

THE GAME OF LIFE

COLLEGE SPORTS
AND EDUCATIONAL VALUES

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The Institutionalization and Regulation of College Sports in Historical Perspective

Let the good work go on—but who the devil is making you all this trouble? Football, in my opinion, is best at its worst. I do not believe in all this namby-pamby talk, and I hope the game will not be emasculated and robbed of its heroic qualities. People who don't like football as now played might like whist—advise them to try that.

—Frederic Remington, writing to Walter Camp upon the establishment of the Camp Commission on Brutality in Football (1894)

It was once possible for college sports administrators on the one hand, and university presidents and trustees on the other, to evade responsibility for the difficulties of intercollegiate athletics. Each side could plausibly claim the other possessed the authority to act. That claim no longer holds water.

—Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, *A New Beginning for a New Century* (1993)

SOME PEOPLE love college sports and others hate them. Some who feel passionately about colleges and universities regard their sports programs as their best feature; others regard them as “just part of the scene”—accepted and generally appreciated, but not of primary importance; still others believe that athletic programs are completely irrelevant. One fact is clear to all: however one feels about them, intercollegiate athletic programs have become thoroughly institutionalized within American higher education. How did these programs become such a consequential part of what these colleges do? Has the “fit” between the educational missions of the institutions and the nature of the athletic programs changed over time? How has the place of athletics within the institutional structure of colleges and universities been affected by other trends in the society, and especially by the increasing specialization within ath-

letics, commercial incentives, and the intense competition for admission to the most selective schools?

The historical record—shaped by a myriad of actors, including the entertainment industry, the media, and various regulatory authorities—is of course far more than a mere reference point. As we saw in the Prelude, history and tradition are themselves potent factors in shaping debate and justifying current policies. In this chapter, we provide a context for the rest of the book by examining the changing place of intercollegiate athletics within the institutional fabric of colleges and universities.

THE MISSIONS OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AND THE RATIONALE FOR SUPPORTING INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

Determining how certain activities fit within an institution depends, of course, on how—and if—the institutional mission is defined. Mission statements of colleges and universities are rarely short and specific. Most go on for a number of pages, with subheadings and bullet points. But two slightly different themes do emerge, as the following excerpts from four mission statements illustrate.¹

Knowledge for its own sake and for preparing flexible minds:

Kenyon is an academic institution. The virtue of the academic mode is that it deals not with private and particular truths, but with the general and the universal. It enables one to escape the limits of private experience and the tyranny of the present moment. . . . As an undergraduate institution, Kenyon focuses upon those studies which are essential to the intellectual and moral development of its students. The curriculum is not defined by the interest of graduate or professional schools, but by the faculty's understanding of what contributes to liberal education. . . . Ours is the best kind of career preparation, for it develops qualities that are prized in any profession. Far beyond immediate career concerns, however, a liberal education forms the foundation of a fulfilling and valuable life. To that purpose Kenyon College is devoted.

Yale's liberal education is an education meant to increase in young people a sense of the joy that learning for the sake of learning brings, learning whose goal is not professional mastery or technical capacity for commercial advance, but commencement of a life-long pleasure in the human exercise of our minds, our most human part.

Education for leadership or success in life:

Penn inspires, demands, and thrives on excellence, and will measure itself against the best in every field of endeavor in which it participates. Penn is

proudly entrepreneurial, dynamically forging new connections and inspiring learning through problem-solving, discovery-oriented approaches.

The mission of the University of Michigan is to serve the people of Michigan and the world through preeminence in creating, communicating, preserving and applying knowledge, art, and academic values, and in developing leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future.

How, then, does intercollegiate athletics relate to such missions? As many faculty critics have pointed out, there is no direct connection between organized athletics and the pursuit of learning for its own sake. It can be said, however, that athletic competition helps provide a more balanced life for some number of students than they would find otherwise. The dictum of a "sound mind in a sound body" captures the idea.

The second theme in the mission statements—which invokes excellence in all pursuits and embraces the training of leaders—casts a wider net. It is much easier to make a straightforward case for intercollegiate athletics under this banner, and there has been no shortage of speeches and statements extolling the ways in which athletic competition fosters learning for life, training for leadership, the ability to work in teams, competitiveness, self-control, and discipline. Perhaps the most famous quotation of this genre is the Duke of Wellington's oft-cited aphorism: "The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton." To test these notions, we will present data on which attributes and actions differentiate athletes from other students; we will also test whether these differences should be attributed to participation in college sports or to differences that were present before students entered college.

At schools with the most extensive intercollegiate athletic programs, where athletes constitute 20 to 30 percent of the student body, athletic programs may have deep effects on the composition of the student body; the distribution of students by field of study, the degree to which various groups of students interact, and the overall emphasis placed on academic achievement. In addition, the presence of large numbers of athletes (who go on to make up equally large proportions of the alumni/ae) may have long-lasting effects on the priorities of the school. In all of these respects, the nature of intercollegiate athletic programs may shape as well as reflect the missions of the colleges and universities that offer them. In such settings, sports are seen as part of the school's core educational mission, and it is on these terms that sports programs should be judged.

A second, often unwritten, justification for college sports programs emphasizes their impact on building a sense of community. In order for Hamilton to have an identity that distinguishes it from Wesleyan, the students (past, present, and future) need to feel part of a cohesive community. Sports can play an important role in creating a campus ethos—in part

through public ritual (the Saturday afternoon game), but also through the banner on the dorm room wall and the stories on the back page of the student paper. These "bonding" effects can be important in attracting students and in making the campus a pleasant place for everyone. They are also thought to sustain alumni loyalty and, over the long run, contribute to the financial strength of the institution and to its reputation within its state and beyond. (Athletics can of course lead to negative as well as positive reputational effects. Cheating scandals, for example, can damage an institution's reputation for academic integrity.)

There is a third, but somewhat different, way in which athletic programs may be tied to an institution's mission. The High Profile sports of football and men's basketball, in particular, may be valued because of their potential revenue-generating capacity. Although all of the educational institutions in our study are not-for-profit entities, and as such are prohibited from "making money," they are of course allowed to generate revenues that can be used to support their not-for-profit mission. Indeed, all of these colleges and universities raise substantial amounts of revenue by providing services (products that they make available for a price). Tuition revenues are the largest and most obvious example, but schools also sell sweatshirts and operate a range of auxiliary activities such as bookstores and museum shops.

The potential revenue-generating justification for intercollegiate athletics falls squarely under this heading—schools can be seen as "investing" in an athletic-enterprise whose ticket sales, booster donations, and sneaker endorsements may provide dollars that can be used to cover the costs of a range of activities, including of course the costs of the Lower Profile sports. Moreover, successful athletic programs may be thought to benefit the institution financially by generating increased alumni/ae support, encouraging legislators to vote for larger appropriations (in the case of public universities), and providing marketing exposure. The success or failure of athletics seen as an investment should be judged in the same way in which any other investment is assessed—by comparing revenues with costs and calculating a rate of return.

How do athletic programs, justified in these different ways, affect a school's core mission? Hanna Gray has written of the importance of focusing on the educational purposes of a university and understanding how successful pursuit of its core mission confers a wide array of benefits on society at large:

In the long history of discussion over the responsibilities and purposes of universities, there has been too little emphasis on clarifying the all-important benefit that flows from their own special mission. Such statements make the academic world sound aloof, self-absorbed, and arrogant, as though it cared

not at all about the world and its urgent problems and saw no obligation to help in alleviating social ills or improving the state of society or assisting the country in achieving significant national goals. To reply that the development of human and intellectual capital is in itself an enormous contribution of central social priority strikes those who see major needs immediately at hand as somehow unresponsive, especially given the public resources invested in higher education. . . . [Besides international economic competition] there are, of course, many other ways in which universities serve their communities—for example, in the provision of medical care or through projects carried on by scholars in a variety of fields such as urban studies, poverty, and education. *These grow out of the universities' educational missions, and that should be the test.*²

Intercollegiate athletics can be assessed, then, in terms of its direct effects on the core educational mission of a college or university (including its effects on the kinds of students enrolled, the education that they receive as undergraduates, and the lives that they go on to lead). It can also be judged in terms of its impact on campus ethos, alumni/ae loyalty, and institutional reputation. Finally, it can be assessed as an activity that, in some situations, might be expected to earn a measurable financial return that will help to make other things possible. Needless to say, these are far from mutually exclusive perspectives, but it is helpful to distinguish among them in thinking about the rationale for electing to support a particular kind of intercollegiate athletic program.

FROM STUDENT CLUBS TO HIGHLY PROFESSIONALIZED ATHLETIC DEPARTMENTS

The world of college sports garners a great deal of attention on the pages of the leading newspapers and magazines and in radio and television coverage of sports events. There is no denying the attention given to the NCAA basketball tournament, debates over equal opportunity for women to compete at the intercollegiate level, admissions standards for athletes, an array of highly publicized scandals concerning illegal payments to athletes, and methods of ranking football teams for the purposes of post-season competition. It seems clear that our revealed preference, as a society, is for an extensive commitment to sports within higher education. Anyone who wants to claim that sports has no place in a college or university is quickly going to run headlong into both the insatiable appetite for sports that is evident in our daily lives—and the reality of history.

The first intercollegiate athletic contest took place in 1852 when boats from Harvard and Yale raced on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire.

