Sport in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Editors

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To Chelito, who has rejuvenated a fading veteran, and to Richard and Jeffrey, brothers and sports enthusiasts, too.
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Introduction

Joseph L. Arbena and David G. LaFrance

History

Contemporary sports in Latin America and the Caribbean evolved from three sources: indigenous games and recreation; activities introduced by the middle of the nineteenth century, primarily under colonial rule; and those distinctly modern sports that have arrived as part of the diffusion outward from the North Atlantic community, mainly England and the United States. When the Spaniards arrived in the Americas they found such recreational activities as swimming, running, wrestling, and games of chance. Only in chueca, similar to field hockey and played in southern South America, and in the Mesoamerican ball games did they see anything resembling modern team games. But these games, like much of indigenous culture, were sacred and ritualistic in content, provoking the Spaniards to try to suppress them by force. Few Europeans participated in the remnants of these games or athletic activities, some of which have survived in marginal communities.

In their place, the Iberians introduced diversions brought from home, though gradually modified by local environmental and African and Amerindian influences to form a regionally diverse American sporting culture, often involving animals and gambling. Thus, whites and mixed ethnic groups derived pleasure from many activities. Among the most prominent of these games and sports were bullfighting (especially in Mexico, Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela, which persists in those countries today), cockfighting (in Mexico and Central America), jai-alai and other Basque ball games (in the Southern Cone and selected circum-Caribbean areas), various card and board games (such as patolli, a Mexican version of Parcheesi), horse racing, and other equestrian activities related to ranching. The most common of the latter is charreada, the source of North American rodeo, played in Mexico. Various Argentine gaucho competitions such as pato, which is rather like playing basketball on horseback, and sortija, in which riders try to place a thin needle through a hanging ring, also exist. Some of these sports and games are little played today (patolli) or relegated to discrete segments of society; pato, for example, has moved from the rural pampa to be adopted by upper-class
Introduction

urban whites, while tejo (stones tossed underhand to explode blasting caps set on a target at a measured distance) is practiced by hard-drinking, lower-class, Colombian mestizos.

By the mid-1800s, three interrelated trends in the area of physical games and sports had become obvious. First, the few persisting indigenous forms virtually disappeared. Second, folk culture was attacked as an impediment to progress. The suppression of folk sports was particularly noticeable. Bullfighting was temporarily banned in Mexico, and it and cockfighting were prohibited elsewhere on grounds of cruelty and links to Spain. Pato and other gaucho diversions were suppressed in Argentina as part of an effort to impose capitalist control over the pampa and its labor force, although in the twentieth century gaucho games would be revived as elite, folkloristic activities.

Third, sport became increasingly tied to the spread of so-called modern, European culture and its evolving recreational practices. These activities came to Latin America mainly with British or French and, later and mostly around the Caribbean, North American businessmen, missionaries, teachers, sailors, and workers as well as Hispanics who studied on either side of the North Atlantic. They were practiced in the schools and social or athletic clubs opened by foreigners or by progressive locals who gradually displaced the foreigners as leaders of the sporting community. These newer, imported sports spread from the capitals and major ports into secondary cities and eventually rural areas. Thus, most popular sports in Latin America today have little connection with traditional society, not much with colonial society, and even less with pre-Columbian civilizations.

Following North Atlantic models, Latin Americans around 1900 began to organize athletic clubs, restructure school curricula, establish national associations, and later form physical education faculties, which they argued would improve health and morals, teach discipline, cultivate national identity and integration, and earn them respect in the civilized world. They likewise affiliated with the emerging international sports network: the Olympics after 1896; the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), soccer’s governing body, after 1904; and other sports federations, which appeared in later decades. Resources, however, rarely matched ambitions.

The British amateur ideal did not prevail for long. Institutionalization, commercialization, and professionalism soon became part of the game. The desire to improve performance led to longer practice sessions, the paying of salaries, and the acceptance of lower-class and darker-skinned players. The increase in free time allowed workers to become recreational athletes and spectators. The chance to make money led to charges for admissions, souvenirs, and broadcasting rights. Those countries with the closest ties to the North Atlantic economy (Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, and the Southern Cone) and those sports with the broadest appeal among the masses (boxing, horse racing, baseball, and soccer) combined to create the earliest forms of professionalism.

Professionalization also encouraged unionization, codification of contract law, and welfare legislation for players. In truth, despite higher selective player incomes, at least in soccer, baseball, and boxing, such efforts protected few athletes from exploitation. Furthermore, efforts to redress the situation, such as the Argentine soccer strike of 1948 and the Mexican baseball players’ (ANABE) movement of the early 1980s, have generally ended in failure for the athletes.

