The Test of Time

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This issue of the Journal of Sport History kicks off a new section titled “The Test of Time.” Its purpose is to re-consider and re-evaluate influential texts in order to assess the degree to which elements such as significance, analysis, argument, and resonance hold up within sport history. In the coming editions, scholars will attend to the first ten winners of the North American Society for Sport History book award (excluding Wray Vamplew’s 1989 Pay Up and Play the Game until the end of his editorial stewardship), from a variety of approaches.

Some may opt to situate the publication within the broader context of developments in sport history or historiography. Central considerations will concern whether the book seems “dated” in any way, that is, if there have been significant advancements in related research, theoretical understandings, or methodologies that would identify the original work as somehow behind the current times. Others may address how the work stands in relation to recent “turns” (cultural, postmodern, visual, etc.) in history, or if the manuscript has been especially influential on subsequent scholarship.

Additional contributions will come from the authors of the award-winning books in which they reflect on changes in sport history, their own intellectual development, and contemplate what they would have done differently or what they would do all over again, if given the chance. In this first installment, Warren Goldstein, winner of the 1990 North American Society for Sport History Book Award, takes on his own Playing for Keeps: A History of Early Baseball, recently re-published by Cornell University Press to commemorate the book’s twentieth anniversary. Goldstein’s essay in this journal is adapted from his new preface for Playing for Keeps.

This series prods sport historians to be retrospective, introspective, and prospective in their analyses. It is a healthy, important process in which to engage and asks readers to think about how significant works and, ultimately, the field of sport history, will withstand the “test of time.”