Though historians record the participants as having thought of the race as "a jolly lark," historian Ronald Smith notes that that first boat race was sponsored by a real estate promoter who was selling land in the area.³ We should not believe that commercial ties to athletics arose only recently. The race signaled the beginning of an enterprise that would grow rapidly during the second half of the nineteenth century.

In 1859 Williams lost to Amherst in the first intercollegiate baseball contest (by a score of 73-32!), and in 1869 Princeton lost to Rutgers in the first football game. But how did such student-organized athletic competitions become embedded in the very core of the leading educational institutions of the country? The rest of this chapter is devoted to examining the factors that led college sports to become increasingly institutionalized over the course of the 20th century. The record of how athletics were absorbed into the institution is central to understanding the rest of this book, since the policies concerning how many (and which) athletes are admitted and how these athletically inclined students live during their time on campus are shaped by the degree to which institutions have come to claim athletics as their own.

Early Days: The Rise of Football

The new sport of football, akin more to soccer than to the sport we know as football today, developed rapidly in the 1870s and in the process changed dramatically through the absorption of rugby rules (via games between Harvard and McGill). Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Columbia gradually formulated acceptable common rules, and the last quarter of the 19th century saw a huge rise in the popularity of the championship game, played in New York City on Thanksgiving. By the 1890s, 40,000 fans would watch the contest.⁴

As the historian Frederick Rudolph noted, this exciting new sport not only reverberated with the national character but also foreshadowed what was to come in college sports more generally.⁵ Rooting for the team provided a focus for school spirit at a time when the campus had been fragmented by the change from a standard curriculum to one in which students could choose their own courses. At the same time, little-known schools like Notre Dame established name recognition by challenging the eastern giants (like Harvard) in football. But above all else, in this aggressive sport in which the individual and the team fought against a common foe, was another more deep and obvious fact: the sport—as is true of sports in general—was fun, and an exciting outlet for the energy and passions of both participants and fans.

According to an 1895 Harper's Magazine article about Princeton, sports had a central role in training young men:

The male of the human species passes through a stage when he has ceased to be a boy and is not yet a man, when his passions are virile and his judgment puerile. In the essentials of life he must at that epoch, in spite of his impatience of restraint, remain under tutelage. But how is he to find play for his growing manhood? Where is he to make his blunders and learn his lessons of experience? In some sphere where he will do the least harm and the greatest good both to himself and the community. This sphere is so manifestly that of his physical exercise and sport that the proposition is self-evident.⁶

The passions, rationalizations, and concerns of college sports at the end of the 19th century were in many ways similar to those of today. But the setting within which sports functioned and competed—the market—was entirely different. The Princeton-Yale football games of the 1890s may have attracted huge crowds, but the crowds had few other options. There were no movies, no television, and no Internet. College sports had the luxury of being the only game in town. When the first baseball World Series took place in 1901, no professional football, basketball, or hockey leagues yet existed, and the rebirth of the Olympic games in Athens began only in 1896, with 245 male competitors from 14 countries. The 25 colleges and universities that played intercollegiate football had the sports-entertainment market to themselves.

By 1905, football was living up to the "larger than life" legend that was building around it. Because passions ran so high and rules were still being improvised and ingeniously manipulated, the game took on a brutal tone—driven by plays such as the Harvard-invented "flying wedge," in which what would be the equivalent of today's offensive line started 25 yards behind the line of scrimmage and ran en masse into (or over) one designated (and stationary) member of the opposing team. People were dying—literally—for their schools; eighteen players died playing football in 1905 alone.

On October 16, 1905, shocked by the level of violence in college football, President Theodore Roosevelt summoned the Harvard, Yale, and Princeton presidents and football coaches to the White House. Historian Ronald Smith has noted that, just as muckraking journalism sniffed out exploitation in industry (Sinclair's *The Jungle* was published in 1905), journalists picked up the criticism of what faculty members called "bacil-

lus athletics," a disease afflicting higher education. No wimp himself, Roosevelt accurately gauged the spirit of the day and expressed his outrage at the idea of dishonor staining an otherwise noble contest. The meeting led to some rule changes (including the invention of the forward pass, which was designed to relieve some of the pressure of the scrum) as well as to a gathering of college presidents who formed the group that would eventually become the NCAA. Although some chose radical moves—Northwestern, Stanford, and NYU joined Columbia in banning football outright—others (notably Harvard, whose faculty had voted for a ban in 1906 but acquiesced to rule changes) worked together to reform the game.

Two issues emerged in addition to the threat to life and limb: alumni/ae and other outside interests placed commercial pressure on student sports, and there were threats to academic integrity. Both of these issues were eminently clear to Howard Savage, the author of a 1929 study commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.⁷ Most of the questions that he identified are still with us, and in barely altered forms: whether financial aid should be given on the basis of athletics, whether athletics builds moral character, how institutions should pay for facilities, and how much influence boosters should have in the management of athletics programs. But in the 1929 report we can discern what was at that time a new stage in the management of intercollegiate athletics. The governance of college sports had recently shifted from student-run clubs to institutionally managed ventures (an absolutely key development). The Carnegie report notes that the initial hope on the part of universities—that, by taking control of the clubs, the faculty of the university would provide oversight—was probably overly optimistic:

The final tests for the presence or absence of true faculty control would seem to be these: First, is the guiding influence that of a man whose chief activities and interests lie in academic fields, or of one to whose income athletics contribute directly or indirectly? Secondly, are the coaches immediately responsible to a faculty representative whose principal concerns are academic, or are they subordinate to another or former coach now elevated to faculty status, or to a former business manager or an alumni secretary who is under academic appointment for the sake of the good that may accrue to athletics from his connection with them? Certainly, in the institutions where faculty control exists at its best there appears to be little truckling to special interests or privileged groups, because the director is not in any way dependent upon athletics for success in his professional career.⁸

While so much of the 1929 report sounds familiar, this concept of faculty control seems today like nothing more than a flight of the imagination. Even at many of the coed liberal arts colleges, coaches and athletic

directors have ceased to be tenured faculty (and in many cases have ceased to be considered faculty at all). In most of higher education, athletic directors today are likely to be drawn from the ranks of former coaches, ideally with experience in marketing and management—and with expertise directed at increasing revenues. Control of the athletic enterprise, and the motivations of those who wield that control, have changed greatly over the course of the century; the structured and semi-autonomous athletics program has been institutionalized and given its own place on the campus.⁹

No other historical development in intercollegiate athletics has been as influential, or as subtle, as the progressive institutionalization of the athletic clubs that students once ran. In institutionalizing these programs, the schools have, in effect, declared, "this is something that we do." This act of assuming ownership of the enterprise has led to a tacit or explicit sanctioning of the goals, values, and norms associated with college sports in a way that has allowed the athletic enterprise to have access to the inner chambers where the educational mission of the school is defined and pursued.

A few attempts were made to resist the institutionalization of college sports. The most notable of these was undertaken by Robert Maynard Hutchins, who declared in 1939 that the University of Chicago (a charter member of the Big Ten) would drop its football program. While Hutchins decried many of the ongoing abuses, his sharpest insight was that how and why colleges play sports tells us a great deal about how they set their overall agendas:

Several universities have dropped football, but the reason they have stated shows how little they trust the public to understand a good reason for doing so. Almost all the universities that have given up the game have said that football lost money. As the public is willing to believe that a university may do anything for money, so it is prepared to agree that it may stop doing it if the money is not forthcoming. If the curriculum were rational and intelligible, the students might not run from it in such large numbers to devote themselves to extracurricular activities.¹⁰

Hutchins was prescient in seeing the ways that sports were being allowed to influence a school's mission: by inducing schools to follow the money instead of the more abstract academic goals that were central to them and by providing the public with something that was more fun, and more easily digestible, than dry academic debates. But Hutchins's view would not win in the debate over athletics outside Chicago. Standing on principle but losing in the war of public opinion, the University of Chicago's attempt at de-emphasis was based on grounds of institutional control over its own mission and the importance of being able to set its

own priorities. Yet the public's continued preference for the clarity of the scoreboard over the confusing goals of the curriculum made Hutchins's decision seem idiosyncratic, out of touch, and, in the minds of some, downright wimpy.

Much later, in the 1970s and 1980s, other college presidents chose to take a stand on the appropriate way to conduct athletics. Paul Hardin's tenure as president of SMU ended abruptly after he brought to light corruption in the athletic department, disciplined the coaches who were involved in it, and made it clear that under his administration all conference and NCAA rules would be followed regardless of the standards set by other schools and whether or not violations known to the school were likely to be discovered externally. (Eight years later, the SMU football program was the first to receive the NCAA's "death penalty" and was completely shut down for four years.) In 1990, the Michigan State football coach was also appointed to serve as athletic director, despite President John DiBiaggio's warning to his board that this would be a dangerous arrangement; DiBiaggio subsequently left Michigan State and became president of Tufts. Courage among presidents on questions of athletics rarely portends a long tenure.

The Interest of the Public

Roosevelt's attention to the problems of football and the vigorously voiced concerns of the journalists who cried out for reform of college sports remind us of one of the unique powers of these programs. More than any other aspect of the collegiate enterprise, sports attract the interest of the public—of fans, journalists, and even legislators and other government officials. Over time, such attention contributed to the pressure on schools to solidify the institutionalization of sports programs. What is it about college sports programs that makes them more appealing to the public than much of the academic enterprise?