Dominating the sports map in the region is soccer (football to the British, fútbol in Spanish, futebol in Portuguese), the principal participant and spectator sport in virtually all of South America and most of Central America and Mexico. It spread as a result of British influence and of its simplicity and adaptability. Initially played by white elites, by 1930 it had socially and racially democratized, developed a popular base, moved toward professionalization, and become a foundation of emerging national identities. In other words, some Latin Americans did with soccer what Cubans and Dominicans have done with baseball and West Indians with cricket: they made the sport of the white foreigner and colonizer their own and used it as an anticolonial force to establish their own dominion, if only symbolic, over those who previously dominated them.

In the 1920s, Uruguay became the premier soccer power, winning Olympic gold medals in 1924 and 1928, four South American championships, and the first World Cup, which it hosted in 1930. Since then four other Latin American countries have hosted the Mundial (Brazil, 1950; Chile, 1962; Mexico, 1970 and 1986; and Argentina, 1978), while Colombia was awarded the competition in 1990 but had to withdraw due to a lack of infrastructure and resources. Since Uruguay’s victory in 1930, Latin Americans have won the Cup seven additional times: Uruguay (1950), Brazil (1958, 1962, 1970, 1994), and Argentina (1978, 1986). Brazil is the only country to qualify for all sixteen so-called finals and to win a title outside its own hemisphere (1958), and the first to win three championships. Also, within Latin America every year the region’s top clubs compete for the Copa Libertadores, and every two years the national teams pursue the Copa América. Subject to substantial debate is the frequent assertion that Brazil’s Pelé (Edson Arantes do Nascimento) and Argentina’s Diego Armando Maradona are the two best players the world has ever seen; both men, like most Latin American players, are from humble socioeconomic origins. In December 2000, FIFA named the two to share the designation as Best Player of the Last Seventy Years, with plans to announce the Best Player of the Century in 2004. At the
same time, FIFA also honored Spain's Real Madrid as the best soccer club of the twentieth century and France's Zinedine Zidane as the world's best player in the year 2000.

American football, by contrast, has found adherents mostly only in Mexico (not counting American schoolboys in the old Panama Canal Zone), where it has been played since the 1920s. There currently is a collegiate-level league made up of teams from the central and northern regions of the country. Local as well as satellite television carries National Football League (NFL) contests, and its teams occasionally schedule exhibition games south of the border. A few Mexicans, mainly place kickers, have played in the NFL, as have an even greater number of Mexican Americans. Other versions of American football are played by small numbers of devotees, partly as a result of the impact of televised Super Bowl extravaganzas.

Soccer's popularity, however, is not unchallenged or evenly distributed, either by place or by social group. On the island nations of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic; in northern Mexico and along its Gulf Coast, including Yucatan; and in Nicaragua, Panama, and the Caribbean zones of Colombia and Venezuela, baseball is king. The game, made attractive by its leisurely pace, low cost, and association with more politically and economically progressive societies, began arriving in the region in the 1870s, carried by U.S. sailors, engineers, educators, and military personnel as well by enthusiasts from Cuba, where it was first embraced. All these countries, as in soccer, have their own professional or organized leagues. Since 1970, the winners of the winter league in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela have played a reborn, yearly Caribbean championship series; Cuba, which frequently won the older series, no longer participates since it ended professional sports. Host Mexico, winner only three times in thirty-one years, finished second in February 2001 to the Dominicans, who have won seven of the last twelve competitions.

Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Venezuela have each won the world series of amateur baseball at least once. In recent years, Cuba's powerful "amateur" team has particularly dominated the nonprofessional circuit, winning gold medals in the 1992 and 1996 Olympic Games; they finished, for them, a disappointing second to the United States in 2000. Although these countries produced outstanding players before 1947, few of them made it to the North American major leagues because of racial barriers. At first, Cuba sent the most to the majors, but once Fidel Castro came to power in 1959, such movement proved more difficult, and major league baseball shifted its attention to Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic, although the number of Cuban baseball defectors was rising by the mid-1990s. San Pedro de Macoris, on the southeastern coast of the Dominican Republic, may have more players per capita in the major leagues than any other city in the world. Due to special legal problems, several leagues of its own, and its shared interest in soccer, Mexico's per capita output of baseball stars is not high, despite the achievements and popularity in the 1980s of Sonoran pitcher Fernando Valenzuela.

By the late 1990s, some 20 percent of players on major league rosters were from Latin American countries, driven by a love of the game, a strong desire to gain recognition, and the hope for economic achievement. Perhaps the greatest player ever, the one most cited as a model and hero, was Pittsburgh Pirate Hall-of-Famer Roberto Clemente (Puerto Rico), who died in a plane crash trying to deliver supplies to Nicaraguan earthquake victims in 1972. In the 1990s Dominican slugger Sammy Sosa gained popularity in the United States and at home as he engaged Mark McGwire in record-breaking home run races.

