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# Teaching Sport Marketing: Notes From the Trenches

Professor Brenda G. Pitts

*The "nexus of experience and instruction is the essence of education."*

Dr. David K. Stotlar (1996, p. 42)

When asked to write a paper on teaching sport marketing for this anniversary volume of the *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, I jumped at the opportunity. Having been a professor in sport management for nearly two decades (wow, that makes me feel mature), I have experienced the evolution of the field, struggles with definition and place, creation and development of the body of knowledge, and the evolution of sport marketing education. In the first paper on teaching in sport marketing, Dr. David K. Stotlar (1996) makes a statement regarding teaching about sport sponsorship: "the nexus of experience and instruction is the essence of education" (p. 42). True, as sport management and, in particular,

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sport marketing have grown, the combination of education, based on its developing relevant theory and fundamentals, and experience in practice appears to be an appropriate instructional methodology for the education and preparation of sport marketing students—those soon-to-be professionals who will work in a highly complex and competitive multibillion dollar sport business industry. Indeed, the current sport management curriculum standards stipulate a combination of a minimum body of knowledge consisting of basic content areas and practical experience in the field (NASPE-NASSM, 2000). Of course, practice, or learning "how to do something," needs a proper foundation of theory and fundamentals. Equally, theory and fundamentals must be tested and tailored in practice. Moreover, theory, fundamentals, and the study of practice are the foundation of teaching.

With these points in mind, I want to offer some notes from the trenches concerning teaching sport marketing. Therefore, this paper provides a brief overview of the historical evolution of sport marketing education, an example of a sport marketing course design, and a perspective of the future of sport marketing practice and education.

## History and Evolution of Sport Marketing Education

Research to discover the history of sport marketing education, or

sport management education, in academe has not yet been conducted. There are some records, however, such as the following, that indicate that early sport marketing education was conducted on an informal basis, as vocational and apprenticeship forms of education.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, there were some forms of organized and nearly formal sport marketing education activities (Fielding & Pitts, in press). Some of the activities consisted of articles and news pieces published in a few periodicals and books. They were "how-to" articles, such as how to sell, how to advertise, and how to study your consumer, and they varied in topic, including how to sell more baseball bats, how many people are participating in skating or tennis, and how various sporting goods manufacturers are faring. One company, A. G. Spalding & Bros., actually used education as a marketing method to promote sports and, of course, to sell more products. For instance, in 1892, Spalding & Bros. began publishing the Spalding's Athletic Library, an extensive library of books on how to organize, manage, and play different sports (Fielding & Pitts, in press; Sullivan, 1907). Spalding touted these books, as many as 127, as "the leading library series of its kind published in the world" (Sullivan, 1907, inside cover).

Other forms of sport marketing education activities included such practices as the publication of trade magazines, the organization of trade associations, the offering of workshops and seminars, and the organization of exhibitions and shows. Trade publications include magazines, newspapers, newsletters, and online services that target the sport business owner. A trade publication will offer, for example, a boat dealership owner all kinds of business, management, and marketing information about the boating industry that the dealership owner may use in making informed decisions regarding the business. Many of the trade publications are pro-

duced by trade organizations. Trade organizations are organizations that target the sport business owner for support, educational, and other purposes. For instance, the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association conducts research on sports, sports participants and spectators, manufacturers, legal issues, and management issues. The SGMA hosts an annual conference and exhibition and publishes several publications.

Early attempts at formalizing sport management education in academe might have begun at least as early as a college program at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, Florida in 1949 (Isaacs, 1964; Parkhouse & Pitts, 2001). Nine sport management courses were offered in the program that ran from 1949 to 1959, two of which were sport marketing courses titled, "Ticketing and Tax Laws" and "Promotion and Public Relations" (Isaacs, 1964, p. 183). The courses covered such topics as "a study of the correct pricing of tickets," "ticket sales and promotions," "program advertising and layout," "sales personnel," "press and radio, T.V. relations," "year-round promotional programs," and "the value of off-seasons promotions" (p. 183).

