

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND CULTURAL STUDIES

American Sport History As Seen Through The Lens of Stephen Hardy

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Sport historians have written numerous review essays exploring the state of the field and/or its component parts. The recent collection of informative articles in *the Journal of Sport History* is but one representation of this healthy trend to self-scrutiny and synthesis. At the same time, these scholars have not followed a practice now becoming more prevalent within the historical profession of focusing on the works and influence of one historian in their field and/or taking a fresh look at some of the classic works in sport history in light of new evidence, scholarship and methodologies. While there are a small number of exceptions to this general absence in our scholarship, most notably Don Kyle's thoughtful discussion of the writings of E.N. Gardiner, the still relative newness of sport history probably serves to inhibit any in-depth analysis of the practices, ideas, assumptions, and frameworks of our practitioners. However, as NASSH moves toward near completion of its first quarter of a century, it is fruitful for sport history to push its historiographical discussions beyond looking at the themes and questions it has and has not addressed as a field, to also scrutinize the producers of scholarship; the context in which they worked and asked their questions, look at their underlying assumptions, frameworks and methodologies, the contributions and limitations of their scholarship, and maybe most importantly where their research left off and possibly how other scholars may take up their ideas in new light of new methodologies, frameworks, evidence and scholarship.

This paper looks at American sport history over the last ten to fifteen years as filtered through both the scholarship of Stephen Hardy and the role he played in the field. It is particularly interested in three different, albeit strongly interrelated, dimensions of Hardy's research and contribution. One is his vision of the urban influence. Here I compare his early research on the intersection of sport and city - - focusing on both his book, *How Boston Played*, and his significant *Sport and Exercise Science Review* article - - with the ideas expressed in his insightful forthcoming review essay in the *Journal of Urban History*. As a significant interpreter of the field, the changes Hardy sees and supports raises valued questions of where we have gone and

our expanding vision. At the same time it raises the question of what is distinctive about urban sport. The second part argues that one of Hardy's central contributions to the scholarship in general and the field in particular, has been his ability to negotiate his way through and more significantly moderate the debate between the two dominant paradigms (modernization and hegemony/cultural studies) within sport studies. I show that while both claim him and he has a foot comfortably in each camp, in the end he rests with the modernist. Finally, I discuss the importance of Hardy's trilogy of articles on sports entrepreneurs and sports industry. I show that practitioners need to give attention to his provocative discussion of the *Sportgeist* and how different groups of entrepreneurs create different sport products, and different sporting images and ideologies to be consumed as well. Hardy's call for a different framework to examine sport history has valued ramifications for how we address our questions in general and how we begin to construct connections to other disciplines.