

JOURNAL OF AMATEUR SPORT

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Foreword to the Issue

George H. Sage

George H. Sage is Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Kinesiology at the University of Northern Colorado. He has published more than fifty articles and is the author of many books, including *Globalizing Sport: How Corporations, Media, and Politics Are Changing Sports* (Paradigm 2010). He was inducted into the National Association for Sport and Physical Education Hall of Fame in 2006. He is the past president of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport.

At last! At last—a journal with a specific focus on amateur sport. It couldn't come at a more opportune time, as the commercialized sports industry becomes more and more the focal point of the mass media and popular and scholarly publications. Such attention conveys an impression that business-related sports have the most athletes and coaches and are the most popular. However, the reality is that the overwhelming number of athletes and coaches—male and female—are amateurs, and if you count the friends and family who come to watch amateur sports events, they unquestionably outnumber spectators at professional

sporting events. In this Foreword I want to illustrate the enormous scope of amateur sport to support what I've said above about the extent of amateur sports and the importance of the *Journal of Amateur Sport*.

Research by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association found that nearly 80 percent of Americans are involved in some type of sports activity or recreational endeavor, with some 34 million active on a “regular basis.” Youth sports programs are organized by more than twenty-five agencies and by thousands of local and regional sports organizations. The National Council of Youth Sports estimates that more than 60

million boys and girls participate in organized youth sports throughout the United States; some 5 million Canadian youth participate. Consequently, there is a bewildering variety of sports for almost every child who has an interest in being involved in sports. To take just two examples, Little League baseball is the largest of the youth sports organizations, with leagues in every U.S. state and in eighty countries with over 160,000 teams. Soccer is a global sport and is played by hundreds of millions of youth worldwide. It has been growing faster than any other youth team sport in the U.S. and there are now some 6,000 youth soccer clubs and about 3.2 million young boys and girls playing the sport.

Nearly 3,000 YMCAs in North America provide some 8 million boys and girls the opportunity to participate in organized sports. The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), a non-profit volunteer sports organization, is dedicated exclusively to the promotion and development of amateur sports. It has over 670,000 participants and 100,000 annual volunteers nationwide and sanctions 34 sports programs in the AAU Districts. More than 2,000 local, state, regional, and national events in twenty-one different sports are sponsored by the AAU Junior Olympics Sports Program.

Interscholastic sports are extremely popular in high schools of the United States, and increasingly in Canadian secondary schools. In 2015 about 7.8

million boys and girls in the United States were involved in more than thirty-five different sports at the high school level. For twenty-five consecutive years the number of student participants in high school sports has increased.

In colleges and universities, the intramural sports program (called recreation sports on some campuses) is the place where more student-athletes participate in sports than anywhere else on college campuses. In the U.S. the National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) regulates recreation sports throughout higher education; it serves college students who play at the intramural and club level in sports, but do not participate in NCAA or NAIA sports programs. The NIRSA membership serves an estimated 8.1 million students annually. The number of athletes on commercialized intercollegiate sports teams is miniscule—typically less than 10 percent—compared to the number of intramural athletes nationwide.

Seniors—age 65 and over—are the fastest growing segment of global populations. By 2030 more than 20 percent of U.S. residents are projected to be over 65, compared with 13 percent in 2015. Older adults are remaining physically active and embracing sporting lifestyles. The organizations they choose to join to continue playing sports vary from local community recreation programs to the National Senior Games

Association, a nonprofit organization dedicated to motivating senior men and women to lead a healthy lifestyle through continued sports involvement. Globally, the Masters Sports Tournaments and the Senior Olympics are major forces in organizing competitive sports for senior men and women. Over 250,000 senior athletes participate in these senior games competitions each year.

These are only the most visible programs for seniors. In addition, retirement communities are typically built to encourage the sports interests of their residents. Many community recreation departments have thriving programs involving senior leagues in a variety of sports. In all likelihood, participant sports will be a major growth industry wherever large groups of older persons settle.

The nonprofit National Sports Center for the Disabled (NSCD) is one of the most effective organizations supporting and promoting sports for people with disabilities. Currently, participants come to the NSCD from all fifty states and from countries all over the world. Participants can choose among twenty different winter and summer sports, from skiing and snowshoeing to river rafting and rock climbing. The NSCD Competition Program is the largest of its kind in North America; it has been successful at attracting and training some of the best ski racers with disabilities and placing them on the U.S. Disabled Ski Team. Twelve of the

NSCD'S sponsored thirty-four athletes who competed in the Winter Paralympic games in Sochi brought home fifteen medals in their perspective sport.

The needs of the disabled are also serviced by Disabled Sports USA, which was founded by disabled Vietnam veterans. It offers nationwide sports rehabilitation programs to anyone with a permanent disability. Activities include winter skiing, water sports, summer and winter competitions, and fitness and special sports events. Participants include those with visual impairments, amputations, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, head injury, cerebral palsy, and other neuromuscular and orthopedic conditions. As a member of the USOC, Disabled Sports USA sanctions and conducts competitions and training camps to prepare and select athletes to represent the United States at the Summer and Winter Paralympic Games.

I hope these examples—and they are only examples—of the multiplicity of types and forms of amateur sport confirm the need for a journal that is specifically dedicated to amateur sport.