Baseball's counterpart, cricket, dominates the English-speaking Caribbean. What has made West Indian cricket distinctive is its lively style and carnival-like context as well as its ties to national identity, black ethnicity, and the pursuit of political independence. Although cricket, along with religion and education, was part of the white colonial regime, these three ultimately shaped the evolving culture of the transplanted African and creole (mixed-blood) population. With its emphasis on civility and recognition of achievement, cricket allowed West Indians a chance to emulate mainstream society while also challenging both British colonial rule and white domination.

Cricket matches between English and West Indian clubs began in the 1890s, although the first Test Match was not held until 1928. While several blacks represented early West Indies teams, the first black captain was Frank Worrell, named in 1959 following increasing criticism of white control of the sport in the islands. Later international Tests have earned the West Indians a reputation as the world's best for much of the last generation. If emotions surrounding such matches have engendered occasional riots among Caribbean fans, success has also stimulated great pride in such black stars as Worrell, Learie Constantine, George Headley, the great all-rounder Garfield (Gary) Sobers, and, more recently, Brian Lara.

Boxing is often the means of escape from poverty for whites and nonwhites all across Latin America. Given the number of international sanctioning bodies, it is impossible to cite all the past and present world champions, especially in the lighter weight divisions. Boxers who brought their countrymen thrills include Carlos Monzón and Pascual Pérez (Argentina), Alexis Argüello (Nicaragua), Al Brown, Luis Ibarra and Roberto Durán (Panama), Juan Guzmán (Dominican Republic), Vicente Rondón (Venezuela), and Julio César Chávez (Mexico). In 1994, Chávez was
Middle America (Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean)
knocked down and defeated, both for the first time, after ninety fights and three world titles. Today, Cuba rules the amateur sphere as seen in the Pan American games, the Olympics, world boxing tournaments, and bi-national competitions with the United States. Best known among the Cubans has been heavyweight Teófilo Stevenson, who dominated the Olympics in the 1970s and later successfully coached his national team. Unlike boxing's near universal appeal, professional wrestling (lucha libre) has achieved extensive popularity among Mexico's working classes, yet less acceptance elsewhere.

Basketball has been played throughout Latin America since early in the twentieth century, and several countries, such as Brazil and Cuba, have succeeded on the international level. Argentina hosted and won basketball's first world championship in 1950. Uruguay has a limited professional league, and Mexico has a collegiate-level circuit. Recently, due in part to satellite transmission and possibly to racial identification, basketball, as exemplified by the National Basketball Association (NBA) and goodwill tours by its stars such as “Magic” Johnson, has become popular across the Caribbean. Within most countries, basketball remains an important part of physical education and recreation programs; Mexico, for example, introduced the sport into its public schools as early as the 1930s. Several players from the Caribbean as well as Mexico are now playing in the NBA.

Less extensively but also spreading is volleyball, carried worldwide by YMCA workers. Brazil, Cuba, and Peruvian women have excelled in international competition. Brazilians of both genders also rated very high at the 1996 Olympics in the newer beach volleyball sport and won both the men's and women's finals in the first world championships in 1997, a reflection perhaps of Brazilians' love of the beach.

As for other ball games, Latin American tennis stars, including several women, have increasingly populated world rankings since the glory days of Anita Linzana (Chile), Pancho Segura (Ecuador), Pancho González (Mexico), and Maria Bueno (Brazil). Out of the 1970s and 1980s emerged such stars as Guillermo Vilas (Argentina), Alex Olmedo (Peru), Andrés Gómez (Ecuador), and Gabriela Sabatini (Argentina). The temperamental Marcelo Ríos (Chile), upon winning the French Open in 1998, became the first Latin American man ever to be ranked number one in the tennis world; in 2000, Gustavo “Guga” Kuerten (Brazil) matched Ríos's achievement. Their success has promoted the game as a recreational activity for a limited middle class in their home countries. On the golf links, Roberto De Vicenzo (Argentina) competed among the best in the 1950s and 1960s; Juan “Chi Chi” Rodriguez (Puerto Rico) continued through the 1990s to play on the Professional Golf Association (PGA) Senior Tour, as did Lee Trevino (Treviño) a Mexican American. Finally, Mexico, selected Andean countries, and Cuba have long been promoters of jai-alai. Like jai-alai, handball and several other related court ball games derive from old Basque sports labeled pelota vasca.

Racing, too, attracts much attention in selected parts of Latin America. Perhaps because of their early industrialization, Argentina and Brazil embraced auto racing, both track and open road, and produced international champions such as Argentina's Juan Manuel Fangio (five-time world Formula I winner) and Oscar Gálvez and Brazil's Emerson Fittipaldi, Nelson Piquet, and Ayrton Senna, whose tragic death during a race in Italy in 1994 was mourned both in his native country and across Latin America. Cycling, an early import from Europe because of its ties to technology, exercise, and French leisure, has been more prominent in mountainous countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico. Finally, horse racing also plays a part on the sport scene. In areas under British influence, the horses run clockwise on grass.

