

Entrepreneurs, Organizations and the Sports Marketplace

STEPHEN HARDY

Robert Morris College

Although social history approaches have vastly improved the quality of research in sport history, it is important that our field not limit itself to any one mode of inquiry. This paper suggests the need to supplement the social history of sport with economic and business history, thereby attempting to determine the evolution of the sport industry as a unique system and structure of production. Such inquiry will require the analysis of the sport product, the organizational system of production and delivery, the sport marketplace, and the professionalization of labor.

The sport product is viewed as a triad, composed, in whole or in part, of the game form, the service, and the good. Moreover, each of these components has undergone an evolution nudging it ever closer to a pure commodity. This evolution has not been a natural or inevitable process, but rather has been the result of complex decision-making by innovative entrepreneurs who have, to use Schumpeter's phrase, "creatively destroyed" existing structures in the sport industry.

As historians reconstruct this decision-making they must determine how and why particular types of organizations and networks or organizations developed to control the markets of game forms, services, and goods. More important, they must uncover the tensions between organizations, between labor groups, between capital and labor which resulted in the peculiar aspects of today's sport industry. Although solid research of this kind may be readily found, particularly among baseball historians, there is need for more and for synthesis.