SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY
C H A P T E R  1

HOW HAVE MEANINGS ABOUT SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CHANGED OVER TIME?

- the beginnings of modern sport in 19th century England and colonial Australia
- compare the nature of sport in the 19th century with sport in today’s society. Consider questions such as:
  - how have the meanings of amateur and professional sport changed?
  - how did the meanings of sport differ for different social groups?
  - how did women’s and men’s sports participation differ and why?

It is generally accepted that the idea of 'modern' sport developed in England at around the time of the industrial revolution. While the revolution brought about improved infrastructure and communications, better pay and the increased opportunity for leisure and sport, there is evidence of organised sporting clubs before the industrial revolution in cricket, golf and horseracing. The industrial revolution also brought with it a move from rural areas to cities. This increase in urban population brought with it an increase in crime. This ultimately lead to more prisoners. The British government determined on settling in New South Wales, so it was established as a penal colony and the first fleet was sent to Australia in 1788.

Since the arrival of the first fleet, sport and physical pursuits have played a major part in building the culture and identity of Australia and its people. The earliest forms of modern Australian sport were played in an unsophisticated and informal manner because of scarce resources. As the colony prospered economically, working class colonists were able to find time for leisure activities which provided fun and amusement.

It was in this climate that organised sport in Australia began. Some of the earliest sports recorded were horse racing and cock fighting; gambling on these contests soon became a popular pastime.

When the free settlers arrived to the colonies in 1793, they introduced sports that were more...
acceptable to their upper social status. Cricket was one of the first of these sports to be played competitively and the first cricket club was established in Sydney in 1826. (The very first sporting club to be set up in Sydney was a boxing club in 1814.) This mirrored earlier development in England.

In 1859, the emergence of Australian Rules football was significant in the development of Australia’s sporting history. Up until this time all other sports played in Australia had originated from England and some were adapted to local conditions. But ‘Aussie Rules’ was the first game that was developed in this country. Another Australian iconic event was the first Melbourne Cup horse race in 1861 at Flemington Racecourse. These specific sporting activities helped Australia emerge as a sporting nation.

---

**links with manliness, patriotism and character**

The geographical distance that separated Australia and Great Britain tested the morale of the British military and the public servants who were living in the country at the time to govern and develop the colony. Sport was seen as one way of developing strength of **character**, masculinity or **manliness**, and devotion or **patriotism** to the homeland.

Participating in physical sports was thought to be a good way to build and test a man’s strength and muscular abilities and therefore develop his manliness. It also helped strengthen a man’s character to persevere and not be afraid to do battle. The sport of football in particular demonstrated brave soldiering qualities among its players, characteristics valued by the military and leaders of the colonies.

Organised team sports developed a national pride for Britain as well as the beginnings of patriotism in early Australians. Popular and friendly rivalry between sporting teams at the time sparked a strong competitive spirit that still exists today between England and Australia.

---

**the meaning of amateur and professional sport**

Sport in its earliest forms was played with an **amateur** status, which meant that players received no financial reward for participation in their chosen sport. In 19th-century Britain, only the wealthy played sport because they did not work and had a lot of spare time. Sport was considered a pastime for socialising. Amateur sport ensured that class distinction remained between sportsmen, many amateur sports players did not want to take part in competition with the lower classes because of the rigid class structure in England. This also ensured that sports clubs were kept exclusive and under the control and patronage of the upper classes.

Working class men in England had little opportunity to play sport until the **Factory Act of 1844** allowed them half a day off a week, which gave them the opportunity to spend free time playing sport. This was not enough to compete with the upper class amateurs, who had much more time and money to devote to sporting pursuits. Working class men found it hard to play top level sport for this reason.