At different times, Latin American athletes, including women, also have shown their skills in a wide range of other sports. Claudia Poll (Costa Rica) became a national hero upon winning a gold medal in swimming at the 1996 Summer Olympics; her sister, Silvia, had starred in the 1987 Pan American Games. Skater Nora Alicia Vega (Argentina) won five world titles in a sport usually dominated by Europeans. Track and field events bring to mind the Brazilian runner Joaquin Cruz (1984 Olympic gold medalist) as well as the Cuban greats, sprinter Alberto Juantorena, high jumper Javier Sotomayor, and javelin thrower Maria Caridad Colón, who took the gold in the 1980 Olympics. Raúl González Rodríguez (Mexico) walked, mainly at a distance of fifty kilometers, to three world championships, two Olympic medals, and numerous records, overcoming a lack of support for a nonprofessional and not very glamorous sport. Weight lifter Soraya Jiménez (Mexico) also caught her country's attention by winning a gold medal in the 2000 Olympics. Chess, which, too, is considered a sport in the region, was led for years by the Cuban grand master, José Raúl Capablanca. More recently, Latin Americans have also shown increasing interest in noncompetitive participatory sports and recreational activities such as hiking and climbing, camping, survivalism, boating, and sport fishing.

In addition to soccer (Latin Americans joined FIFA, the sport's governing body, in 1913), the last century has also witnessed the region's participation in other international sports competitions, particularly in the Olympics and related games. They began to take part in Olympics as early as 1900. In 1968, Mexico was the first Third World and only Latin American country to sponsor the Summer Olympics. In 1922, on the centenary of its independence, Brazil organized the now-defunct South American Games; in 1926, encouraged by the Olympic leadership in Paris in 1924, Mexico hosted the first Central American and Caribbean games. (Overwhelmed by Mexico and Cuba in particular, the isthmian countries...
started a more limited Central American Games in Guatemala in 1973.)
In 1938, on the 400th anniversary of its capital, Colombia initiated the
Bolivarian Games. In 1951, Juan Perón’s Argentina inaugurated the Pan
American Games, a competition likewise encouraged by the Olympic lead-
ership as early as the Los Angeles Olympics (1932) and originally sched-
uled for Buenos Aires in 1942. A smaller winter version of the Pan
American Games debuted in 1990, but it has had only minimal success
given the lack of suitable training sites, except for in the United States,
Canada, and the Southern Cone.

In recent decades, no single country of the region has had the degree
of success in international competition as Cuba, thus underlining that
nation’s unique system and the relative weakness of the rest of Latin
America in sport. After 1959 and at a controversial cost, Cuba, in part
through a Communist model administered by the National Institute for
Sports, Physical Recreation, and Recreation (INDER), eliminated open
professionalism and expanded domestic athletic activities to raise
health standards at all age levels and for both sexes. Aided at first in this
project by the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, in recent decades
Cuba has become self-sufficient and even an exporter of coaches and
technology.

The nation’s high point came in the 1990s. First, in 1991, it success-
fully hosted the XI Pan American Games. Under severe economic and
political difficulties, the Cubans not only prepared the facilities for thirty
nine countries and over 4,500 athletes but also won ten more gold medals
than did the United States (140–130), although the total medal count fa-
vored the latter (352–265). Then, in 1992 at the Barcelona Olympics,
Cuba’s medal count totaled thirty-one, placing the island nation fifth over-
all in gold medals and sixth in total medals. In Atlanta in 1996 Cuba
placed seventh and ninth, respectively. Within Latin America that year.
Cuba won more medals than Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico combined—
more also than Canada—which illustrates that without the Cubans the
overall Latin American performance in 1996 was lower than for any re-
gion on the globe. At Sydney in 2000 they were eighth in total medals and
tied for ninth in gold, surpassing Great Britain and all Western Hemi-
sphere countries except the United States. Still, these successes have not
kept Cuban athletes from fleeing the island’s economic failures and po-
itical restrictions. Some forty Cuban athletes, for example, defected dur-
during the 1993 Central American and Caribbean Games in Puerto Rico,
suggesting that dissatisfaction runs high even among the privileged—a
conviction reaffirmed by the similar flight of an increasing number of
players from Cuba’s Pan American, world amateur, and Olympic champi-
onship baseball teams, several of whom signed professional contracts in
North America. Among these a few, such as New York Yankee pitcher
Orlando “El Duque” Hernández, have become World Series heroes.