First and most obviously, sports link campuses to the outside community by the strength of their visual imagery, which is easily translated onto television or into photographs in alumni magazines and admissions marketing brochures. The uniformed hero in his or her mud-splashed splendor is a much more arresting image than a photo of a history major with writer's block or an economist hunched over a problem set. Clear communication goes beyond the visual; for the president visiting the alumni/ae club in a faraway city, the results of the big game or the recitation of how many championships the school has captured generally makes for a more engrossing presentation than the harder-to-portray

results of work in classrooms, libraries, and labs. It is also sometimes thought, rightly or wrongly, that talking about athletics will have a broader appeal to the school's constituency than a more "academic" emphasis.

There is also a "larger than life" attitude toward sports. But whereas getting caught up in the passion of a mythical moment is something that many of us are naturally inclined to do, it is worth noting that there are people who earn their living through their ability to fan the flames of the mythical imagination. "Outlined against a blue-gray October sky," Grantland Rice wrote in 1924, "The Four Horsemen rode again. In dramatic lore they are known as Famine, Pestilence, Destruction and Death. These are only aliases. Their real names are Stuhldreher, Miller, Crawly, and Layden."¹¹ The running backs from Notre Dame did not elevate their ball carrying to a supernatural level; sportswriter Grantland Rice did. Two years earlier, Yale coach Tad Jones had told his team: "Gentlemen, you are about to play for Yale against Harvard in football. You will never again do anything so important in your entire life." Once again, it was not the Yale players who bestowed lifelong significance upon their game, it was their coach. Sports draw upon our passions and our myths in a way that little else does. But in drawing in the public—the alumni/ae, the fans, and government officials—schools set expectations that may be difficult to satisfy and that may encourage outsiders to take a much more active role in policy making than is normally found in academia.

Regulation

Having seen how sports attract the interest of powerful off-campus constituencies—ranging from alumni/ae and local boosters to state legislators and presidents—it is not at all surprising that a recurring theme in the development of intercollegiate athletics is the making and enforcing of rules. Even in war, where winning and losing involve the highest of stakes, there are rules—from the formal boundaries of medieval chivalry to the codes of the Geneva Convention. The existence of such treaties implicitly acknowledges the degree to which combatants realize that unrestrained competition will eventually come back to haunt them. But the rules of war also serve to legitimize warfare, by making it at least remotely palatable. In this way, regulating the rules of the game may at first seem like a way of restraining competition, but in fact such regulation may encourage escalation.

The athletic director of one of the schools in our study provided a recent example of how regulation may stimulate more of what it sets out to

restrain. The Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act now requires schools to report publicly on the amounts they spend on coaching and other aspects of intercollegiate athletics (data we use extensively in Chapter 11). An entirely unintended consequence of this disclosure was to give knowledgeable athletic directors a weapon to use in pressuring their own schools to spend more on athletics. Since the ADs know their way around these complicated data far better than any school budget officer, an AD can call attention to categories of expenditure in which his or her program is falling behind the competition without noting areas in which it may be ahead. The end result is a "leveraging up" of everyone's spending.

The Rules of Engagement

Regulation of college sports began with debates over the still-being-formulated rules of the games themselves, before moving on to ask who should be allowed to play and under what conditions. Unlike life itself, and certainly unlike what happens in classrooms, sports require precise rules. Baseball mounds are 60 feet and 6 inches from home plate in every park. And although fans sometimes forget that rules are continually being tweaked—3-point shots and 24-second clocks were added to liven up basketball games—agreement on common rules is fundamentally a cooperative and regulatory process. As historian Ronald Smith has noted, the question of whether graduate students were eligible to play football in the 1890s was only the beginning. One group of Princeton players "enrolled" at Columbia long enough to help beat Yale, and 7 Michigan players had no affiliation whatsoever with the University! It was 1905 before the leading schools, led by the Big Ten, ruled that only currently registered undergraduate students could participate. Concern about the state of intercollegiate athletics led to attempts, beginning in the aftermath of Howard Savage's 1929 Carnegie Foundation report, to regulate other aspects of college sports as well.¹²

The history of regulating college sports is important for understanding the degree to which institutions today emphasize athletics in allocating admissions slots and other resources. As we have already noted, rules are inherently double-edged in that while they may seem directed at stopping you from doing certain things (e.g., from paying an athlete above the standard aid package) they also legitimize what you can do and, in fact, set a common target. So, for example, before 1956 athletic scholarships were forbidden. By legalizing them (in the hope of controlling abuses), the NCAA also encouraged their proliferation and, in effect, raised the bar determining what participation at the highest competitive level would require of institutions.

Payment of athletes was one major aspect of the management of athletics programs that, by the 1950s, schools had begun to take an active interest in regulating. Before 1956, paying for an athlete's tuition on the basis of the student's athletic ability rather than financial need was considered breaking the rules but was nevertheless a widespread practice; afterward, it became standard and legitimate. When scholarships were first instituted, athletes were given four-year awards. In the face of lawsuits that made such agreements seem very much like an employee relationship, the rules were changed; in the 1970s, coaches gained the power to "re-up" or rescind scholarships on a year-by-year basis. All such arrangements—seen either as manifestations of the great American dream of opportunity based on merit or as systematic professionalization of amateur sport activity—should be understood as regulation that solidified institutional control of, and involvement in, athletics.

Another great battlefront in the regulatory arena concerned academic standards. By the early 1970s, the efforts to set common standards for the eligibility of athletes had, for the most part, failed. The only academic achievement required for admission, for a scholarship, or for competition (from 1973 to 1986) was the requirement that athletes graduate from high school with a GPA of 2.0 or better.¹³ At the 1983 NCAA convention, in response to the efforts of an ad hoc committee of presidents that had sought to bring about reform of athletics through the American Council on Education, new academic requirements were adopted. As of 1986, freshmen were not able to participate in sports unless they had an SAT score of 700 and a 2.0 high school GPA in 11 core courses. (These requirements were both tightened and made more flexible at the 1992 convention with the adoption of Proposition 16.) Debates then took place over whether the more elaborate regulations were improving graduation rates.

In the Ivy League, academic regulation went further. Distressed by the way in which the academic profiles of athletes were drifting further and further from those of their classmates, the Ivy presidents decided to impose formal admissions regulations—to protect themselves from themselves. Recognizing that schools differed in their ability to attract students, and that Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were thought to hold an advantage over the rest of the league in the competition for talented students who were also excellent athletes, the presidents devised an elaborate Academic Index, whereby athletes' admissions credentials were considered in relation to the overall academic profile of students in the school. Thus the allowable "bands" of SAT scores and high school grades for athletes in the High Profile sports of football, men's basketball, and men's hockey varied by school. For example, athletes recruited by Harvard were required to have a higher distribution of SAT scores than ath-

letes recruited by a school with a lower average SAT score (which was permitted to dip deeper into the applicant pool, where greater numbers of athletically talented candidates could be found). This approach was consistent with the original Ivy League objective of fielding athletic teams composed of students who had academic qualifications that made them more or less representative of their classmates.

This Index (discussed at greater length in Chapter 2, where we examine the admissions process and its results) has been found to have pluses and minuses. Despite requiring a great deal of data collection and analysis, and having had to contend with numerous end runs (including, for example, the obvious tactic of balancing high-talent players who had low SAT scores with low-talent players who had exceedingly high scores in order to produce an acceptable mean), the Index has been found to work. But distrust and discontent across schools have by no means disappeared even as the average SAT scores of football, basketball, and hockey players have improved.

By far the most significant regulatory shift in intercollegiate athletics—and perhaps in higher education more generally—was the passing of the Title IX amendment to the 1972 Omnibus Education Act, whereby the Congress of the United States decreed that “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”¹⁴ The implications of this legislation have played out gradually over the ensuing three decades, but there is no doubt that mandated gender equity has had, and will continue to have, a fundamental impact on every aspect of college sports.¹⁵

The implications of Title IX are discussed at greater length in Chapters 5–8 and in Chapters 13 and 14. The general point to be emphasized here is that the ever-closer intertwining of the athletic and academic enterprises has left college and university athletic programs—and the institutions themselves—highly susceptible to both self-imposed and externally imposed regulation. And the cycle of regulation continues. Former college wrestler and current U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone, frustrated over the threat to college wrestling programs that now must compete for funding with women’s tennis as well as men’s football, introduced an amendment to the Higher Education Act in 1998 that would bar institutions from reducing funding or participation levels for a sport without providing a public “statement of justification.”¹⁶ If athletic programs were still looked upon as peripheral activities that existed at the fringes of college life, it seems unlikely that either the presidents of these institutions, the Senate, or the Office of Civil Rights would have taken such a powerful interest in them.

Collective Institutionalization: The NCAA and the Conferences

As the rules of the game—and of who could play the game—became clarified and solidified during the course of the century, the question of going back to a less formal, laissez-faire world became ever more irrelevant. Instead, self-interest brought schools together. The umbrella organization that plays by far the most important role in organizing and regulating intercollegiate athletics is of course the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Although it was founded in the early years of the 20th century, it was only in the post-World War II period that it became the dominant entity that we know today, having settled firmly into place because colleges and universities made it clear by their actions that they could not trust one another or themselves. The organizational structure of the association has long been dominated by former coaches and athletic directors—precisely the people whose dependence on athletic success was foreseen by the 1929 Carnegie report.