In the early 19th century the beginnings of **professional** sport emerged, which meant that players were paid money for their participation. Boxers were sometimes paid to lose a fight, but before long, payment was dependent on the boxer’s physical ability to win. Gambling associated with sport allowed the lower classes to try and make a little money, and so blood sports such as boxing became very popular. Up to the mid 20th century most athletes held down jobs to support themselves financially, but were usually offered time off to train or travel to play their sport—these were classed as semi-professional athletes.
Rugby union was traditionally played by the wealthy class, who were required to pay fees to join clubs and participate in the game. It became a professional sport in the late 20th century and union players still come predominantly from private schools and universities. For the working class, Rugby League was developed in 1895, and although it eventually became a professional sport, it is still known today as the 'working man's game'.

Find out more about the history of rugby league:


Australia’s earliest professional athletics track race was the Stawell Gift, where wealthy people sponsored runners in the event. It was first run in 1878 and remains Australia’s oldest and richest short-distance running race. Many of the earlier runners were young Indigenous males and this was probably the first time that Indigenous Australians participated in athletics in the colony. Indigenous males also participated in boxing and were sponsored because they were strong and could be paid modest amounts. Gambling and professional sport prospered during this time and young men from Indigenous and poor working class backgrounds were exploited by a few wealthy entrepreneurs within the community.

---

**women’s historical participation in sport**

Sport in 19th-century Britain was specifically a male domain and women were rarely encouraged, or permitted, to participate but were expected to be spectators. As a consequence, few records exist of women’s early sporting successes. The main restrictions that limited women to participate in many physical activities were physiology, fashion and social expectations.

In the early 1800s, women’s pastimes included needlework, music and reading; and participating in any sporting activity was frowned upon. The fashions of the day—corsets, stays and long voluminous skirts and petticoats—prevented women from moving freely. All of these physical restrictions kept women on the domestic front and were actively encouraged by men.

It was not until the Victorian era (1840–1901) that the true beginnings of women in sport emerged. Women were offered higher educational opportunities and an increasing number were participating in the workforce. Women had started to campaign for girls to be educated in physical education and for women to be able to play sports.

One of the first sports introduced for women was a form of skittles that later evolved into gymnastics. Archery was one of the first organised sports where women were allowed to compete in tournaments. Tennis was the most popular sport in the Victorian era and one that women could play without being perceived as unfeminine. In 1884, a women’s singles tennis competition was introduced at Wimbledon.

Unfortunately, society controlled women’s physical activities by demanding dress codes that showed little or no flesh and made movement and skill development for women very difficult. But it was bicycling that gave women the potential for physical mobility and freed them from their restrictive clothing, as they turned to bloomers and knickerbockers as dress alternatives.

For women living in colonial Australia, there was little time for sport but the realities of colonial life meant that women became good at shooting, rowing, archery, swimming and horseriding. Qualities of strength and endurance were required to survive and although these were generally seen as male qualities many early Australian women possessed stamina and strength. With time, women began to take a more active role in their communities and participate in sports.
Other sports that became available for women were walking, golf, croquet, rowing, sailing and swimming at secluded beaches or pools unfrequented by males.

In Australian schools in the late 1800s, girls were instructed in marching, callisthenics and dancing. Young girls from elite families played some team sports but female sport was frowned upon by most people.

Australia’s first female Olympians were Fanny Durack and Mina Wylie, who won gold and silver in the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm, Sweden for the first ever women’s 100-metre freestyle swimming event. Their success was reported in local newspapers and they became national heroes and role models for Australian women.

The advent of World War One, 1914–1918, brought about a changing attitude towards women’s freedom and participation in sport, and they were permitted to compete in sporting events like athletics. However, it took many years before women were allowed to compete in more physically challenging events like marathons, and there is still no 1500-metre freestyle swimming event available for women.

Today, acceptance of women in sport has given them opportunities to compete at club and elite competitions, with high participation rates in individual sports such as swimming, tennis and athletics. Women are now competing at elite levels in male-dominated sports such as boxing and martial arts, with Australia’s first female gold medal in tae kwando awarded to Lauren Burns in the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Women of all ages now participate in health-enhancing physical activities such as aerobics, yoga, Pilates and aquarobics.