Issues

Given the long history of sport, it still is necessary to define exactly what
one means by the term. Broadly, sport is a form of diversion or recrea-
tion. Nevertheless, so are many other activities such as movie going, or
beer drinking, or even sex. Therefore, sport consists of something else, a
physical and mental endeavor that involves competition against others or
with oneself. Competition here is used in the sense of pushing oneself
toward a goal—even something as mundane as a daily walk around the
block—in an effort to enhance one’s well-being. It could also cover other
informal activities not always construed as sport, such as chess, cyclists
on tour, or even hopscotch. Clearly, however, the more common idea of
sport includes not only competition but also some degree of organization
and systematization with rules and procedures and generally score keep-
ing. In Allen Guttmann’s models, sport is defined as organized, physical,
competitive play. Thus, there are differences between, say, tossing a ball
and playing in a baseball game. The latter is more commonly thought of
as sport, although the former may be shaped by and in turn contribute to
the more refined practice of true sport.

Another issue to be considered is modern sport, the topic of this vol-
ume, as opposed to its so-called earlier counterpart. Here, a time factor
clearly divides the two; according to most periodizations, sporting activi-
ties that took place before approximately 1850 are considered pre-
modern. Nevertheless, certain endeavors, such as foot or horse racing and
even hitting or throwing a ball can be traced back for centuries; consider
the Mesoamerican indigenous peoples, for example, who, divided by
teams, competed by using their bodies to place a sphere through vertical
stone hoops.

What then, besides chronology, divides modern from ancient? Again,
one must return to the idea of organization and systematization. In the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, societies, or at least seg-
ments of those societies, in certain parts of the world gained enough leisure
time and material resources to dedicate themselves and their money
toward a goal—regularized sport. Again citing Guttmann, modern sports are charac-
terized by secularism, equality, bureaucratization, specialization, ratio-
nalization, quantification, and an obsession with records. Clearly there
seems to be a connection between the rise of modern sport and industrial
capitalism both in an economic and a bureaucratic sense: note the in-
creasing emphasis during that later period on record keeping, rules, train-
ing, and professionalism in all walks of life (such as, for example, the rise
of discrete social science and humanities disciplines in universities and
the requirement that doctors and lawyers be licensed). Few societies be-
fore this time had the means or motivation to apply such regimentation
and importance to nonwork endeavors.
Furthermore, it was not only a question of resources and motivation that promoted the development of modern sport in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As William Beezley demonstrates for Mexico in *Judas at the Jockey Club*, sport was much more than merely tangential to the modernizing process; indeed, it was an integral part of that very process and helped to allow people to adjust to and perform better in that rapidly changing era.\(^2\) Cycling, for example, not only offered something to do during one's spare time but also maintained or even improved one's health, an important consideration in an age in which hard physical labor was no longer a part of daily life for middle-class urbanites.

Organized boxing epitomized the individualistic competition of the period's stage of economic development. Team sports provided another type of competition, attuned to the expanding factory system, in which team/firm competed against team/firm, while within the organization players/workers learned to cooperate as a cohesive unit following certain rules and procedures and operating under the guidance of a coach/foreman. In addition, baseball, soccer, basketball, and the like were well suited to and even made more compelling by elaborate record keeping, again another parallel between sport and the bureaucratic modernization of the time. Furthermore, modern sport stimulated, through equipment manufacturing and repair, commercial sales, facility construction and maintenance, and, of course, ticket purchases, the very development of capitalism that it reflected. After all, who would deny that sport and Coca-Cola or Nike sportswear, to take two recent examples, go hand in hand?

In this same vein, some observers would also argue that sport enslaves the individual to his or her society. In other words, participation in modern sport, either as player or fan, reinforces societal norms and one's acceptance of them, even though these practices may be exploitative. Here, one might point out as an example the average factory worker or teacher who spends a lot of money on tickets to watch millionaire ball players, accepting the fact that he is, one could say, being exploited for the benefit of overpaid, self-indulgent professionals who produce, unlike the worker or teacher, little of concrete value. Another example might be the casual runner who, convinced by advertisements, thinks he needs the latest model of Nike athletic shoes; again, this purchase enriches a huge corporation and the professional athletes who endorse its products. Nevertheless, other students of sport and its relationship to society have argued that this idea of enslavement is simplistic. They posit, instead, that sport is mostly neutral. People participate in it or watch it for benign, but not unimportant, reasons of health, relaxation, and entertainment. Once having taken part, however, the experience does not necessarily carry with it any ulterior baggage such as an acceptance or reinforcement of society's social structures or one's own personal exploitation.

Other observers claim that while sport does reflect and strengthen the dominant norms of society, it also provides individuals with a means to challenge those very structures, whether social, economic or political. In other words, according to this argument, one gets out of sport what one sees as appropriate to one's own desires or needs. One player or fan, for example, may participate in or view a game with little other motivation than to have fun; afterward he walks away feeling satisfied about his team's performance and, by extension, views his life and his place in it (at least for the moment) positively. Another person may enter or view the same contest with the intention of taking out his frustrations about life, or boss, or spouse, and therefore challenging the status quo through the security of the ritual of sport. What we have here is a safety-valve phenomenon, in which sport allows the angry and frustrated person to let off steam in a relatively harmless way, thus preventing more serious "blowups" in the society at large. As Richard D. E. Burton observes regarding Caribbean cricket, the significant fact for West Indians is "not that they regularly beat Massa at his own game and regularly make him look foolish, but that they are playing his game in the first place." The consequence is that "the System itself survives—strengthened, not weakened by its merely symbolic defeat."

