

# Reaction to Papers By Angela Lumpkin and Jay Helman

DAVID ZANG

University of Maryland

The papers by Angela Lumpkin and Jay Helman add to the preoccupation of sport historians with the concept of the “student-athlete.” The act of reconciling athletics with a college education has been problematic, and the papers here offer two approaches to the problem: one exhibits the urge to resolve as well as analyze the problem; the other attempts to explain.

Lumpkin’s research on graduation rates involves meticulous attention to detail but offers little to carry us beyond our present experience. What do graduation rates signify? And,

more importantly, what do they signify across time? What did graduation rates mean to a college president in 1889? Underlying this paper is a belief that high graduation rates are and have been prima facie evidence of a valid and proper educational experience. As recent events indicate, however, it is more likely that they are merely evidence of the existence of a successful infrastructure for maintaining a new recruiting lure. Lumpkin needs to show how and why graduation rates are important in a historical context. She needs to take the statistics and be sure they are free from the moral notions that we tend to attach to them in the present.

Helman's paper recounts one of the early NCAA's moral tug-of-wars without conveying the same plaintive sense of "Paradise Lost." Helman observes that freshman eligibility rules were designed to even competition, not to protect the student's educational status and that, despite their recognized effectiveness, freshman rules were slow to gain widespread acceptance. Helman thus infers that getting ahead was more important than competitive parity and certainly more important than education. This being the case, I think it would be instructive for Helman and future researchers to begin to shift attention from the early moral watchdogs whose rhetoric dominated issues. Perhaps we should look as well at those who recognized the use of hypocrisy. A deceptively simple and widely ignored concept introduced last year by Dick Crepeau, the uses of hypocrisy might be stated as the acknowledgement that at some level the hypocritical uses of intercollegiate sport outstrip the more honorable uses. Acknowledging the uses of hypocrisy - without necessarily labeling them as malevolent - might lead us to look at controversies in a new light - move them from the black and white into the gray.

Expanding upon Helman's good work, an excursion into such new concepts and the light they shed on sport's relationship to other campus social forms and to changing university goals might allow us to see intercollegiate athletics in the way they have been without the constant attention to variations from the ideal which characterize much of our work.

Both papers attempt to assess the place of sport in the educational system. The first by Angela Lumpkin needs to more clearly come to terms with what it is that graduation rates tell us of this. The second by Jay Helman succeeds in exposing once again the shaky merger that was forced early on between sport and education, and begins to offer the first clues as to how such a shaky foundation has, at least in the public realm, sustained the weighty myth of impurity which attaches to intercollegiate sport.



Newly elected NASSH President Dick Crepeau explaining his campaign platform to Vicky Paraschak of the University of Windsor.