

NO THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY  
OPPOSES

COMMENTS: Re: e), there was strong sentiment that such procedures would dilute the attendance and the vigor of discussion and interest at sessions.

NOTE: Proposals 8 and 9 imply the possibility of a standing committee, changing gradually in its membership, so that there would be some continuing assessment of convention format and procedures. It is clear that the Committee favors a degree of standardization in procedure (without sacrificing flexibility) so as to insure equitable treatment of presenters and greater participation by attendants.

Proposal # 10

*NASSH should seek to gain links with the sports establishment with an eye to obtaining funding for some of its special projects, such as funding for its honor addresses and for its awards (as possibly suggested elsewhere in these proposals).* (It is now possible for NASSH to pursue funding as a tax-exempt organization, and some of our present strictures against funding travel for honor address speakers and the like might be modified if it were possible to gain external funding and, perhaps, establish the basis for a small endowment .)

*For:* This is an approach that NASSH has little explored as of yet, but it is one that has an element of promise to it. Although it is not always possible to gain positive response to calls for money, it is certain that NASSH will not get any without asking. It is worth the trouble of asking. It is possible, though by no means certain, that some franchise owners or others in the sports establishment might be willing to contribute, even in a small way, toward the funding of awards or other programs.

*Against:* This is highly unlikely, and it would end up as a waste of time and effort; and, as a consequence, we should not ask NASSH members to do something which is not likely to have any profitable outcome.

ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL: YES THE COMMITTEE WAS SUFFICIENTLY DIVIDED SO AS  
NO TO PRECLUDE A RECOMMENDATION

(WITH THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(WITH NO REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: There is a real interest in gaining outside funding. But there is also a real concern that funding may imply dependence upon the desires of persons or agencies outside NASSH. Further, it is urged that more thought is needed in determining how far one must go into the "sports establishment" and precisely who it is that we include under that rubric. The The Future Directions Committee could, if it were so ordered, pursue this further; or, if the Council preferred, the matter could become a delegated charge through the Secretary-Treasurer.

Proposal # 11

*Due to the critical importance of the Journal of Sport History, it is imperative that NASSH reaffirm the necessity of maintaining timely appearance of the Journal.*

YES THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY  
APPROVES  
NO \_\_\_\_\_

*The editor of the Journal should consider ways of inviting articles of greater sweep and comprehension which we may currently be losing to other journals. This might include the specific invitation of certain authors to submit articles of a kind deemed to meet this need.*

YES THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY  
APPROVES  
NO \_\_\_\_\_

*In the event that the editor finds articles of special importance and comprehensiveness, it may be possible that he/she should consider means of hastening the review procedure.*

YES THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY  
APPROVES  
NO \_\_\_\_\_

*It is important to expand the number of reviews of books in each issue of the Journal and to have them published in as timely a fashion as possible. (It is understood that this suggests a need for more reviews than appear in the average issue at present.)*

YES THE COMMITTEE STRONGLY  
APPROVES  
NO \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: The Future Directions Committee respectfully acknowledges that these matters also have reference to the Publications Board, as an elected body in NASSH charged with supervising matters having to do with the *Journal* and publications more generally. Hence, we respectfully suggest that the Council keep the Board in mind in reference to the above comments.

The Future Directions Committee is especially concerned to urge that the *Journal* use reasonable and academically creditable means of pursuing the major articles and the conceptual work that has been less frequent in its pages over the years. The Committee does not at all challenge the *Journal's* emphasis on tight procedure to assure refereed quality; but it does call attention to the desirability of pursuing certain kinds of work that does not tend to appear in the *Journal* on a regular basis.

Proposal # 12

*NASSH should seek to sponsor special sessions on sport history at various regional conferences and in the conferences of related disciplines and fields, aiming to promote an identifiable presence of sport history in various places and fields every year. (A customary means for administering such a program is that NASSH officials would undertake, with a given other organization, to provide it with a quality session or sessions in the area of sport history. Normally, submissions dealing with sport history would be transferred by the program manager to the NASSH representative, who in turn would also encourage people to submit proposals through his or her own network of contacts.)*

*For:* This would establish an institutional presence for NASSH within various other organizations, such as regional American studies associations or groups in popular culture. It would also provide a means whereby those (whether NASSH members or others) who can not afford to attend the annual meeting of NASSH would be able to attend a conference at which the history of sport was given recognition. Further, it is a means of encouraging the study of sport history and thus fulfilling a part of the constitutionally designated purpose of the organization.

*Against:* There is a risk that such a proposal, if followed, would weaken the annual meeting by siphoning off papers that might otherwise be presented at NASSH and by reducing the number of people attending the annual conference. Such a result would have serious negative consequences.

ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL: YES THE COMMITTEE WAS DIVIDED  
AND DID NOT MAKE A  
NO RECOMMENDATION AT  
THIS TIME.

(WITH THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(WITH NO REQUIRED AMENDMENT:) \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: The aim in this case is to make it possible to pursue sport history with colleagues at other institutions without having to suffer serious financial burdens due to extensive travel. The fact is, however, that the specific details in handling such a proposal govern the acceptability of the measure. How can we assure that this would not siphon papers off from the NASSH convention, for example? The Committee can, if it is so directed, pursue this further and seek a detailed proposal beyond the general concept.