A fourth issue that one must consider when analyzing the nature of sport is the debate between amateurism and professionalism. Basically, the controversy swirls around whether one is superior to the other, or, more accurately, whether professionalism has ruined the ideals of amateurism. Traditionally, those advocating amateurism have taken the high road, claiming that sport's principal objective should be the betterment of our health and moral condition; we should all play for the fun of it. According to this line of thinking, paying someone to take part in what amounts to a game not only corrupts players and turns them into elitists but also transforms likely participants into fans. Those people who defend professionalism argue, however, that if the public wants to pay for sedentary diversion, then the entertainers should be duly compensated for their work. (Note here the transition from player as entertainer to worker and the implications this differentiation has in how one views and treats athletes.) After all, are athletes as entertainers/workers/artists any different from opera and rock singers, actors, novelists, or fashion models?

Attitudes about the superiority of amateurism have a fairly long history, going back to the origins of the modernization of sport in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. In that period, only people of some economic means had the resources and leisure time to participate in sport; they also had no need to be paid for their activity and shunned so-called public spectacles. Furthermore, the requirements of money and time generally kept out the lower classes, who had neither in sufficient amounts to join...
in, at least in any organized form of sport of the day. Over time, however, as the popularity of organized sport spread to the lower rungs of society, the working classes began to form their own teams (sometimes with the help of bosses and owners), and more and more people were attracted to the contests as fans. Entrepreneurs, less concerned about elitism and amateurism, saw the opportunity to attract the best players of any social class because this superior product attracted paying fans. Thus, a semi-professional system arose in which ad hoc payments to athletes and volunteer donations by observers became the norm. Eventually, these sometimes illegal or at least condemned practices became tolerated and accepted, thus resulting in full-blown professionalism. Nevertheless, the tension between amateur and professional sports still exists today. Witness the debate among countries over whether the Olympics should permit professional players to take part in the games or the insistence on the part of Cuba that its athletes, though provided with special benefits, privileges, and training, are amateurs and not professionals.

In recent years, as students of sport (economists, historians, political scientists, sociologists, and others) have increasingly examined its relationship to human life, other avenues of inquiry and speculation have evolved, most of them not as philosophical as the issues addressed above but nevertheless relevant to an understanding of this complex and constantly changing phenomenon, which touches in one way or another the life of nearly every human being. Most attention in this regard has been paid to sport in the developed countries of Europe, North America, and Austral-Asia. However, a growing body of work exists on other areas of the world, including Latin America.

One theme is the internationalization or the diffusion and globalization of sport. No so-called modern sport originated in Latin America either during its pre-Columbian or colonial eras (to the 1820s). All, including football/soccer, baseball, basketball, volleyball, boxing, cycling, tennis, swimming, wrestling, charreada, automobile racing, and even bullfighting, originated in Europe or North America and were adopted in Latin America. As a result, each sport now practiced there has a history of transferal to the middle and southern zones of the Western Hemisphere. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that the transferal process was one in which the sport arrived intact. Latin America as a whole and even areas within the region adapted these sports to their specific needs and cultures. Over time many of these sports have continued to evolve, making them in some instances increasingly different from those in their countries of origin.

This process has been studied comprehensively by Tony Mason, who, in *Passion of the People?*, traces football (soccer) from England to South America, particularly in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. Mason argues that within three to four decades of football being introduced to South America, the working classes had adopted the heretofore elite sport as their own and began to modify it, giving it more flair, passion, and emotion than that of Europe where almost formulaic structure and technique dominated. Indeed, commentators today still talk about the “difference” between the sport on the two continents. Nevertheless, Mason goes on to say that as football has become more internationalized in the mid-to late-twentieth century via the World Cup and other intercountry and intercontinental competitions, including the establishment of FIFA and its universal body of rules, the sport has begun to revert to a more homogeneous form that undermines the differences between regions of the globe. Obviously depressed by a perceived tendency of world soccer and culture to become standardized and conservative. Uruguayan historian and avid soccer fan Eduardo Galeano predicts that “in this end-of-century world, whoever doesn’t die of hunger dies of boredom.”

