

The Roles and Responsibilities of Kinesiology Regarding Sport

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This article is a response to the 2013 NAKHE meeting in San Diego, California. The assigned strand was the roles and responsibilities of kinesiology regarding sport. The article is a response of the strand leader, comments from the participants in the strand, and possible solutions to the strand direction.

Keywords Kinesiology, sport

In January of 2014, NAKHE met in San Diego with four other organizations to discuss important roles and responsibilities of the profession in the 21st century. A number of strands were discussed at the congress and summarized in other articles in this issue; One strand focused on “the roles and responsibilities of kinesiology regarding sport,” for which I was charged to provide some introductory comments and to lead a plenary session. This article is a summary of my own thoughts on this topic and some of the comments made by those in the audience that morning. The discussion included examinations of the relationship between kinesiology and sport at all levels. Examples included but not limited to coaching education programs, research to inform new practices in sport, interactions between the kinesiology department and the intercollegiate athletic department, coach/teacher role conflict, faculty voice in campus athletics, and ethics in sport.

A Three-Part Discussion of that Process

Part 1: Development of Questions for the Congress

When I was asked to chair the strand role and responsibilities regarding sport, I did not realize at the time how difficult it would be to actually come forth with words of wisdom, direction or focus, and more importantly to develop questions to titillate discussion from the audience on the subject. Maybe I was just naïve that this would not be a difficult task, but I have to admit it was an onerous task which I will explain throughout this document.

I am an academic who, through my entire professional life, has been blessed to work with coaching education at all levels of sport and athletics. I work in the field of ethics of sport, not as an ethicist or even as a philosopher, but as a teacher. I teach others how to teach ethics in their sporting organizations and I write curriculum on the same subject. For example, an organization with an ethical mission contacts the Center for ETHICS* (my research group), seeking help in teaching their people to value the organization’s mission and to

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act in accordance to that mission. We at the Center act as their consultants, developing a teaching curriculum, and then teaching them how to teach an ethical curriculum.

I am a curriculum and pedagogic specialist with the Center, the largest repository of information on moral reasoning of competitive populations in the world. Actually, the Center for ETHICS* at the University of Idaho, is known more for its assessment tradition than its pedagogical programs. We do much assessment as it applies to moral reasoning, moral development, or moral growth in competitive populations, including athletics, business, law, and the military. In relation to athletics and sport, we know quite a bit about the effect of competition on moral reasoning. We presently have a data base of over 90,000 inventories which have assessed moral reasoning. We have assessed high school sport athletes, collegiate sport athletes, Olympic athletes, and professional athletes. We have also dabbled a bit in assessing professionals in education, business, law, U.S. Army officers and soldiers, and U.S. Marines. What we know is that the longer one is involved in competitive sports or any highly competitive activity, the more affected one's ability is to make moral decisions. With sport populations, we know that men score lower than women; team sport athletes score lower than individual sport athletes. We also know that males in contact, revenue-producing sports score the lowest, and males or females in golf score the highest (Stoll, 2014).

However, my specific duties at the Center lie not in assessment, but in pedagogy and methodology of teaching moral behavior and moral reasoning. I have been fortunate enough to spend over six years working with the Atlanta Braves MLB developmental teams (Stoll, 2007) and over ten years with the University of Georgia Bulldogs football team (Stoll, 2004). At the opposite end of the continuum, I have also consulted with youth sport organizations and the National Federation of High School Activities. I have worked football coaches in the Southeastern Conference and am a consultant for the American Football Coaches Association—the only woman ever to address the total conference body who was not “a compliance person.” My doctoral students have also been actively engaged in moral education and moral reasoning interventions. One study was recently completed with The Basic School, Quantico Virginia (Culp, 2012) with U.S. Marine Corps second lieutenants. Another study was the development of a curriculum for Native American Children (Stoll, 2012). I believe in education and I believe in sport. I believe that there is power in the combined formula of sport and education, which should result in character development.

Thus, whenever the issues of responsibility and roles regarding sport is discussed, I am interested, intrigued, and ready, but the more I tried to prepare for my assigned role at the Congress—to do a short introduction and to develop questions about the roles and responsibilities of sport for the Congress—the more I struggled, and I mean *struggled*—for over five months. I struggled because roles and responsibilities in the case of sport and kinesiology have become a conundrum—they appear logical and fixed, but this case poses many complex problems that are difficult to solve.