Within the field of sport management, sport marketing has evolved as one of its content areas. Sport management's modern evolution began in the 1960s as academics

called for increased attention to organizing and managing school and collegiate athletics programs as they were developing commercially and requiring administrators with formal education specific to athletics administration (Zeigler, 1979; Zeigler & Spaeth, 1975). In the 1970s, early developing sport management academics called for a broadening of athletics administration to include the preparation of students for jobs in the many other areas of the booming sport business industry (Parkhouse, 1978; 1984, Parkhouse & Ulrich, 1979; Parks & Quain, 1986; Parks, Zanger, & Quarterman, 1998; van der Smis-sen, 1984; Vanderzwaag, 1984). During the 1980s and 1990s and into the 2000s, definitions and descriptions of sport management began to broaden from a focus on college athletics administration to management in all types of commercial sport business. Today, sport management is considered to be the study of management and business practices in the sport business industry, and athletics administration is just one tiny piece of this very large pie. In fact, the sport industry is among the top-ten largest industries in the United States.

Sport marketing is also one of several specialized areas in sport management. It is developing into its own field of study, and there is still much room for continued

growth and evolution. For instance, there are still two schools of thought as to what sport marketing is (Pitts & Stotlar, 2002). In one, sport marketing focuses on how to sell sports events. This definition and concept involves two points: the selling of sports and selling through sports, or using sports to sell other products (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000). In addition, this concept purports that sport consumers fall into two broad categories: the spectator and the participant. The other definition and concept is that sport marketing is marketing applied in any sport business (Pitts & Stotlar, 2002) and that sport marketing is used in every type of sport business. Although the definition of the sport business industry that is used by nearly every author of sport management and sport marketing papers and books is nearing conclusion, that the industry is a nearly \$300 billion industry and is comprised of numerous kinds of businesses, the primary focus of these papers and books continues to be selling college athletics and professional sports (Olafson, 1990; Paton, 1987; Pedersen & Pitts, 2001; Pitts, 2001; Slack, 1996; Soucie & Doherty, 1996). On the brighter side, at least the contemporary definition seems to be more accepted and used. However, it appears that we still have a long way to go in regard to expanding the depth and breadth of the literature.

**Figure 1.**  
**Current Sport Marketing Textbooks**

Author	Year	Title	Publisher
Milne, G. R., McDonald, M. A.	1999	Sport Marketing: Managing the Exchange Process	Jones and Bartlett Publishers (Sudbury, MA)
Mullin, B., Hardy, S., Sutton, B.	2000	Sport Marketing (2nd Edition).	Human Kinetics (Champaign, IL)
Pitts, B. G., Stotlar, D. K.	2002	Fundamentals of Sport Marketing (2nd Edition)	Fitness Information Technology (Morgantown, WV)
Shank, M. D.	1999	Sports Marketing: A Strategic Perspective	Prentice Hall (Upper Saddle River, NJ)
Shilbury, D., Quick, S., Westerbeek, H.	1998	Strategic Sport Marketing	Allen & Unwin (Australia)

**Figure 2.**  
*Current Sport Marketing Case Study Textbooks*

Author	Year	Title	Publisher
McDonald, M. A., Milne, G. R.	1999	Cases in Sport Marketing	Jones and Bartlett Publishers (Sudbury, MA)
Pitts, B.G.	1998	Case Studies in Sport Marketing	Fitness Information Technology (Morgantown, WV)

**Figure 3.**  
*Current Sport Marketing Workbooks*

Author	Year	Title	Publisher
Stotlar, D.K.	2001	Developing Successful Sport Marketing Plans	Fitness Information Technology (Morgantown, WV)
Stotlar, D.K.	2001	Developing Successful Sport Sponsorship Plans	Fitness Information Technology (Morgantown, WV)

**Figure 4.**  
*Sport Marketing Journals*

Cyber-Journal of Sport Marketing
International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship
Sport Marketing Quarterly

### Teaching Sport Marketing: Sport Marketing Course Design

**Notes From the Trenches.** When many of us first started teaching sport marketing, there were no textbooks; textbooks are a recent development, most of which have been published in the 1990s. To develop a sport marketing course before there were textbooks, many of us used books and literature in foundational and related areas. These are still used, continue to support the development of teaching literature, and serve as conceptual frameworks for sport marketing research. Areas of research include a wide array of fields of study, such as marketing, advertising, communications, financial management, economics, consumer behavior, sociology, sport sociology, tourism and sport tourism, popular culture,

population studies, vacation marketing, management science, legal issues, sport history, recreation administration, adapted physical education and disability sport, and leisure studies.