The fact that sport has been imported into Latin America raises the question of whether this process has produced or at least contributed to a relationship of dependency or hegemony between the originating and recipient country or region. Likewise, the growth of Latin America’s athletic pool, the region’s uneven and relatively dependent economic development, and the growing international sports dimension have resulted in the migration of players and coaches within and from Latin America and the sale within the region of foreign sporting equipment and televised sporting events. The best performers move from small town to city and small country to large one. They start with small clubs, then are transferred to better known ones, although these also lack funds and sell their rights to the players abroad. Soccer players, especially from the Southern Cone, commonly play their peak years in Europe. Building on a tradition that dates back to the 1930s, for example, over 400 Argentine soccer players were estimated to be playing in other countries in the 1990s. Cricket and baseball players from the circum-Caribbean earn fame and fortune in Britain and North America, respectively. Before 1959, Cuba was the major source mined for baseball talent, but since 1970 the mother lode has been the Dominican Republic. Other countries provide jockeys, boxers, and American football place kickers. On the amateur level they also help fill rosters of American university swimming, tennis, soccer, and track teams. Although the foreign exploits of their former hometown heroes may warm the hearts of locals, their home clubs suffer a loss of fans, and national teams lack time together to prepare for international competitions. In other sports, such as track and field, the best athletes often reside and train abroad; in sports such as tennis and auto racing, most competition is out of the country. In short, except via television, most people have little contact with their athletic heroes. Moreover, whatever
their sport and wherever they choose to live, Latin America's best athletes traditionally have had to travel abroad to earn major recognition and rewards.

Most observers would agree that in some important ways, particularly economic and cultural, the region is subject to the undue and, many would argue, unhealthy influence of Europe and the United States. While other people would accept the dependency idea in general, many of them would add that sport is also used to resist outside influences; this can take on symbolic importance, such as in the modification of an imported sport as mentioned above, or in a more direct form in international competition, in which both players and fans evaluate successes or losses in nationalistic terms.

Two works by Alan Klein have explored the intricacies of this dependency-nationalism idea. In *Sugarball* he shows that Dominicans admire U.S. culture and ways, aping much of what the larger country does and sending many of its talented athletes northward to play. Nevertheless, the author argues that baseball is used in this Caribbean nation to create a sense of nationalism; its people take tremendous pride in the success of its exports to the center of world-class ball. The irony, of course, is not only that the Dominicans employ a foreign cultural import to assert their patriotism but also that the more they imitate U.S. baseball, the more they undermine the distinctiveness of their own game and thus its ability to challenge the hegemony of their northern neighbor.

In a second book, *Baseball on the Border,* Klein examines different forms of nationalism and how they are manifested by Mexican players who were members of the unique binational (Mexico and the United States) baseball team, the Tecolotes de los Dos Laredos (Owls of the Two Laredos), which shared two cities, Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. According to Klein, players and the larger communities demonstrated three types of nationalism depending on given situations: nationalistic, the most traditional, which pits one's own country against another; binationalism, or the pragmatic sharing of interests, especially along a border; and transnationalism, or the fusion of the other two forms into what amounts to the creation of a border region that sees itself as unique and apart from the power centers (in this case, Washington and Mexico City) of each country.

No major sport, and few minor sports that are played internationally, escape the fact that governments have a close connection to them. Thus, sport and politics are often closely intertwined. All countries have, however poorly funded and ineffective, some version of an integrated national sports federation, such as Chile's DIGEDER, Colombia's COLDEPORTES, Cuba's INDER, and Mexico's CONADE. In addition, there are national associations for most sports, Olympic organizing committees, a physical education institute, and periodic "national games" at different age levels.

Some people bemoan this aspect of government involvement, while others applaud it; whatever the case, it is an important component of sport studies. Sports people, commonly without adequate resources, have looked to the government for support. In turn, officials readily have understood the value of backing sport to one degree or another. First, it has not been lost on politicians that sport is widely popular. Take note, for example, of the candidates for office who show up at contests or Argentine president Carlos Menem who, in the 1990s, was often seen playing soccer wearing the shirt of the national team. Second, teams and events, many argue, bring economic as well as psychic well-being to a community. In this vein, one hardly needs mention the rhetoric surrounding the building of professional-level stadiums and other facilities to attract and support teams or events.

Third, authorities in many areas promote sport as a means to improve the physical (and mental) health of the society at large; many countries and states and provinces have physical education requirements in the public school system and even in universities. Finally, returning to the nationalism idea, leaders back sport as a means to enhance a country's image both at home and abroad, thus helping to legitimize incumbent regimes and attract foreign aid, investment, and tourism. This phenomenon goes back to the 1930s when President Getulio Vargas of Brazil gave his government a formal role in the promotion of sports. A decade later, Juan Perón of Argentina (1946-1955) moved even further in funding training and travel for national athletes, organizing youth sports and competitions, diverting money to professional soccer clubs, arranging public appearances with famous athletes, attending high-profile events, and hosting the Pan American Games. Since coming to power in 1959, Fidel Castro in Cuba has done much the same, only on an even larger and more successful scale. Mexico hosted the Olympic Games in 1968, in part to project an image of development and modernity, but the event was marred by the shooting of hundreds of protesters in central Mexico City. Perhaps the most notorious example of this political use of sport occurred during the Latin American military dictatorships of the 1960s to the 1980s, especially those in the Southern Cone. Officer-run regimes promoted international competition in a blatant attempt to curry favor and burnish their tarnished images; in contrast was Chilean strongman Augusto Pinochet who, after taking power in 1973, suppressed all sports clubs and events that might give voice to critics and protesters.