I finally developed a short introduction for the Congress and offered a few questions for the conferees to discuss. Below is what I said, and how the conferees responded to the questions I offered.

Part 2: My Statement to the Conferees

In considering roles and responsibilities, the latter seems to me to be a given. I believe we, in higher education, are the responsible parties for the knowledge and science of kinesiology in which sport, athletics, and so forth lies. We are the historical source. We are the scientific source. We are the philosophical and ethical source. We are the research and practice source. We should be the “go to” professionals and academics for everything in the field.

But are we the “go to” professional concerning sport in the States? Does the real world of sport and athletics come to us to answer the questions, to give education, to give direction?

On the whole, I do not believe the real world comes to us. I know that from my own experience that the real world of athletics and sport is a tough, tough place to get a foot in the door. I personally believe that as a profession and a discipline, kinesiology has dropped the ball—more than dropped the ball. I think we fumbled it and others have picked up the ball and like Pandora who is out of the box, I doubt we are nimble enough to get the ball back, let alone do anything with it.

What I see when I travel and consult in athletics and sport is that there are few kinesiologists taking on similar consulting roles. We, the kinesiologists, are the responsible parties for the knowledge base, but do we play a role? Again, I believe that the real question is not should we be responsible, but how do we actually play a role in sport and athletic organizations?

Let us consider some examples in athletics and sport today. I think if we did a poll on the number of coaches in all levels of sport and athletics who actually have a degree in kinesiology, or maybe a degree period, we would be shocked. In my state, a high school coach is not required to have a teaching degree in our discipline’s knowledge. In fact, he or she does not need a degree at all. What they must have is some experience with the game. A local high school baseball team, not far from where I live, is a three-peat state winner with a coach who is neither degreed nor certificated (Potlatchschools, 2014). In my state, athletic trainers are not required at high school competitions or athletic events (Idaho Athletic Trainers Association, 2014). It was not until five years ago that three of my graduate students presented to the athletic directors of the state and convinced them to support a mandate to require automated external defibrillators in every gymnasium.

Soccer is the largest participation sport for children and youth in my town. None of the coaches or organizers of that group have degrees in kinesiology—they do have extensive playing or coaching experience and they have, or so they say, an “excellent preparatory course for coaches” (United, 2014).

At my university, a few of our coaches have degrees in kinesiology but only at the baccalaureate level, and only one has an advanced degree in kinesiology. Our track coach holds a Master’s degree from the University of Oregon in exercise physiology and has taken doctoral level classes in exercise physiology—maybe that’s why his team is and has been our most successful team in the win and loss column (Idaho Athletics, 2014).

I think this same trend is consistent with other roles in athletics and sport. There are numerous competing credentialing organizations that have taken our place to prepare individuals to coach, serve, or train in athletics and sport. The National Federation of High School Activities Association offers a \$10 certification program, and the new coach can print their own certification (NFHS, 2014). This truth should give us pause—\$10 and a coach is certified!

If anything argues for kinesiologists to have a role, it is this sobering fact. Maybe that’s where our role is—in the credentialing organizations with kinesiologists sitting on the executive boards and examination boards and politically mandating better education for coaches?

In my experience, I do not see us there, either. I have tried and continue to try to convince the U.S. Anti Doping Agency (USADA) and the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) to do ethics education beyond their current cursory 15 minute online sessions. It is an uphill battle, and I am continuing the good fight. The board members of these organizations (WADA, 2014) are typically former athletes or physicians, with a lawyer or

two thrown in for good measure (USADA, 2014). I wish those boards had kinesiologists as members; the conversation would be very different because kinesiologists understand the importance of education.

How do we get our “foot in the door” to have a role? Maybe I am jaundiced from my years of working with the NCAA, WADA, USADA, High School Federation, NAIA and other sport organizations; I am not sure those organizations really care about the education and preparation of coaches, which then calls into question their level of care about athletes. Perhaps “care about” is the wrong adjective—perhaps they just do not know that there are actually people who are degreed, educated, trained, and prepared to oversee athletics and sports. The sad reality is that I believe this is partly our fault. We do not sell ourselves very well. If I am wrong and these organizations do know about us and the science that we in kinesiology can offer, we are in a worse political power position than I thought.

There appears to be a mystical belief that coaching is a rare profession in which one does not need to study it to do it. Coaches are accepted as experts with little formal education in the field. Success is measured by wins, losses, and their coaching and playing lineage: where they played, who coached them, with whom they coached, and their own coaching experience. Coaches are not evaluated by their formal education or degrees. I know of no other place on the university campus where one is hired to teach or coach a subject matter without a degree in that discipline; this includes music, dance, art, and theater.