### A Sport Marketing Course

**A Sport Marketing Course Syllabus.** Perhaps most helpful to sport marketing education would be a sport marketing course syllabus along with information about textbooks, journals, and other helpful materials. As sport marketing is added to sport management programs, those charged with teaching it reach out for help. Those of us who teach sport marketing are asked many times a year for help with materials and syllabi. Recently, a sport marketing listserv on the web has asked that sport marketing professors post their sport marketing course syllabi. Furthermore, when Dave Stotlar, Jackie Cuneen, Dianna Gray, and I have done workshops on sport marketing, they were very well attended. There are many ways to teach a sport marketing course; there are many kinds of assignments and projects that can be used; and there are exams which, of course, I chose not to publish here. For these additional

ideas, please feel free to contact me and I'll do my best to help.

**Sport Marketing Textbooks.** Figure 1 is a list of the current (last 5 years) sport marketing textbooks available. It is important that the instructor study each book and determine how the content fits into the overall focus of the sport management program. For instance, some programs, most likely their course, focus on promoting and selling sports events, particularly college and professional sports. In other programs, the focus is broader and more reflective of the entire sport business industry and includes courses that are more inclusive of the overall industry. When studying the textbooks, this difference is apparent.

**Sport Marketing Case Study Books.** The first of their kind, there are two case study books currently (see Figure 2). They cover a broad array of sport businesses and types of marketing problems and situations, and both are excellent for the classroom, as case studies can be used in a number of ways both in and outside the classroom.

**Sport Marketing Workbooks.** Currently, there are two sport marketing workbooks (see Figure 3) that were developed to be part of a set

**Figure 5.**  
Possible Journals for Sport Marketing Papers

<b>Sport Studies</b>	
Journal of Sport and Social Issues	Quest
Journal of Recreation Administration	Journal of Sport Behavior
Journal of Sport History	Leisure Studies
Journal of Sport Tourism	
<b>Sport Management Journals</b>	
Entertainment and Sports Law Forum	European Sport Management Review
International Journal of Sport Management	International Sports Journal
Japan Journal of The Sports Industry	Journal of Korean Society of Sport Management
Journal of Legal Aspects of Sport and Physical Activity	Journal of Sports Economics
Journal of Sport Management	Marquette Sport Law Journal
Seton Hall Journal of Sport Law	Sport Management Review
The Sports Lawyers Journal	Villanova Sports & Entertainment Law Journal
<b>Business Journals</b>	
Journal of Advertising	Journal of Marketing
Journal of Vacation Marketing	Journal of Consumer Marketing
Journal of Services Marketing	European Journal of Marketing
European Business Review	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management

**Figure 6.**  
Some Key Words to Use When Searching the Web (or in the library) for Sport Marketing Resources

<b>Sport Marketing in General</b>	
sport marketing	sports marketing
sport management	sport administration
sports management/administration	athletics administration
sport studies	sport business
sporting goods	
<b>Specific Sport Businesses</b>	
Use the name of a sport business, such as NASCAR, NBA, or WNBA, and they will provide links to other resources.	

of sport marketing materials for the Pitts and Stotlar (2002) sport marketing textbook series. Each one focuses on elements of sport marketing that most students will encounter with any type of sport business.

**Sport Marketing Journals.** Figure 4 presents a list of academic sport marketing journals available today that cover sport marketing research. Two journals are current: the *Sport Marketing Quarterly* and the *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*. A third journal, the *Cyber-Journal of Sport Marketing*, existed from January 1997 to

July 2000 (with the archive of this journal available at [www.cjism.com](http://www.cjism.com)).

**Sport Marketing in Other Journals.** Papers regarding sport marketing topics are not limited to sport marketing journals. They can be found in a number of journals outside of sport marketing and sport management. Figure 5 offers a sample list of these journals.

**Web Sources.** The worldwide web is a virtual library and archive of resources in sport marketing. By simply starting with any one of a number of search engines and typing in the words, "sport marketing,"

for instance, you can find a mass of information. Figure 6 presents examples of keywords to use for searches.