Barriers in place that limited women’s participation in sport were the:

- Victorian social standards
- Male-dominated sports club membership rules
- Trivialisation of women’s sport by the male population
- Fashions of the day
- Medical profession’s views toward sport and women
- Moralists in colonial society who saw women’s sport as evil and prevented nurturing of families
- Media’s limited recognition of women’s sport.
The Australian women’s swimming team has become legendary with its consistent international success and provides excellent role models for young girls aspiring to greatness in sport. Mixed male and female competitions, particularly netball and touch football are also popular. Women are still subjected to discrete discrimination where they are either denied access to some sports and activities that men play, or stereotyped depending on their sport and activity of choice. However, women now can enjoy most sports.

www.ausport.gov.au/participating/women/about/history

- **sport as a commodity**
- **analyse the consequences for various sports as they have adopted a business focus**

Modern sport is an industry that produces and sells major products and services, it is part entertainment, part commercial advertising, with each element based on the profit motive. Sport in the second millennium is recognised as a business and therefore faces the challenges of conducting ethical transactions in a very competitive environment.

Since European settlement, the landscape of Australian sport has been evolving and developing into a big business commodity, rather than just a recreational pastime. Professional sport has evolved from meagre match payments and part-time athletes to full time highly paid professionals. Thirty years ago Australia’s most popular professional football codes of Rugby League and AFL still had a majority of players who had day jobs because the sporting payments were insufficient to allow them to train full time. Cricket also was played and organised in a very traditional and amateur format.

The most influential change to sport has been the advent of television coverage and in particular pay television. Kerry Packer and the ‘… repackaging of cricket in the 70s to suit television audiences’ was the start of a strong link between sport and the media. Rupert Murdoch has also been a huge influence on professional sport both here and overseas. Rugby League and Rugby Union were completely revamped with new teams and competitions. The Olympic Games and the Football World Cup are the most widely viewed television tournaments in the world. There are vast amounts of money being generated by sponsors and companies for these events and athletes are now being paid exceptionally well for their athletic ability.

From a government perspective, the development of the Australian Institute of Sport led athletes to receive scholarships to pursue elite training. The Australian model for developing world class athletes has been recognised as one of the most effective sports development programs in the world. The establishment of professionalism in sport has improved the standards of sport at all levels including government funding to business sponsorships. It has also raised the profile of major sports and players, fuelled by strong media interest.

SOURCE: JIM DALY, ADJUNCT SCHOLAR, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, *RETHINKING THE ETHICS OF SPORT BUSINESS PRACTICES*

---

**FIGURE 1.5**

Serena Williams has won the most prize money of any female athlete in history, surpassing golfer Annika Sorenstam, after her Australian Open win in 2009.
While football codes, cricket, tennis and basketball embraced the rise of professional sport, the Olympic movement was reluctant to move from its traditional amateur status. Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, developed altruistic ideals that athletes participated for the love of their sport and competition, while always following the code of fair play and friendship. The Olympic movement struggled to reconcile the Olympic ideals with the cut-throat world of professional sport, but eventually gave in after much pressure from powerful countries such as the United States, who were eager to show off their best athletes and increase their medal tally.

— sport as big business

There is a lot of money in sport, and with increasing opportunities for jobs, its value to business is growing. The impact on trade to promote and provide successful sport extends to almost every corner of Australia’s commercial sector. Early development of sport as a business is evident in entrepreneurs who collected money from spectators. These entrepreneurs clearly saw the potential for making money by encouraging district or town rivalry, which opened up opportunities for gambling and further profits.

In the mid to late 1980s the practice of buying sporting teams by business people emerged and players started to earn large sums of money as full-time sports professionals. An early example was the purchase of the Sydney Swans AFL team by Dr Geoffrey Edelston. Unfortunately, the purchase ended in disaster and the club was eventually sold back to the AFL for ten dollars.