This strange practice severely limits the potential for interactions between the kinesiology department and the intercollegiate athletic department, promotes coach/teacher role conflict, and quiets faculty voice in campus athletics. It’s hard to have a voice once it gets lost in the glamour of big time sport.

A few weeks ago, I went to a lecture of a new head football coach at a Division I school. This coach holds a baccalaureate degree in education. He was invited to speak to a group of leadership students at the institution. The head coach’s talk was on leadership and integrity—so of course I showed up. He did, in fact, speak on the subject, and he offered the group a three ring binder that he and his brother, another head coach who is more famous, wrote collaboratively. The coach very proudly told the young people that they all should read this text because it was the definitive source of his and his brother’s experience on character. The students nodded their heads and thanked him for the binder. This story appears not so odd, except that the co-author of this binder, the coach’s brother, was recently fired from a major university for unethical conduct (lying, cheating, and mismanaging funds). No one in the room chuckled or thought it bizarre that a coach fired for unethical practices would write a “definitive text on character.” In contrast, I have the credentials to speak on the subject of integrity and leadership, but I was not invited to speak—I had no voice there, either.

Our battle is to play a role in coaching education programs, disseminate research to inform new practices in sport, develop interactions between the kinesiology department and the intercollegiate athletic department, examine coach/teacher role conflict, and have a faculty voice in campus athletics. Ethics in sport lies in power, and unless the powerful want us, we will have a devil of time becoming a voice.

A friend of mine, a retired kinesiology professor from Washington State University, sent me a graphic that I think tells the whole story about power in higher education very succinctly. Figure 1 is a map of the States, showing the position of the highest paid public employee in each state. In only ten states is the highest paid employee *not* a college football or basketball coach. Power lies in money—and guess who has all the power?