The NCAA was transformed in the postwar period under the leadership of Walter Byers, a skilled negotiator of television contracts who brought entertainment dollars to the NCAA and then redistributed them, in large part, to the participating schools. But beyond his marketing skills, Byers also was a superb strategist, leading the Association in efforts to head off any threat to the jobs and power that it controlled. In 1980, when the promises of the Title IX gender equity legislation were beginning to become a reality, Byers shrewdly provided irresistible incentives to schools to choose the NCAA as the locus of control of women’s sports instead of the group that had long sponsored and led the fight for women’s college sports, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW). By paying for travel to championship competitions and insurance for schools, Byers provided incentives for women’s sports programs to pass through their adolescence under the direction of the NCAA. When a group of college presidents then sought (in 1983, acting through the American Council on Education) to take control of an athletics structure that was perceived to be acting with complete disregard for academic standards, the NCAA formed its own presidents’ commission, thereby solidifying its place in determining which rules would be made and how they would be enforced. All of the disputes over gender equity and all of the concern over academic standards encouraged the NCAA to add to its enforcement and watchdog responsibilities.

The NCAA has been described as the fox watching the henhouse of college sports, but the Association’s consolidation of power cannot be attributed only to its own ambitions; schools had demonstrated repeatedly that they were unable to protect themselves from themselves and,

at the same time, that they had no desire to disband their programs. In response, the NCAA has organized and managed the flow of big money, while orchestrating the cooperation of all segments of higher education. Critics have described it as a powerful cartel that employs 300 people and defends the interests of thousands of coaches and athletic administrators at some 1,041 schools. But, in part through its success in keeping the small Division III colleges and the big-time schools together, the Association has, despite its billion-dollar television contracts, also been able to claim the banner of academic objectives and to retain its not-for-profit status.

The NCAA has also been effective in tweaking regulations to make them even more efficient in ensuring the smooth functioning of the system. For example, in response to rising cost pressures in the early 1990s, the NCAA cut the number of football scholarships that each Division IA school could offer from 95 to 85. The NCAA's role in regulating college sports has also been important in legitimizing and institutionalizing the role of college sports—particularly when backed up by the enormous amount of money generated by the NCAA's multibillion-dollar basketball contract. This money is shared so as to provide not only strong incentives for the big-time programs to compete successfully in the regular season and in the postseason conference, but also incentives for the also-rans and even the small Division III colleges to stay within the fold. The 3.18 percent of the NCAA revenues that is shared among 373 Division III colleges pays for travel to conference championships in all sports and is also used to pay for insurance for athletes and schools.

It would be a mistake, however, to think of the NCAA as the sole organizing element in college sports. Conferences also play important roles as, in effect, companion entities to the NCAA. Historically, conferences grew up as federations within which schools could find a dependable set of competitors with interests that were at least generally aligned with their own. Conferences today serve a variety of purposes: some share revenues, some mutually police each other's admission standards (as we noted in the earlier discussion of the Ivy League's Academic Index), and all enable their schools to compete in at least a reasonably predictable way.

Conferences also have some powers that cannot be exercised by the NCAA. In 1984, a Supreme Court ruling declared that the NCAA could no longer control television football rights for all of college football, a decision that freed individual schools and conferences to negotiate their own arrangements and take home their own profits.¹⁷ This decision set conferences into a scramble to attract football powerhouses that would bring television revenues to the collective: Penn State joined the Big Ten, Florida State was invited to join the Atlantic Coast Conference, and the Southwestern Conference fell apart as Texas and Texas A&M were invited

into the Big Eight, and smaller schools like Rice were left to find a new home, after decades in the legendary Southwestern Conference. Individual institutions within conferences are obviously affected by what the conference collective decides. The addition of football powerhouse Florida State to the traditionally basketball-focused Atlantic Coast Conference brought in more revenues, but it also meant that schools like Duke and Wake Forest had to be prepared to either raise their level of commitment to football or risk embarrassment on the field. One problem for the private Division IA institutions in our study is that they are appreciably more selective academically than many of their conference peers. The dilemma that a school like Vanderbilt faces is, as one former Vanderbilt coach put it, wanting "to be Harvard six days a week and Alabama on Saturday."¹⁸

More than half a century after they invented American college football, the schools of the Ivy League went their own way and became an official conference in 1956—although they had already been a conference in the minds of many for years. It is interesting to note that, despite the widespread collective recognition enjoyed by the eight Ivies (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Penn, Princeton, and Yale), their only formal connection is through sports, and the only time that their presidents officially convene is to discuss athletic matters at biannual meetings. The league had hesitated to form a conference officially throughout the 1930s and 1940s out of concern that differing academic standards and financial resources within the group would make it hard to share common goals. Finally, with the legalization of athletic scholarships in 1956 (which they opposed), the schools signed the original Ivy principles.¹⁹

Beginning in the 1970s with the partitioning of the NCAA into divisions, selective colleges and universities had another option. Liberal arts colleges and some universities found refuge in Division III, where no athletic scholarships were allowed. Ten New England small colleges formed the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) in 1971. NESCAC provided dependable rivalries among like institutions. They policed themselves, expelling one original member (Union College) when it seemed intent on going in a different and more intense direction than the rest of the conference. Matters became somewhat more complicated in the 1990s when the presidents voted to undertake an "experiment" and to let teams compete in postseason competition, reversing a position that long had been a NESCAC line in the sand. Tasting postseason competition made it very difficult for coaches and students to contemplate going back to their prior position (recall the Williams College lacrosse snapping shot in the Prelude). The debate continues to this day as the presidents, by voting to allow only one team from the conference into each post-

season competition, try to control the genie they set loose. Some have argued that this movement into postseason competition makes in-season competition more intense than it had been before. Even in a conference praised by the national press as "pure and simple," arms races accelerate when the competitive gates are opened.²⁰

SOCIETAL FORCES THAT HAVE SHAPED COLLEGE SPORTS

Understanding how sports in America became institutionalized within colleges and universities, and how regulations have shaped "the rules of engagement," does not tell us as much as we need to know about the large societal forces that have shaped both the incentives and the constraints within which college sports must operate. Although there are surely many ways of attempting to capture the essence of what has happened, we conclude this chapter by focusing on three interconnected forces that underlie many of the developments we have outlined: (1) the growth of the entertainment industry and the commercialization of intercollegiate athletics; (2) the ever-increasing importance of a college degree, the concomitant heightening of competition for admission to the most selective colleges and universities, and changes in admissions philosophies; and (3) the greatly increased specialization of athletic talent from early ages, accompanied by improvements in performance.

The Growth of the Entertainment Industry and the Commercialization of Athletics

In the early 1900s, Ivy League football monopolized the collective imagination of the country and consequently cornered an almost mythical portion of the public's entertainment dollar. For the year ending August 30, 1915, the Yale football team showed expenditures of \$95,572.09 and receipts of \$194,669.04—a profit of roughly \$100,000 (in excess of \$1.5 million in 2000 dollars).

The enterprise that brought in almost one-third as much as the school's entire tuition revenue rested on one three-hour ritual—the annual Harvard-Yale football game. At the time of that 1914 game, there were only 29 football games being played nationwide (as opposed to 300 on any given fall Saturday now), and just 14 in the area between Maine and Washington, D.C. There were no professional football games the next day (Sunday) because professional football did not yet exist, and while Lionel Barrymore and Sarah Bernhardt were defining the height of vaudeville, there were no movies, no television, and no radio. Ivy League

football dominated the market and, for the moment, all was right in their world. For many years, the local Saturday afternoon game was literally "the only game in town." But, this was to change—dramatically. The rise of sports in the second half of the century coincided with the rise of an entertainment-driven economy. Disneyland was built in 1955—the year that the first cohort of students in our study emerged from college. Disneyland and other theme parks, the music industry, and the world of film, television, and video games constitute an ever-growing sector of the economy, one that attracts and draws upon many of the same passions that sports inspires.²¹

More generally, the extraordinary growth of the entertainment economy has made it much more difficult for college sports programs to compete for attendance. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, Saturday afternoon sports fans have increasingly had to choose between local contests and high-quality transmission of many appealing contests involving the top-rated teams in the country. Consider the same November Saturday afternoon 5½-hour time slot across 38 years. In 1955 viewers could watch 3 hours of sports, with no overlap among programs. By 1979, there were 15½ hours of options, and by 1993 fans could choose from among 43 hours of sports—including 15½ hours of college football alone. Subsequently, "direct TV" has allowed viewers to subscribe to the game of their choice—making the options virtually limitless. Moreover, television producers have worked hard to make their presentations better, in a sense, than reality. Viewers, enjoying the warmth of their living rooms, have become so dependent on features like instant replay that they feel cheated when they attend live games and must actually pay attention to every play, lest they miss the big one.

The financial stake in television revenues of those colleges and universities with big-time programs has become enormous, and, as was noted in the previous section, even those schools with Division III programs share modestly in the revenues generated by the NCAA contract to televise "March madness." The financial aspects of all of these relationships are discussed in Chapter 11, where the costs and revenues of intercollegiate sports played at various levels of competition are analyzed in considerable detail. Perhaps the most obvious point to emphasize here (apart from the fact that billions of dollars are involved) is that the distribution of financial rewards places a tremendous premium on winning, especially in the High Profile sports. Coming in even "second best" can entail large losses, and the financial incentives to be consistently at the top are powerful.²²

In their book *The Winner-Take-All Society*, Robert Frank and Philip Cook describe how changes in technology have intensified the gap between the winners of any sort of societal contest and the rest of the pack: "As the

revolution in information processing and transmission continues, there is increasing leverage for the talents of those who occupy top positions and correspondingly less room for others to find a lucrative niche.²³ So, for example, the opportunity to listen to your favorite symphony on digital compact disc as performed by the London Philharmonic mediates your desire to hear the local orchestra play the same piece, and hence lessens the rewards that accrue to the local violinist. In the same way, the college teams that make it big can at least attempt to justify the high costs of competing, and those who lose are left far behind. But the competition for television-transmitted glory is by no means the only intense race for a prize that occurs at selective colleges and universities.

