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Comments from the Editor

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It is hard to believe that is has already been a year since we launched the Journal of Intercollegiate Sport. Three hundred and twenty pages, 2 issues, 17 articles, 3 book reviews, and a bibliography later, we have now gone to press with the first issue of Volume 2. As was the case last year, the initial issue of each volume is dedicated to the publication of the papers from the Scholarly Colloquium held each year in conjunction with the NCAA National Convention.

To set the theme for our first Colloquium, we asked a basic question: Is collegiate sport a legitimate focus for scholarly inquiry? We began with this rather broad, philosophic question for two reasons. First, we did not want to assume that intercollegiate sport deserved the time, energy, and cost required for careful scrutiny. After all, if sport were a trivial enterprise, if it had only minimal educational potential, or if it had already received sufficient scholarly attention, a negative answer to our question might have been warranted. Second, we wanted to identify those intercollegiate, sport-related phenomena that seemed most in need of further research. This second purpose was important because sport is an expansive topic. Some of it, we speculated, might be of academic interest. The rest of it might not.

The first Colloquium, therefore, allowed us to make some headway on these very general but important issues. Most speakers argued that sport is an overlooked element of culture and one that has considerable educational potential. They also suggested that, on the whole, sport is understudied, often misunderstood, and in need of further investigation . . . particularly in relationship to the context and purposes of higher education.

The Second Scholarly Colloquium

The second Scholarly Colloquium, held during the 2009 NCAA National Convention in Washington, D.C., was designed to answer a much more specific research question. The conference program was organized around the following theme: Paying the price: Is excellence in sport compatible with good health?

This topic is timely for several reasons. In a period when sedentary living and obesity threaten the health and well-being of many citizens, the need for exercise has never been more apparent. In light of this, the active lifestyles adopted by intercollegiate athletes might benefit them individually and serve as a model for others to follow. As the authors of our articles point out, however, this conclusion is only partly supported by the data.

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As we all know, too much of a good thing can be harmful. This is the case with exercise. While the active lifestyle embraced by our intercollegiate athletes is worthy of support, the excesses associated with year-around training and the pursuit of athletic excellence often are not. As some contributors to this Colloquium go on to argue, these stresses introduce risks that may require new policies, increased efforts at education, or other targeted interventions.

This health-related topic is also timely because specific concerns related to the well-being of college athletes have emerged. One of them has to do with burnout, the unfortunate phenomenon that can turn athletic joy and delight into duty, drudgery, or worse. Another is related to the rash of injuries that seems to accompany participation in certain sports. Much recent attention, for example, has been given to knee injuries among women athletes in sports like soccer and basketball. This, of course, raises important questions that range from politics to physiology.

Other health-related concerns in college sport, as we have seen recently, have provocative moral and legal implications. We might ask, for example, if an institution can rightfully prevent an athlete with various health conditions from participating. Should the team physician and the institution have the final say, or should a mature and well-informed athlete be allowed to make this determination?

Concerns about "paying the price" are also timely because contemporary society seems to exert inordinate pressure on college athletic programs to win and thus too, on individual athletes to contribute to that cause. High salaries paid to successful college coaches, lavish facilities, recruiting excesses, media coverage, and celebratory status granted to athletes on university campuses, among a host of other factors, create potentially coercive forces that can overwhelm athletes and push them into high-risk behaviors . . . behaviors that end up causing serious health problems later in life. Still, it could be asked, should not an individual athlete have the wherewithal to stand up to these pressures and simply say, "no"?

In this issue of the Journal of Intercollegiate Sport, you will find essays authored by our four keynote speakers followed immediately by one or more reaction papers. You will also see that "good health" has been defined holistically. It has to do not only with the physical well-being of the athlete, but also with their health in a broader sense. One of the goals of the Colloquium and JIS, in fact, is to show the power of cross-disciplinary research. The papers in this volume, I believe, give testimony to the importance of such eclectic research in solving some of our more complex and nettlesome problems. Throughout the papers in this volume, authors show that knowledge from various disciplines is interdependent and, in some cases, even difficult to keep apart. Authors suggest that good research findings are produced at all levels of inquiry—at the level of ideas, ideals, lived experience, motivation, culture, gender, physiology, cell biology, chemistry, and physics—even though, once again, it is sometimes hard to keep the levels apart.

Dan Gould, Director of the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports at Michigan State, initiates the discussion on the compatibility of athletic excellence and good health by examining the phenomenon of athlete burnout, primarily from the perspective of sport psychology. Kirk Cureton, a physiologist by training, and Jay Coakley, a sport sociologist, follow with their own reactions from quite different perspectives.