In another perspective on this issue, Janet Lever, in her pioneering study *Soccer Madness,* connects official support for sport to the goal of national integration. Brazil, despite its many cleavages (region, ethnicity,
religion, class), she argues, demonstrates a unique ability to remain a whole, thanks at least in part to football/soccer. Participation in and observation of the sport from the local through the state and national levels to the international level help to overcome these divisions and thus create unity through competition. Brazilian leaders from bottom to top thus expend public monies on sport on soccer's behalf.

A consideration of sport and politics moves on to a closely related inquiry: the difference between a judgment about sport in socialistic and capitalist nations. From the socialist perspective, capitalist nations treat sport as a commercialized, individualized endeavor that may benefit the athlete personally yet does little or nothing for the populace or nation as a whole. Furthermore, this view would posit that socialist countries have proven to be international sport powerhouses despite, in most instances, their relatively smaller population and resource bases. The capitalist would counter by saying that socialist systems smother personal initiative, overly regiment society, and deny successful athletes their economic due. Another less visible position maintains that all organized sport is inherently exploitative and repressive and should be abolished in favor of true play and games.

Paula Pettavino and Geralyn Pye have taken the closest look at arguably the only truly socialistic sport system in the Americas, that of Cuba. They trace the history of sport in Cuba, comparing the pre- and post-revolutionary periods, and point out the difficulty in developing a socialistic sport system in a primarily capitalistic world. Castro's efforts, the authors assert, have come close to meeting several socialistic ideals such as mass participation, a healthier populace, and national integration. Nevertheless, with the increasing difficulty of supporting economically such an extensive sport system and the temptation to focus on the training of world-class elite performers, both to bring in hard currency and to boost Cuba politically on the international scene, there is the danger of losing sight of or even undermining many of the heretofore impressive achievements regarding mass, egalitarian sport. Recently the results of this process have been manifested in the defection of Cuban athletes, especially baseball players, to the United States, in which their officially expressed desire for freedom is difficult to separate from the motivation of earning undreamed-of salaries.

No matter whether capitalistic or socialistic, however, every government views, at least to some extent, sport in terms of the good it can do for the physical and mental well-being of society as a whole. In other words, sport, through direct participation as well as the diversion it creates, is seen as the key factor in the development of a healthy, contented, and vice-free people. Political entities at all levels (not to mention private efforts—note the proliferation of exercise facilities as standard perquisites at many businesses) expend large amounts of resources on play-
be argued that many sports are driven by the money that the media offers. Television contracts, especially, provide the economic wherewithal for teams and leagues and transnational organizers to pay athletes huge salaries and stage extravagant events.

Consider, moreover, the common use of sport jargon in the ordinary language and of sport themes in artistic expression. While the language of sport was built on the Hispanicized pronunciation of imported, usually English, terms (golf, round, football), more recently, under pressures of mass involvement and nationalism, either Spanish or Portuguese linguistic inventions have replaced many foreign words (buexo for boxing, gol for goal, arquero for goalie) or reasonable translations have been identified (fuera de lugar for offside, lanzador for pitcher, árbitro for referee). Politicians often "move pieces on the board" in the hope of "getting to the head of the pack" in order to "score more goals." Popular songs praise the skills of Pelé and Fernando Valenzuela; poems glorify the talents of Brazilian soccer star Garrincha, Puerto Rican baseballer Roberto Clemente, and Argentine jockey Irineo Leguizamo; works of art illustrate the physical beauty of athletics. Great writers such as Julio Cortázar (boxing, Argentina) and Antonio Skármeta (cycling and soccer, Chile) have long used real play or game settings to convey their ideas. Increasingly, authors depict sport as physical activity rather than spectacle and as a means to represent social and psychological conflicts among literary characters, as in the boxing plays of Eduardo Pavlosky (Argentina) and Vicente Leñero (Mexico) and the novels of Isaac Goldemberg (soccer, Peru) and José Agustín (baseball, Mexico). Humorists Roberto Fontanarrosa (Argentina) and Oscar Conti (Chile) have contributed numerous collections of sports-related cartoons. A final expression is seen in widely read sports periodicals such as El Gráfico (Argentina), Placar (Brazil), and Estó (Mexico). Clearly, sport fills an important place in and reflects Latin American society.

Notes


2. William Beetzley, Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).