The Increased Competitiveness of College Admissions

As recently as the 1950s, applicant pools at even the strongest colleges and universities were both much smaller and much less diverse. Whereas it once was true that solid applicants from the better-known prep schools and leading public high schools could count on getting into one of the leading colleges and universities, the odds of admission for everyone fell sharply, starting in the mid- to late 1960s, as larger and larger numbers of outstanding candidates sought admission at the strongest schools.²⁴ Career advancement in our knowledge-based economy has increased the premium that prospective employers, and consequently applicants, place on attending a school with an impressive reputation. Three factors arose simultaneously to change dramatically the terms of the race to the admissions office: new applicants coming from an increasingly national and democratic pool, an improved flow of information that can be used in matching highly qualified applicants with selective schools, and a widely held perception that advantages accrue to those who attend a school that is highly ranked in national polls. In choosing recent classes, Swarthmore offered places to about 20 percent of its applicants; Wellesley, to about 50 percent; Stanford, to fewer than 15 percent; Columbia, to 17 percent; and the University of Michigan, to roughly 64 percent of all out-of-state applicants—and these daunting percentages include only those who applied, not all the other potential applicants who realistically bowed out of the competition before the application deadline.²⁵

As competition for admission increased, and admissions officers sought ways of choosing from a surplus of talented applicants, colleges began to move away from identifying and admitting the “well-rounded” student and instead began to concentrate on enrolling a “well-rounded class” of students who stood out in specific ways. The ramifications of this increase in the competition for admission and this shift in admissions philosophy

Figure 1.1. Sports Televised (in New York City) during the Harvard-Yale Football Game, 1955, 1979, and 1993
Source: *New York Times*.

Channel	Time	Event	Hours
Ch 4	12:00	Thrills in Sports	1.0
Ch 13	12:00	Pts Bx Rev College Football USC vs. UCLA	2.0
Ch 4	12:00	College Basketball Duke vs. Kentucky	3.0
Ch 2	12:00	College Football Ohio State vs. Michigan	5.0
Ch 7	12:30	College Football Miami vs. Alabama	5.5
Ch 11	12:30	High School Football NFL	3.5
Ch 11	12:30	Soccer	15.5
CBS	12:00	College Football Boston College vs. Notre Dame	2.5
NBC	12:00	NBA	5.0
FOX	12:00	Wrestling American Gladiators	2.0
ABC	12:30	College Football Ohio State vs. Michigan	6.0
Ch 8	12:30	College Football Big East Game of the Week	6.0
Ch 58	12:30	Wrestling NFL	1.5
Ch 58	12:30	Wrestling NFL	1.5
SC	12:30	NHL Detroit Red Wings vs. Devils	6.0
SC	12:30	G. Moeller Horsta Devils	6.0
CNN	12:30	Sports	0.5
ESPN	12:30	Game Day W College Basketball Texas Tech vs. Vanderbilt	6.0
MSG	12:30	Tennis ATP World Championship	6.0
TNT	12:30	Tennis Virginia Slims Championships	1.5
TNT	12:30	Gymnastics	43.0
Ch 4	1:00	Thrills in Sports	1.0
Ch 4	1:00	College Football USC vs. UCLA	2.0
Ch 13	1:00	Pts Bx Rev College Football USC vs. UCLA	3.0
Ch 4	1:30	College Basketball Duke vs. Kentucky	3.0
Ch 2	1:30	College Football Ohio State vs. Michigan	5.0
Ch 7	1:30	College Football Miami vs. Alabama	5.5
Ch 11	1:30	High School Football NFL	3.5
Ch 11	1:30	Soccer	15.5
CBS	1:00	College Football Boston College vs. Notre Dame	2.5
NBC	1:00	NBA	5.0
FOX	1:00	Wrestling American Gladiators	2.0
ABC	1:30	College Football Ohio State vs. Michigan	6.0
Ch 8	1:30	College Football Big East Game of the Week	6.0
Ch 58	1:30	Wrestling NFL	1.5
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SC	1:30	G. Moeller Horsta Devils	6.0
CNN	1:30	Sports	0.5
ESPN	1:30	Game Day W College Basketball Texas Tech vs. Vanderbilt	6.0
MSG	1:30	Tennis ATP World Championship	6.0
TNT	1:30	Tennis Virginia Slims Championships	1.5
TNT	1:30	Gymnastics	43.0

are discussed at length in Chapters 13 and 14. The point of immediate relevance is that admissions offices became much more interested in candidates who offered distinctive qualifications—who were different in some major respect from the rapidly growing number of well-qualified “ordinary” applicants. The much more active recruitment of both minority students and applicants with unusual promise in particular fields such as mathematics was part of this process, as was the willingness to admit the exceptional musician and the truly outstanding athlete who had specialized talent.

One consequence of this change in the composition of the student body, read alongside the change in the entertainment market already noted, is that the once-cohesive audience that was expected to fill the stadium on Saturday afternoon was fragmented. At selective colleges and universities, the competitive nature of the admissions process was drawing an increasingly active student body committed to a burgeoning array of participatory pursuits. Whether out of pure interest or determined careerism, students who attend Northwestern and Wesleyan and Barnard have been building résumés full of extracurricular activities since junior high school or earlier. Between 1980 and 1996 the number of officially registered student organizations at Yale rose from 140 to 230—including 27 music or singing groups, 11 math or science organizations, 16 drama groups, and 18 publications.²⁶

It should come as no surprise then that the ritual significance of the big Saturday football contest, in particular, changed on many (perhaps all) of these campuses. Students became increasingly engaged in a host of participatory activities of their own, and many of them were also intensely committed to academic and research pursuits (spending many Saturday afternoons in the lab or library). Average student attendance at football games at Ivy League universities and coed liberal arts colleges has declined, as has the student share of attendance at places like the University of Michigan.²⁷ At many coed liberal arts colleges, attendance at intercollegiate events consists of a heavy representation of friends, plus some number of family members and others deeply interested in the particular sport. The growth in popularity of sports like lacrosse, soccer, and volleyball, and the rapid increase in the number of women’s teams, has meant that students and others interested in campus sports have a much wider array of spectator options than used to be the case.

From the perspective of the place of the athlete on the campus of a highly selective school, this upsurge in the competitiveness of admissions, combined with the search for “distinctive” candidates, had two principal effects. First, it raised sharply the “opportunity cost” of any admissions decision, including the decision to admit someone who ranked high on a coach’s list—because the disappointed student at large who might have

been accepted had the athlete not been taken was now much stronger than the corresponding candidate who would have been turned down in the 1950s. Second, it introduced onto the campus a group of athletes who were as specialized in their own ways as the most intensely focused computer scientists.

The Increased Competence (and Specialization) of Precollege Athletic Talent

Sports programs for 18- to 21-year-olds who attend selective colleges and universities do not exist in a vacuum. The changes that we have tracked in college sports must be considered in the context of a sports culture that has grown exponentially. The program grid presented in Figure 1.1, showing our society’s apparently limitless appetite for consuming sports on television, tells part of the story. Also relevant is how seriously we have come to take games in general, at younger and younger ages, and the role that the institutionalization of sports has played in this process.

The institutional sanction of sports is clearly seen in high schools, where the image of the jock as big man on campus has intensified, and the distinction between “winners” and “losers”—once a social divide set up by the kids themselves—is now reinforced by institutionally sponsored arrangements such as special meals and other privileges. In the aftermath of the Columbine High School massacre, in which athletes were singled out as targets, the costs and benefits of the high school-sponsored “jock culture” were debated in an online forum set up by the *New York Times*: “You cannot have a high school administration that openly condones an ethic of competitive glory-seeking conquerors,” one respondent wrote, “without also creating an underclass of noncompetitive ‘losers.’”²⁸ This is, of course, only one opinion, but as athletics are taken more seriously as an institutional activity, stakes do inevitably rise. “On the village green,” George Orwell wrote in 1947, “where you pick up sides and no feeling of local patriotism is involved, it is possible to play simply for the fun and the exercise; but as soon as the question of prestige arises, as soon as you feel that you and some larger unit will be disgraced if you lose, the most savage combative instincts are aroused.”²⁹

Following (or concurrent with) the institutionalization of college athletics, sports have become more specialized, and athletes (and their parents) have become more serious about play in the formative stages of life. A *New York Times* article tells of parents hiring batting coaches for Little Leaguers (at a rate of \$70 per hour).³⁰ There is a link here that is worth noting. At the same time that sports has become more valued as a part of our culture (with parents quoted in the *Times* article as insisting that they

have to hire the high-priced coaches lest their children's self-worth be threatened by striking out), colleges have helped define these cultural attitudes through their actions: a Little League spokesman noted that a large share of those paying for private instruction were girls trying to win college scholarships in softball.