**Sport Marketing and the Library.** Unfortunately, you're a search for sport marketing materials in a traditional library will be frustrating, as many library systems have not yet given sport management, much less sport marketing, a classification of its own. Therefore, when using a traditional library to find sport management or sport marketing books and journals, researchers must use *physical education, recreation, sport studies, law, or business* as topical areas. When in the stacks, the few sport management and sport marketing books and journals are mixed in among these areas. Furthermore, sport law books and journals might be found in the law library, which is oftentimes in a different location on college campuses.

### Future of Sport Marketing Education

There are a few trends and future estimations to note regarding the future of sport marketing education. The first two consider sport market-

ing within the larger context of the field of sport management. First, the field of sport management as an academic discipline will continue to expand in relation to the number of college programs, the number of students enrolled, and the number of faculty. This should prove worthwhile when one considers the growth of sport management to date. While some worry that there might be too many sport management programs flooding the market with graduates, I remind them that the sport business industry is one of the top-ten largest industries in the United States. There are more than enough jobs for our graduates. A more pressing problem in sport management academe today, however, is filling the growing number of faculty positions with properly educated and prepared doctoral students in sport management programs. Currently, only a handful (fewer than 10) of doctoral programs exist and each produces on average two graduates a year. Last year, there were over 130 faculty positions advertised in sport management. Who is taking these positions? Where are they coming from? What is their education and preparation? These questions leave little room for answers other than an identified need for more doctoral programs. However, we must monitor the quality of these programs, as we (the industry) cannot afford to have programs in name only.

Second, sport management courses and degree programs will be increasingly offered in departments and schools outside of those of physical education and recreation. Sport management will continue to crop up in departments or schools, such as business, leisure, and hospitality and tourism. Neither should be considered negative or positive, but this may prove to be a struggle and battle for the field of sport management itself. Some departments and schools will force sport management to continue as a specialization, subsumed under other disciplines. Other programs will try to make the discipline of

sport management "fit into" their field's curriculum and accrediting standards, almost guaranteeing loss of identity. In fact, this is already happening; there have been arguments that sport management should be under recreation (Sawyer, 1993) and under business (Hardy, 1987). Indeed, there was a round table discussion at a NASSM conference recently on how to make sport management fit into the business curriculum standards (Rosner, Mayo, McCarthy, & Fay, 2000). It is typical that the arguments are made by faculty in those areas—that is, the argument for sport management to be in recreation is made by those in recreation, and so on.

Too many of us in sport management still view sport management needing to be "housed" somewhere. I have challenged us to think outside this box (Pitts, 2001), as I believe strongly that sport management should be an autonomous department and/or school (e.g., School of Sport Management or School of Sport Business) containing departments of each of the content areas, such as, Department of Sport Marketing, Department of Sport Finance, and so forth. We are well on our way to having a sizable body of knowledge, to being recognized as a field of study, and to having larger numbers of students and faculty. The next step is to become our own department or school.

Third, I foresee (and want to encourage) continued development and expansion of the area of sport marketing. For instance, there is a need for more journals as outlets for our research and to continue to build the body of knowledge (Mahony & Pitts, 1998; Pitts & Mahony, 1997). Each journal might focus on one of the many elements of sport marketing. For example, I hope to see journals with such specialized sport marketing topics as: "*Journal of Sport Promotion and Strategy*" "*Journal of Sport Product Management*" "*Sport Business and Marketing*

*Review*"  
 "*International Journal of Sport Sponsorship Management*"  
 "*Journal of Pricing Strategies in Sport Business*"  
 "*Marketing Management in Sport Business*"  
 "*Licensing and Merchandising in Sport Business*"  
 "*Journal of Advertising in Sport Business*"

Similar to the need for more journals is the need for a scholarly association for sport marketing and an annual academic conference. A review of any NASSM conference program reveals that a third of the program is dedicated to sport marketing topic papers, and the American Marketing Association conference now offers sections on sport marketing. In summary, the time is right for our own association and conference.

## Conclusion

Academic programs in sport management require practical experience as part of the educational process to prepare students for demanding careers in sport business, and the sport business industry obligingly provides a plethora of internship possibilities for sport marketing students. On a higher level, sport management programs should offer several content areas, one of which is sport marketing, so that students gain the minimum body of fundamental knowledge needed to be successful in the profession. Together, the practical experience and sport marketing education are the nexus that should offer students the proper essence of education.

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