National competitions where a player’s earnings could rapidly increase to six figures were a further development. A player could be bought and sold by a rival club and the price was dependent on the player’s ability or star quality. This level of investment has seen the emergence of large stadiums, which provide tiered seating, food, drink, toilets, security, first aid and medical services, gift shops, cleaners and ticket collectors. All of these facilities cost and generate enormous sums of money, and the revenue from them is channelled back into the Australian economy.

On a broader scale, the sport phenomenon impacts on everyday Australians who purchase sporting goods and services to play a chosen sport for their own leisure or community. Many are influenced by product brands worn by their sporting role models, including goods such as:

- specialised equipment for specific sports
- athletic shoes for specific activities and surfaces
- sport-specific clothing
- safety equipment like gloves, helmets, knee pads, shin guards and mouth guards.

There is also the provision of suitable fields for sports that are played in communities all over Australia.
The rise of professional sport and big business in sport has been responsible for sponsorship of clubs, teams and individual athletes. Sponsorship involves the payment of money or the provision of sporting products to individual sports people or teams in return for the right of the sponsor to advertise their products. This can occur on:

- billboards around a sports field during a specific sporting event
- clothing worn by the athletes
- the equipment athletes use in the sport
- broadcast media coverage.

Most high-level athletes would not be able to compete without a major sponsor. Athletes have to be prepared to devote their energy and time to promote the sponsors’ product. The most prominent business corporations are usually the major sponsors of sport teams such as the Australian Cricket team. Media exposure for these companies is high and most advertising breaks during cricket broadcasting will have an Australian cricketer featured in the advertisements.

Sports advertising can take many forms and can be either a positive or negative experience for an athlete or team. On the positive side, there can be:

- greater recognition of the individual athlete and the sport through media and sponsorship
- large amounts of money gained for clubs through sponsorship deals to set up programs for identifying and mentoring junior talent, which can assist the future development of their club
- a boost to the economy of a city or town through the influx of supporters of a large sporting event.

Disadvantages of sponsorship and advertising are:

- most major sponsorships are still dominated by male sports and athletes
- large sponsors usually only want to promote athletes, teams and games that have a high profile
- many smaller, less popular sports miss out with most struggling to survive financially
- demands from some sponsors for changes to rules and game times
- uniforms and equipment can be required to show the sponsors logo.

The ethics of advertising should also be considered—is there such thing as inappropriate sponsorship? Sports advertisers have access to some of the biggest audiences worldwide, particularly for televised events, and a major issue for debate is whether they should be able to utilise this to promote products like alcohol.

Tobacco advertising was banned in Australia in 1992 and in the worldwide arena similar measures were taken. This ban affected a number of sports, in particular Formula One car racing where teams, drivers and competitions were heavily dependent on tobacco sponsorship. For a number of years Formula One was able to negotiate exemptions from some rules, but since the start of the 2008 season no team has carried any branding related to tobacco companies. In Britain, snooker was also badly affected with a number of its competitions losing their funding.

In recent years bad behaviour from sports stars associated with alcohol consumption has risen, with a number of high-profile players being suspended from play or dropped from teams. This raises an important question about the effect that alcohol sponsorship has on players and whether removing sponsorship deals would improve the sport, or cause funding problems for teams and players.
Sport to suffer if alcohol ads stop

SPORTING groups claim the cost of participating in grassroots sport will rise if proposed laws to limit alcohol advertising on television and radio are passed. But welfare groups have called for an outright ban on alcohol advertising in submissions to the Senate inquiry on liquor marketing that were made public this week.

Calls were also made for the use of sports stars to promote alcohol brands to be prohibited, and for proposed restrictions for TV and radio to be extended to other media, including magazines and the internet.

The welfare lobby did not hold back in several submissions this week that claimed the proposed alcohol advertising bill—which would require health labels to be put on alcohol products and ban TV and radio alcohol advertising between 5am and 9pm, as well as introduce other restrictions—did not go far enough.