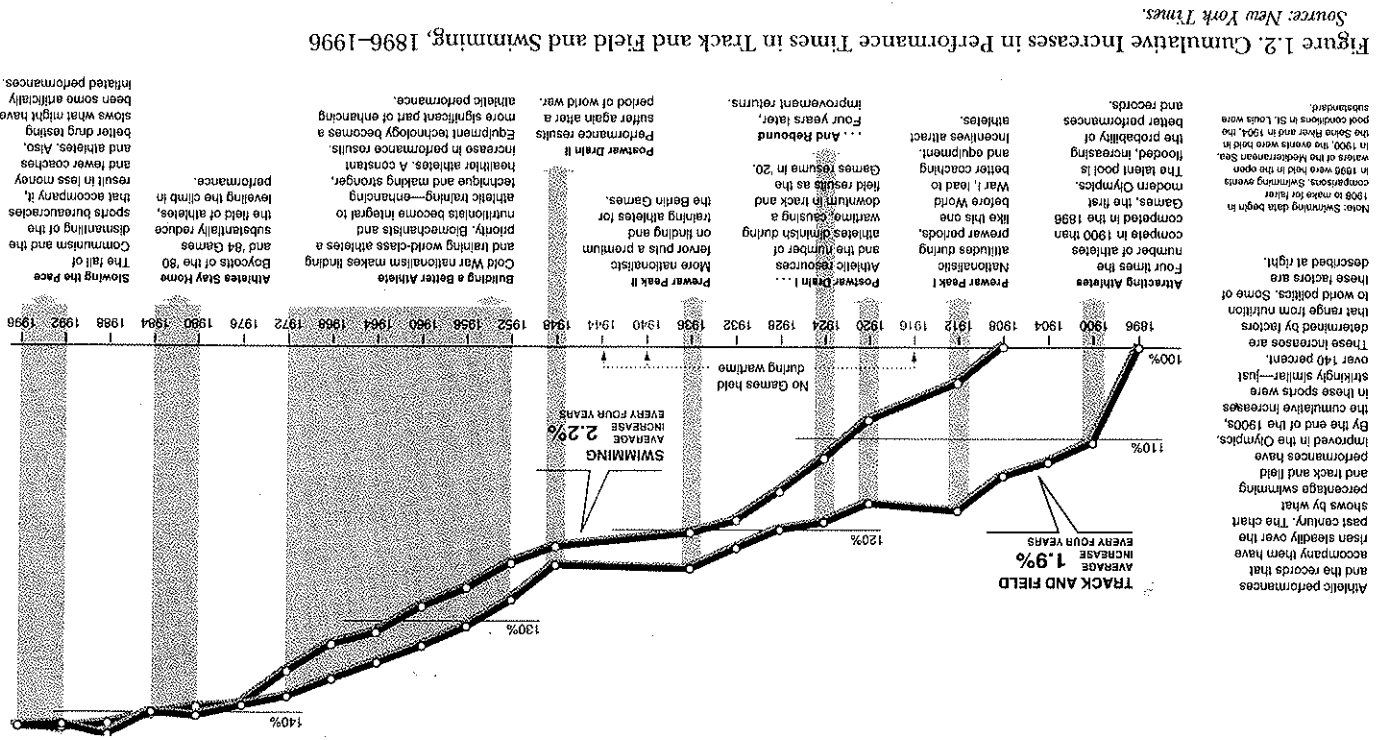
Not surprisingly, standards of performance have improved dramatically. One set of relevant data was presented in the context of athletic performance at the Olympics (Figure 1.2), demonstrating cumulative performance time improvements in track and field and swimming of just over 140 percent. Although we are not concerned directly with Olympic athletes, the achievements of the Olympians are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Anyone who watches Little League games, high school tennis championships, soccer competitions, or pickup basketball games (let alone televised contests featuring high school all-stars) cannot help but be aware of the trend—in part because of the much heavier investment in coaching, practice, and training that is now made when children are still very young.

Weissmüller, 15 times over:

In 1924, Johnny Weissmüller was the first Olympian to swim the 100-meter freestyle in under a minute. More than half a century later, Vladimir Salnikow maintained that pace over a distance 15 times that of Weissmüller's, when he set a 1,500-meter freestyle world record in under 15 minutes.³¹

Since everyone has limited time, there is a corresponding tendency to specialize in a sport at an early age, so that a young person can become "really good at something." The changes in the philosophy of college admissions, which put greater emphasis on excellence along at least one noticeable dimension, have played at least a small part in encouraging this tendency. To be sure, there are people who remain capable of excelling in many pursuits at the same time. There is, nonetheless, a risk that society will train what a famous economist, Jacob Viner (in speaking about graduate students), once referred to as "a trufflehound . . . finely trained for a single small purpose and not much good for any other."³²

It is worth keeping in mind this increased specialization among athletes when considering other findings reported in this book. In particular, specialization relates to the nature of recruiting, with coaches focused heavily on identifying candidates who can fill particular niches on their teams (say, outside linebackers). This process is made easier, of course, by the fact that today so much more is known about the athletic skills of



Source: *New York Times*.

applicants when coaches decide whom to pursue. Increased specialization also translates quite directly into an unmistakable trend away from participation in college in more than one sport. In Figure 1.3a, we show the percentage of all male athletes in each of three cohorts (1951, 1976, and 1989) who played more than one sport in college, with separate figures given for the Division IA programs, the Division IAA (Ivies), and the Division III schools (coed liberal arts colleges). In Figure 1.3b, we present similar data for women, including women enrolled at the women's colleges, in the two most recent cohorts (data for women athletes are unavailable for the '51 cohort).

To begin with the data for the men, a clear story is told by the data at the two ends of the spectrum: in the Division IA public universities, 10 percent of male athletes in the '51 cohort played more than one sport, as compared with 1 percent in the '89 cohort; in the Division III coed liberal arts colleges, the comparable figure falls from 37 percent in the '51 cohort to 20 percent in the '89 cohort. When we compare Figures 1.3a and 1.3b, we see that the women athletes are consistently more likely than their male counterparts to play two or more sports. We also see that women athletes in the Division IA programs and in the Ivy League are following the same trend as the men—that is, the percentage playing two or more sports declined significantly between the '76 and '89 cohorts. The data for women athletes at the Division III colleges (both the coed colleges and the women's colleges), on the other hand, do not show the same effects of specialization—so far.

The changes in college athletics that have occurred over the past half century have been profound. In the 1950s, two very different worlds of college sports existed simultaneously. The big-time programs, while still a "work in progress," were even then increasingly taking on professional overtones. The second approach was much lower key; it was found mainly where sports were seen by students as a part of life that they wanted because they enjoyed playing. As time passed, even the less intensive programs, which were once viewed as ancillary, consumed more and more institutional resources—money, admissions slots, and administration time. This change is fundamental to the questions we explore in the coming chapters for one reason: when we look at athletes from the 1950s, we must realize that they were both products of and participants in a very different ecosystem. The external environment within which colleges and universities live has changed. But the policies of the schools have changed as well. It may be a mistake for the football or lacrosse player of yesterday to look at his counterpart today and assume that the two of them are

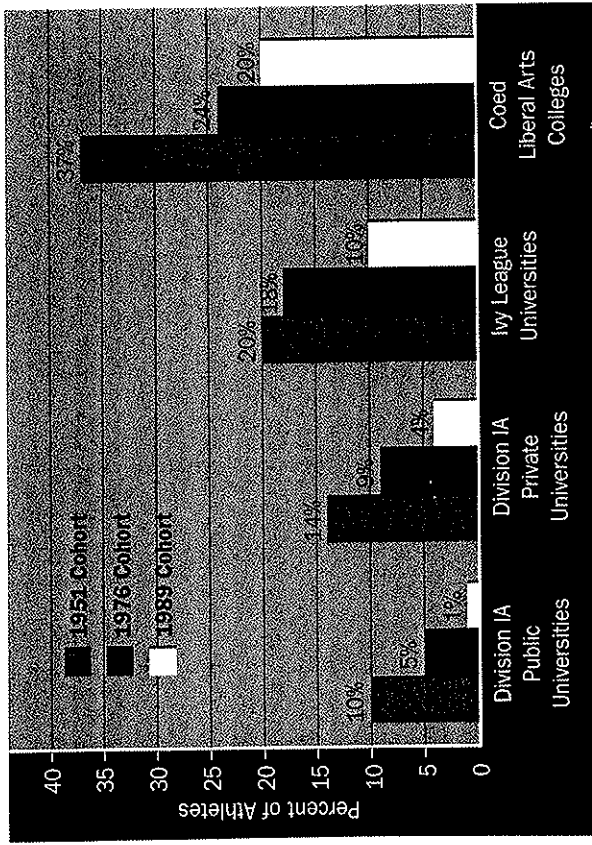


Figure 1.3a. Multi-Sport Athletes as a Percent of All Male Athletes
Source: College and Beyond.