Ron Zernicke, who is Director of the Bone & Joint Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation Center at the University of Michigan, is the author of the second

keynote paper. He provides important information on the nature and prevalence of sport injuries while focusing on the "injury epidemic" among female athletes. Diane Wiese-Bjornstal, who provided the first reaction paper, is an expert on psychological responses of athletes to sport injuries. Holly J. Silvers, the second reactor, is a certified physical therapist who provides information, from both theoretical and clinical perspectives, on various interventions related to women's knee injuries.

The third keynote address was delivered by one of our Board members, Matthew J. Mitten, a professor in the sport law program at Marquette University. He focuses on legal and ethical issues related to institutional decisions to prevent participation for health reasons. The ethical side of the equation is addressed by the first reactor, Jan Boxill, another one of our Board members and a senior lecturer and director of the Parr Center for Ethics at UNC-Chapel Hill. Steve Stovitz, who serves as the primary care sports medicine physician at the University of Minnesota, offers a more practically based perspective on these difficult decisions that may pit the rights and concerns of those who represent an institution against the preferences of individual student-athletes.

Mariah Burton Nelson, Executive Director of the American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation and a former Stanford University and professional basketball player, authored the final keynote paper. She raises interesting questions about the "physical intelligence" (or the lack thereof) exercised by college athletes and their ability to make good decisions about their long-term health. Don Sabo, Professor of Health Policy and Director of the Center for Research on Physical Activity, Sport & Health at D'Youville College, underlines the gender dynamics at work for male and female athletes who risk their health, and the considerable social pressures that complicate good decision making for high profile athletes like Burton Nelson.

As a group, these articles and reactions add to the growing literature on the effects of intensive training, practice, and competition on health. This can be conceptualized as basic research that helps to address much broader and more complicated questions about the overall fit between athletics and the central values and purposes of higher education. This is the case because certain assurances of health and degrees of safety are important moral considerations in any programs sponsored by our colleges and universities. Consequently, good cross-disciplinary research on health liabilities associated with intercollegiate sport is central to any assessment of goodness of fit. So too are research efforts designed to find various interventions that would decrease health risks and make participation safer for all involved.

Colloquium Purposes and Future Research Opportunities

In our first issue, I mentioned that one of the purposes of the Colloquium and the journal was to foster additional research on intercollegiate athletics. I noted that a considerable amount of work had already been done, but that much more was needed. I speculated on reasons for the general absence of research on this topic. I suggested that sport often seemed to attract polemical discussions from harsh critics, on the one hand, and apologists on the other. In light of this fact, I indicated that the Journal of Intercollegiate Sport would attempt, as best it could, to publish sound research whether it proved controversial, supported the status quo, or pointed in the direction of change. We continue to be committed to these values and purposes.

In fact, the first Colloquium generated some progress on that front. One of our keynote speakers, Jay Coakley, argued that difficulties in securing data provided strong disincentives for scholars interested in studying intercollegiate sport. NCAA President, Myles Brand, and members of the NCAA Research Team attended at that session and took those comments to heart. During this past year, work was initiated under the leadership of senior vice president, Bernard Franklin, to provide access to data collected by the NCAA. We want to share that progress with you.

Immediately following these comments, you will find a Commentary entitled, "A Process for Sharing Data Collected by the NCAA," written by Todd A. Petr and Thomas S. Paskus. Todd and Tom detail the steps they took after last year's Colloquium to navigate the ethical, legal, and technical waters in which they found themselves. They also discuss the kinds of data that will be made available in both the near future and in the years ahead. They conclude by expressing their hope that the availability of data will "enhance the dialogue between NCAA research staff and outside scholars." They conclude by highlighting one of the goals that has motivated the work of the Board over the past three years—namely, that policy analysis and decision-making be data-driven and otherwise fully informed. It goes without saying that we are delighted with this turn of events and trust that researchers will make good use of the data that will soon be available.

Michael Miranda develops the same theme of data needed for policy decision making in a second commentary ("Anecdote or Data: Research on NCAA Division III Academic Performance and the Division III Presidential White Papers"). Miranda underlines two important facts: a) that data are needed for Division III athletics, not only for the more frequently studied Division I and Division II programs; and b) that far too little is known specifically about the academic impact of the Division III athletic experience on these student-athletes.

Speaking on behalf of other members of the Board, we are more than happy to endorse these ideas. Both the Colloquium and the journal are designed to stimulate good research on intercollegiate athletics—regardless of the Division or philosophy under which they operate and regardless of the kind of institution in which they take place. While much of the national attention is focused on "big time" sport, the potential for both harm and good alike is not limited to any segment of the athletic enterprise.

—R. Scott Kretchmar