‘We strongly believe that advertising of alcohol beverages should be totally banned, with the exception of promotional materials displayed inside liquor shops, pubs and bars’, the Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies (NSW) submission states.

The Northern Territory Police called for the proposed ban to include ‘the promotion of alcohol products via highly prominent sporting stars’.

But sporting bodies as well as broadcasters and advertisers, who are facing calls for increased regulation on several fronts, argued strongly against the proposed laws.

The Coalition of Major Professional Sports, which represents seven key sporting bodies, predicted the bill could drive up the cost of grassroots sports by reducing the advertising revenue broadcasters could attract and therefore the broadcast rights fees that sports could demand.

COMPS, which represents all four football codes as well as golf, tennis and cricket, estimated between 5 per cent and 23 per cent of sports’ revenue came directly from alcohol sponsorship: ‘There is a possibility of compromising the primary commercial driver in modern professional sporting business models’, its submission says.

‘The potential impact ... may ultimately contribute to an increase in the direct financial or societal cost being passed on to consumers.’

— the economics of hosting major sporting events

When a city decides to bid for the rights to host a major sporting event the costs start immediately in the process of formalising the campaign. Most prospective hosts spend large sums of money preparing an extravaganza that showcases their city. Once the bid has been won, the host city then begins the preparations of venues, transport, accommodation sites and other organisational logistics. Types of major events that
are attractive for cities and States to host are the World Rugby championships, international motor racing events, and the Olympic and Commonwealth Games. Australia has submitted a bid to host the FIFA World Cup in 2018 or 2022 and will be competing against a number of other countries including England and Indonesia.

Major costs incurred in hosting a major sporting event are:
• constructing venues and accommodation requirements
• paying for new administrators and upkeep of office facilities
• special ceremonies or dinners prior to or at the end of the event
• providing prizes, medals and trophies

To offset costs, income from the event will be forthcoming from:
• ticket sales
• corporate sponsorship
• broadcasting rights from televising the event
• indirect income from tourism
• increased GST and other appropriate tax revenue arising from goods and services associated with the event
• sales of event-related merchandise.

Overall, the many benefits a city receives when choosing to host a major sporting event include:
• promoting the city as a tourist destination will bring in more consolidated revenue in the long term by new influx of tourists
• greater international recognition
• immediate cash injection to the city’s economy as more money is likely to be spent during the event
• more job creation as infrastructure is being built and hospitality facilities are increased
• increased trade for most vendors due to tourists influx
• better facilities and infrastructure for the city after the event has finished.

consequences for spectators and participants

Commercialising sport has helped to improve the standard of sport in Australia, due to:
• increased availability and variety of major sporting events
• improved sporting venues and facilities
• building sport into an entertainment spectacle that is televised and made accessible to a wider population
• easy access to sport media coverage, increasing interaction and socialisation among people about outcomes of sporting events
• improved safety from sports equipment and security at venues for sport participants
195

Increased participant experience in success, failure, competition, teamwork and resilience

• Elite athletes enjoying the glory and high socioeconomic status of their success and being an inspiration for other aspiring athletes.

Some negative consequences of commercialising sport for spectators have been:

• Loss of money from gambling when a team loses

• Low morale after a game loss

• Increasing costs to attend major sporting events make it out of reach for people on a strict budget or on low incomes

• Violence sparked from unruly or drunk patrons, which therefore makes the sporting venue unsafe for other patrons with families and young children

• Loss of familiarity with a sports athlete once they have achieved high success in the game and have become a celebrity profile

• Racism towards players, which can often lead to violence.

Racism can still flare up at sporting events with players suffering verbal abuse from other players or spectators. Problems between spectators also still take place, such as at the 2009 Australian Open where a number of violent clashes between fans of different nationalities marred the event.