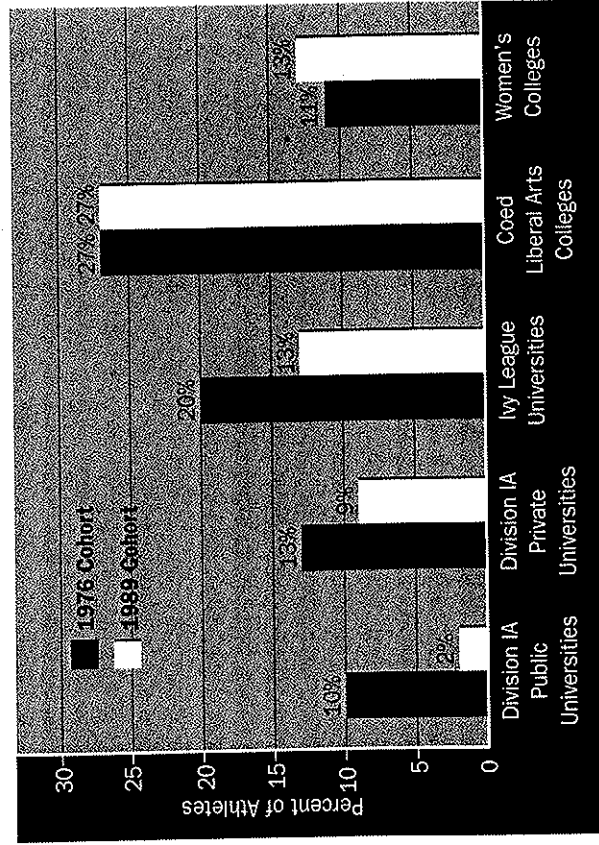


Figure 1.3b. Multi-Sport Athletes as a Percent of All Female Athletes
Source: College and Beyond.

the same, that their common sport means the same thing to them, or that, despite having donned similar uniforms, they have played the same game.

In the coming chapters, we attempt to gauge in what ways the player in the 1950s and today's more sharply focused recruit are similar and in what ways they differ. It was the eminent social scientist Yogi Berra who once noted the trickiness inherent in tracking systemic changes over time: "The future," he said, "ain't what it used to be."

The Admissions Game: Recruiting Male Athletes and the Implications of Selection

It's the same for everybody in the conference. If one school can field a "nickel package," we all have to. Here we are with only 400 slots and I'm not just looking for a football player or a linebacker with scores that are respectable, I'm looking for a left outside linebacker who can blitz.

—Tom Parker, director of admissions at Amherst, formerly director of admissions at Williams

IN A PINCH, a strong safety can be converted into a wide receiver. But a coach is presented with an entirely different situation when he has two very good 174-pound wrestlers and no one to step into the circle at 118 pounds. Although the firestorm over wrestling at Princeton began with the pressure to close a university-wide budget gap (and associated concerns over compliance with Title IX), the sport's unusual degree of specialization was an additional problem in the ongoing challenge it presented to an admissions office compelled to choose among a plethora of well-qualified candidates. This chapter describes the numbers of male athletes admitted to academically selective colleges and universities and how those students who play sports differ from their classmates.

At many of the schools in our study, it is not unusual to receive ten applications for every place in the entering class. Every spring, valedictorians with straight A averages, and applicants with stellar SAT scores who may have conducted original laboratory research or made a full-length documentary film, are rejected because there are only so many spots in a class. Because there are so many outstanding candidates, a place in the entering class at Wellesley, UNC-Chapel Hill, or Columbia is a scarce resource. In making these difficult selections, a school places its bets on certain students in the hope that in one way or another each student will contribute to the fulfillment of the institution's mission. It is when decisions are difficult that institutions and individuals demonstrate what really matters to them (as opposed to what they might *say* really matters to

4. On the decision to eliminate wrestling and its associated fallout, see Chris Edwards, "Princeton Continues to Grapple with Wrestling," *Trenton Times*, August 8, 1993, p. C6; Doug Lederman, "Tigers on Top: Princeton's Sports Program Is the Envy of the Ivies, But at What Price to the University and Its Athletes?" *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, November 6, 1996, pp. 12-22.

Preface

1. Data from four of the schools (Georgetown, Washington University, Tufts, and Emory) are used primarily in the chapter on finances. Student data concerning athletics from the latter three schools were not available for the 1951 cohort, and Georgetown's data were unique (and thus could not be merged with data for other schools) since it alone played big-time basketball but competed as a Division IAA school in other sports.
2. Supplementary data on giving patterns were collected from a subset of 15 institutions. For an extended discussion of the College and Beyond database, see William G. Bowen and Derek Bok, *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), especially Appendix A.
3. The methods used to analyze data are similar to those described at length in Bowen and Bok, Appendix B. We try to use the simplest methods consistent with the objectives at hand, and ordinary tabulations and cross-tabulations often suffice. But we also employ multivariate regression analysis to isolate as best we can the effects of one independent variable (for example, whether or not a student played sports) on an "other-things-equal" basis. When the dependent variables are continuous, such as rank-in-class or income, we use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression techniques. When the dependent variables are binary, we use logit models; see Bowen and Bok, pp. 341-44.

Chapter 1 The Institutionalization and Regulation of College Sports in Historical Perspective

1. The Yale statement is by the late Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti; it served as the mission statement for the undergraduate college for many years. See <http://www.yale.edu/accred/standards/s4.html>. Recently it has been superseded by a new mission statement: "The mission of Yale College is to seek exceptionally promising students of all backgrounds from across the nation and around the world and to educate them, through mental discipline and social experience, to develop their intellectual, moral, civic and creative capacities to the fullest. The aim of this education is the cultivation of citizens with a rich awareness of our human heritage to lead and serve in every sphere of human activity." The statement is available online at <http://www.yale.edu/accred/standards/sl.html>. For the other mission statements, see [http://www.upenn.edu/audit/agenda.html](http://circle.kenyon.edu/visitors/mission/); <http://www.umich.edu/UM-Mission.html>.
2. Hanna Gray, "The Leaning Tower of Academe," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 49 (1996): 34-54; quote on pp. 52-53; emphasis in original.

3. We are indebted for much of the information about the early history of intercollegiate athletics to Ronald Smith, *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
4. This section borrows its name from the title the historian Frederick Rudolph gave to a famous chapter in his history of higher education, *The American College and University* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990 [1962]).
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 385-87.
6. Henry T. Fowler, "A Phase of Modern College Life," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, April 1896, pp. 688-95.
7. Howard J. Savage, *American College Athletics* (New York: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1929).
8. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
9. As historian John Thelin puts it, "The organizational revolution has been the ascent of the incorporated athletic association, a structure that has allowed athletic directors and boosters to create, basically on their own terms, a privileged entity attached to the university." *Games Colleges Play: Scandal and Reform in Intercollegiate Athletics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 198.
10. Robert Maynard Hutchins, *Some Observations on American Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 67-68.
11. Ron Fimrite, "Once Regal, Soon to Be Razed," *Sports Illustrated*, November 25, 1956, p. R5 (originally published in the *New York Herald Tribune*).
12. Thelin, especially Chapter 2.
13. For the history and context of this reform effort, see Derek Bok, "Intercollegiate Athletics," in John B. Bennett and J. W. Peltason (eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Higher Education: Self-Regulation and the Ethical Roles of the Academy* (New York: American Council on Education, 1985), pp. 123-46; Arthur Padilla and Leroy T. Walker, "The Battle for Control of College Sports," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 14, 1994, p. A56; Walter Byers (with Charles Hamner), *Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Exploiting College Athletics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), especially Chapter 16.
14. 20 USC 1681(a). The associated language from the Code of Federal Regulations reads as follows: "No person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, be treated differently from another person or otherwise be discriminated against in any interscholastic, intercollegiate, club or intramural athletics offered by a recipient, and no recipient shall provide any such athletics separately on such basis"; 34 C.F.R. 106.41 (a).
15. Government regulation of course affects other parts of the campus as well. Chemical waste from the labs must be disposed of in ways that comply with OSHA regulations, for example. But the potential programmatic and financial consequences of Title IX, while still being defined, are substantial.
16. Guy Gugliotta, "On the Hill, Ex-wrestlers Go to the Mat for the Sport," *Washington Post*, April 30, 1998, p. A19; Bill McAllister, "Wrestler Wrider," *Washington Post*, July 2, 1998, p. A19.
17. It was in 1940 that television first attempted to bring college football from the cold outdoors into the comfort of our living rooms. By 1952, the NCAA had signed a contract with one of the networks on behalf of many of its constituent schools. The University of Pennsylvania and Notre Dame squared off against the

NCAA over the right of schools to set up their own television contracts. In the end, the Association won and over the next thirty years built up its own fortunes with a series of huge contracts with the major networks. The 1984 Supreme Court decision was made in response to a lawsuit brought by schools in the College Football Association (CFA). The CFA's own negotiations with the networks subsequently fell apart as Notre Dame defected and signed its own exclusive agreement with NBC; it was followed by the Southeastern Conference. For more detail, see Theilin, Chapter 4, and Andrew Zimbalist, *Unpaid Professionals: Commercialism and Conflict in Big-Time College Sports* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

18. "One of the biggest reasons for Vandy's football failure," one coach had said upon his departure in the mid-1980s, "is the continuous rise in academic standards." Vanderbilt also provides a textbook example of the difficulties in trying to compete in local entertainment markets and in the quest for support of the local community. In 1995, a *Sports Illustrated* article simultaneously celebrated Nashville's sports enthusiasm and blasted Vanderbilt athletics. The article portrayed Vanderbilt as plagued by "a uniquely arrogant defeatism." None of this was surprising coming from a sports magazine that sells its product by arousing sports passions; what was surprising to some people at Vanderbilt were the comments of the mayor of Nashville, who chided Vanderbilt as "an institution that has held itself very apart from the community." The mayor had sponsored the construction of a \$125 million hockey and basketball arena, which was currently sitting empty awaiting either NHL or NBA expansion or a team purloined from another city; he also was hard at work crafting a deal to lure the NFL Houston Oilers to Nashville. He saw Vanderbilt's sports failures as a sign of contempt for his community. Vanderbilt Chancellor Joe Wyatt responded by pointing to the hundreds of doctors, nurses, and teachers who volunteered in the community. S. L. Price, "What's Hot, What's Not: In Nashville, the NBA, the NFL, and the NHL. May Be on the Way In and Up, While Football at Prestigious Vanderbilt Is Down and Out," *Sports Illustrated*, November 27, 1995, p. 48.