Feature Box

Business and economic benefits of the Sydney 2000 Olympics

... the Games delivered substantial benefits to Sydney, New South Wales and Australia. For example:

• Some $3 billion in business outcomes, including:
  – $600 million in new business investment
  – $288 million in new business under the Australian Technology Showcase
  – Almost $2 billion in post-Games sports infrastructure and service contracts

• Of the above $3 billion, over $500 million has been secured in contracts, sales and new investment by businesses located in regional NSW

• Injection of over $6 billion in infrastructure developments in NSW

• Injection of over $1.2 billion worth of convention business for NSW between 1993 and 2007

• Over $6 billion in inbound tourism spending during 2001

• Greatly enhanced business profile for Sydney, NSW and Australia

• Through the equivalent of up to $6.1 billion worth of international exposure

• Greater expertise and confidence in tendering, both domestically and overseas, on large-scale projects

• New and improved business programs including strong collaboration with the private sector.

Many sports are attempting to combat racism. As a result of AFL’s Nicky Winmar’s defiant act of raising his shirt to show the colour of his skin, former Essendon player Michael Long pushed to create the ‘Bouncing racism out of sport’ policy, a racial and religious vilification policy now adopted by the AFL.

Playing sport in today’s society can often have a negative impact on participants. The pressure of competing at a high level can cause stress and a potential for substance abuse among players. Sports coaches have been known to provide athletes with drugs to enhance their performance for financial gain. This is particularly evident when there is pressure to win to keep promoters and sponsors happy. There have been incidents where sporting heroes have cheated and fixed matches so that a team can win. For instance, South African cricketer Hansie Cronje was involved in match fixing in 2000 that brought the game of cricket into disrepute.

**Figure 1.8**
Nicky Winmar famously pulls up his jumper in response to racist remarks in 1993

### Activities

**Activity 1 (Page 186)**
In groups of two or three, research and **discuss** the following questions. Be prepared to present your findings to the class.

1. **Construct** a timeline for the development of sport in Britain and Australia from the 18th century to the present day.

2. **Discuss** why most sports played in Australia had distinct links to Britain.

3. **Identify** how sport was used to maintain the social structure of Britain in the 19th century.

4. **Describe** the benefits sport has given to the people of colonial Australia.

5. **Discuss** the differences in sports participation among the social classes in colonial Australia.

**Activity 2 (Page 186)**

1. **Investigate** the success of Australian women in the Olympics.

2. **Investigate** the methods used to discourage women from participating in sport in colonial Australia and **compare** these with the situation for women in today’s society; explore what has changed.

**Activity 3 (Page 191)**

Debate the topic: ‘Big business is ruining sport.’

Divide the class into two groups: one half acting as the affirmative side, the other as the negative side. Develop arguments to support your team and present both sides of the debate to the class.
Activities cont.

Activity 4 (Page 192)
Select a club or team of your choice from any national code, such as from football, netball or basketball. Investigate businesses that have some input into the success of the team on the playing field.

Activity 5 (Page 192)
• Brainstorm names of current sports people and their sponsors. Discuss how sponsorship has affected each of the athletes you have identified.
• Discuss why many individuals and sports do not attract sponsorship and associated advertising.
• What effects do you think lack of sponsorship has for these individuals and sports?

Activity 6 (Page 193)
One of the largest undertakings for any city or State is to host the Olympic Games. The 2012 Olympics will be held in London.
• Research how England is funding the games and the effects this is having on the English people. Discuss your findings as a class.
• Discuss how the Olympic Games can be seen as a commodity.

Review Questions

1. Define the terms manliness, patriotism and character.
2. Describe the differences in sport played during early colonial Australia with the sports played today.
3. Compare the differences between amateur and professional sport.
4. Discuss why the modern Olympics took so long to allow professional athletes to compete.
5. Discuss why women were discouraged from participating in sport in the 19th century.
6. Investigate why women found it difficult to develop high-skill level in competition during the early 20th century.
7. Discuss how the meanings of sport varied for different social groups in the 19th century.
8. Analyse the development of sport as big business.
9. Identify the consequences for participants and spectators of sport developing into big business.