19. The first sections of the original Ivy Group agreement of 1954 read as follows:

I. The subscribing institutions constitute themselves, for the purposes covered by this agreement, members of a group to be known as "The Ivy Group."

II. The Group reaffirm the basic principle of the control of athletics by the academic authorities of each institution.

III. A. The Group affirm their conviction that under proper conditions intercollegiate competition in organized athletics offers desirable development and recreation for players and a healthy focus of collegiate loyalty. These conditions require that the players shall be truly representative of the student body and not composed of a group of specially recruited athletes. They further require that undue strain upon players and coaches be eliminated and that they be permitted to enjoy the game as participants in a form of recreational competition rather than as professional performers in public spectacles. In the total life of the campus, emphasis upon intercollegiate competition must be kept in harmony with the essential educational purposes of the institution.

B. The Group conclude that these conditions and requirements can best be fulfilled by denying to the fullest possible extent external pressure for competitive extremes.

C. To this end, the Group will foster intra-group athletic competition in all sports. No member institution, however, shall necessarily field a team in every sport.

D. The Group approve a round-robin schedule in football and the principle of round-robin schedules in as many sports as practicable.

20. The best history of NESAC was a report by Karin Vélez, commissioned by the conference in 1997, entitled *The New England Small College Athletic Conference, 1971-1997: A Retrospective*. We also benefited from a study written by Robert Edwards, president of Bowdoin College, entitled "A Reflection about NESAC Football," appended to the Vélez report.

21. On the entertainment industry, see Michael J. Mandel and Mark Landler, "The Entertainment Economy," *Business Week*, March 14, 1994, pp. 58ff; Richard Butsch (ed.), *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

Marketing has fed off (and into) the craving for sports as entertainment—and has also led to new complications for colleges and universities. In May 2000, Nike broke off talks with the University of Michigan on renewing a sports-equipment contract that could have been worth between \$22 and \$26 million. The dispute centered at least in part on differences between Nike and the university over the handling of "sweatshop" issues. Michigan's interim athletics director, William C. Martin, was quoted as saying: "Social change takes place at universities across the country. I think sometimes kids do a better job of understanding these things than adults do, and I'm proud of them. But it's one hell of an expensive stand"; Welch Suggs, "Abandoning Major Sponsorship Deal, Nike Plays Hardball over Sweatshops," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 12, 2000, online edition. Subsequently, Nike agreed to extend by one year its licensing agreement with the University—so that athletes would have uniforms and equipment for the next academic year. But it does not appear that this interim one-year contract represents any change of heart on the part of either party. See Martin Van Der Werf, "Nike Grants U. of Michigan a 1-Year Extension on Athletics-Apparel Contract," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 15, 2000, online edition. Earlier in the year, Nike had broken its contract to supply hockey equipment to Brown University, and Nike's chairman, Phil Knight, said he would give no more money to his alma mater, the University of Oregon, because of disagreements over similar issues. Such disputes illustrate how commercial, educational, and social values can become intertwined and lead to serious conflict when revenues from corporate sponsorship become so consequential.

22. For more on the intersection between television and college sports, see Murray Sperber, *College Sports, Inc.: The Athletic Department vs. the University* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990); Zimbalist, *Unpaid Professionals*.

23. Robert H. Frank and Philip J. Cook, *The Winner-Take-All Society: How More and More Americans Compete for Ever Fewer and Bigger Prizes, Encouraging Economic Waste, Income Inequality, and Impoverished Cultural Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995), p. viii.

24. Carolyn Hoxby, "The Changing Market Structure of U.S. Higher Education," unpublished paper (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1997). For background on how the admissions offices of selective colleges and universities sought to diversify the type of student they admitted over the course of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, see Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999).

25. The University of Michigan figure is courtesy of its news service. The others were calculated from data collected in 1998-99, published in *Peterson's Guide to 4 Year Colleges 2000* (Princeton, N.J.: Peterson's, 1999).

26. To illustrate, a partial listing of organizations organized by Yale students includes numerous publications: *Akili Neusmagazine*, Banner publications, the *Yale Course Critique*, the *Yale Daily News*, the *New Journal*, the *Yale Free Press*, the *Yale Herald*, the *Yale International Forum*, *Jornungandr*, the *Yale Journal of Human Rights*, the *Yale Literary Magazine*, the *Yale Political Monthly*, the *Yale Record*, the *Review of Politics*, *Yale Scientific Magazine*, *Splatter!* magazine, *Urim V'Turim*, and *Whirlpool* Productions. In addition, Dwight Hall (the center for community service) lists 5 literacy groups, 12 arts organizations, 6 community development groups, 5 disabilities groups, 29 youth/tutoring programs, 4 programs for the elderly, 8 environmental groups, 7 gender-related groups, 26 health-related groups, 20 homeless and hunger groups, 8 legal groups, 14 political advocacy organizations, and 24 recreation or mentoring organizations.

27. For example, in the 1950s Yale attracted roughly 30,000 spectators per game, a figure that has dropped in the 1990s to the range of 10,000 to 20,000. Similar trends are observable at other schools in our sample.

28. Robert Lipsyte, "Backlash: The Entangled Web around Youth Sports," *New York Times*, May 23, 1999, section 8, p. 13.

29. George Orwell, *The Sporting Spirit* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968 [1947]).

30. Dirk Johnson, "Seeking Little League Skills at \$70 an Hour," *New York Times*, June 24, 1999, p. A1.

31. "Faster, Higher, Farther: Tracking Athletic Performance," *New York Times*, January 2, 2000, section 8, p. 9.

32. Jacob Viner, "Scholarship and Graduate Training," in his *The Long View and the Short* (New York: Free Press, 1958), pp. 378-79.

Chapter 2 The Admissions Game

1. Andree Brooks, "Heavy Angst When It's Ivy or Else," *New York Times*, March 30, 1995.

2. The NCAA uses the phrase "revenue sports," defined to include only football and men's basketball, and in some parts of our analysis (especially in Chapter 11, where we examine the finances of intercollegiate sports and use some NCAA data), we too treat football and men's basketball as a category all their own. In working with the student data for these selective institutions, however, and in recognizing the similarity of recruitment patterns, it seemed more appropriate to group men's ice hockey with football and basketball than to put the hockey players with, for example, the golfers. There is, of course, no exactly right

way to combine teams, and in some parts of the study we report data for other groupings of teams and occasionally even for particular sports.

3. These figures are taken from Scorecard 2.1, which shows the percentages of the male student body who played the High Profile and Lower Profile sports in each of the three generational cohorts and each divisional grouping (with a sector composite shown as well). The sector composite is a simple average of the values for each divisional grouping, with the divisional groupings in turn composed of simple averages of the values for each school within each divisional grouping. This approach emphasizes that it is the individual institution (and then the division, or type of school) that is the unit of analysis, *not* the individual athlete. We do not want to give larger weights to those schools (and divisions) that happen to enroll larger absolute numbers of athletes in particular sports or in all sports.

4. These numbers cannot be compared readily with the single-cohort numbers obtained from the College and Beyond database and presented in Figure 2.1. The single-cohort data tell us the number of students who won an award at any point in their college careers, and it would therefore be misleading to multiply these numbers by four to estimate the total size of the athlete population at any moment in time (which is what the EADA data report).

5. Savage, p. 240.

6. This account of recruiting practices in the 1950s, based on the recollections of former athletes, was confirmed by a memo made available to us by Thomas Wright, vice president of Princeton University. The memo recounts a lengthy conversation between Mr. Wright (who was working on an internal study of athletics) and Bill Edwards, the director of admission at Princeton through the 1950s and into the early 1960s. Mr. Edwards reported that the football coach at Princeton at that time, Charles Caldwell, was an early proponent of using alumni to contact prospective football players. Coach Caldwell also had excellent relations with the Office of Admission. He would bring to the director lists of prospective football players, ranked A, B, and C on the basis of their promise as athletes, and the two of them would then discuss the candidates, focusing on the A list. Mr. Edwards recalled that, in the words of the memo, "Coach Caldwell never put inappropriate pressure on the Director of Admission, and was 'just as interested' as Edwards was in seeing that young men who came to Princeton would do well and fit in well there." Perhaps ten students a year were admitted as a result of this process. Edwards also recalled that there was "a little" of the same sort of identification of players for basketball, also "a little" in ice hockey, "a very little" in track, and "others nil."

7. We present these data only for the Ivies and the Division III coed liberal arts colleges because the CIRP surveys were carried out more extensively at these schools; CIRP data are too limited at the Division IA private and public universities to permit presentation of meaningful numbers.

8. In order to judge how representative this school is of all the non-scholarship schools in the study, we calculated the difference between the mean (combined) SATs of all male athletes and of all male students at large at each of these schools in both the '76 and '89 cohorts. The resulting gaps are remarkably similar in size among the more selective institutions (in the 70 to 90 point range, in the case of the '89 cohort). They are somewhat smaller at some of the less selective liberal