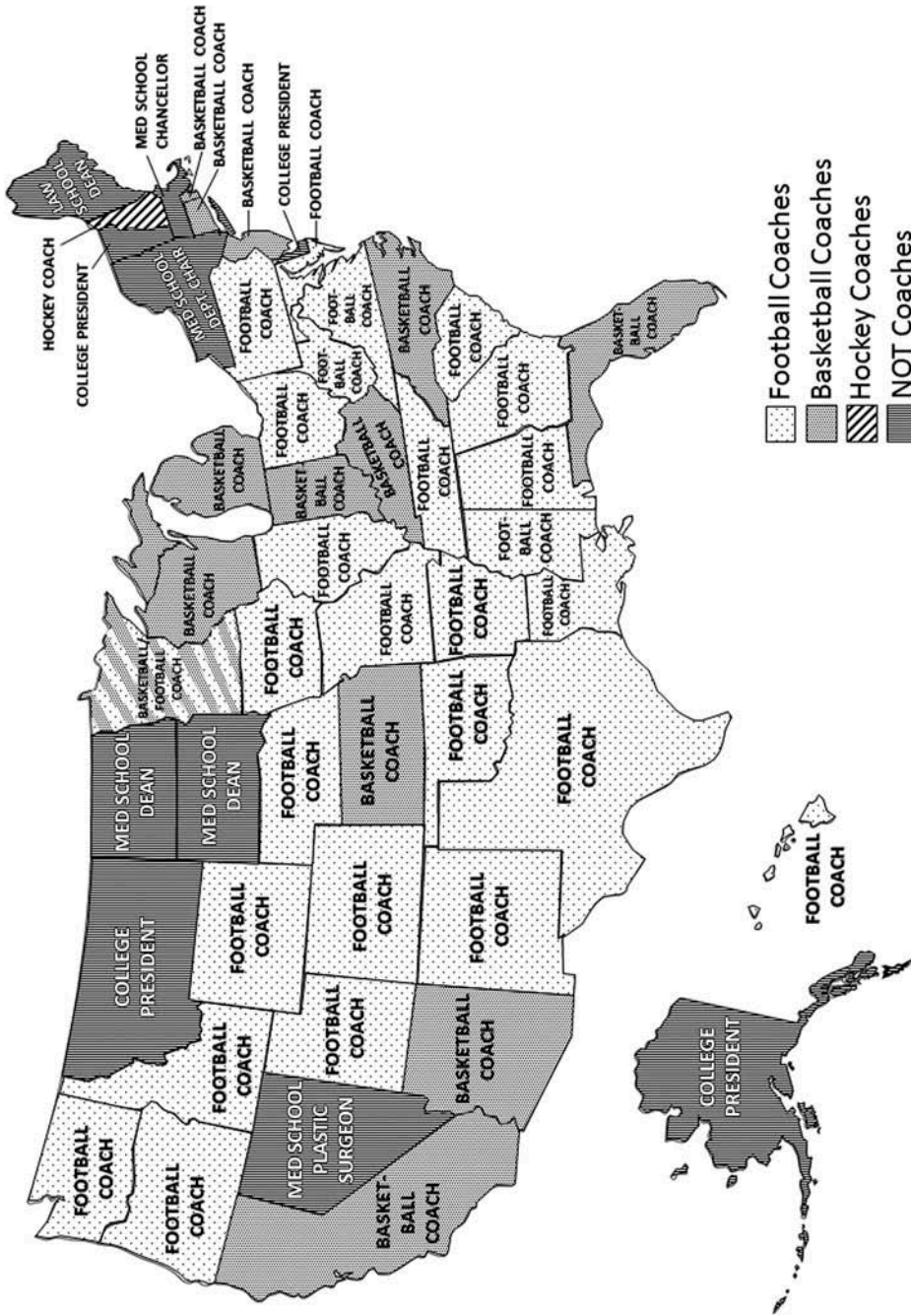


Figure 1. Highest paid public employees by state.

I do believe we have a responsibility, and I believe that it is both a moral and ethical responsibility to be a voice. I try to have that voice by being a member of committees about athletics on campus.

For example, I sit on the University of Idaho's President's Advisory Committee for Athletics. We meet once a semester. There are about 20 people on the committee. I am the only kinesiologist and the only one ever to serve on this committee. After two years of being a member of the committee, I have not advised anything. I have not consulted, advised, or made any difference except "wearing off" the finish of a chair in a fancy board room. Our faculty representative to the NCAA is the business dean. Formerly it was a professor in nutrition and before that, no kinesiologists that I know of—ever.

Part 3: The Questions Asked of the Conferees

At this junction, I offered the conferees the following questions to discuss in small groups. Following the questions is a representative sample of responses by the conferees.

Question 1: The role of kinesiology regarding sport. A role is the expected behavior of an organization which occupies a given social position or status. It is a comprehensive pattern of behavior which places the organization in society, and then society comes to expect consistent specific behavior. A role should also serve as a strategy for dealing with issues at hand.

- 1a. Thus, does kinesiology play "a professional" role in relation to sport as it is practiced in coaching education and coaching practice at all levels of sport?
- 1b. and if kinesiology does have a role, what is the role?
 - i. To inform coaches and society about scientific knowledge about coaching?
 - ii. To form research communities with coaches and athletic teams to better serve?
 - iii. And, how would that role affect sport and athletics at all levels?

Question 2: The responsibility of kinesiology. If responsibility deals with having a duty, and duty implies action or obligation to satisfactorily accomplish this task, how is that responsibility met?

- 2a. Do we have a responsibility to sport at all levels? What would that responsibility entail?
- 2b. If we have that responsibility, do we then have a duty to translate our knowledge to sport including coaching education at all levels?

Question 3: Translation is one question, but access is a greater issue. How does kinesiology access administrators in these particular coaching arenas to share knowledge and serve these organizations?

- 3a. How do we communicate and inter-relate our work into the greater application of sport at all levels?
- 3b. How do we convince the sporting agencies from youth sport to collegiate sport and professional sport that we have knowledge and services to offer them?

What the Conferees Said

Below find a graphic of what the conferees said about my questions.

Group I	Group IV
<p>Don't think the commercial enterprise of college athletics can be influenced by kinesiology.</p> <p>PETE ignored coaching.</p> <p>Start coaching education program? Clubs & Youth Sports Programs.</p> <p>Social responsibility and development.</p> <p>Strength and conditioning—we have a responsibility.</p> <p>Youth sport—Dan Gould</p> <p>Some of us in PE pedagogy separate ourselves from coaching.</p>	<p>Body of knowledge—know about sport and best practices—we have a duty to share.</p> <p>Students want allied health, not concerned with sport, athletics, coaching.</p> <p>We should pick battles, and focus on where we have impact, where people might listen.</p> <p>PE/Coach Education—tend own back yard, focus on ethics in pedagogy issues, case studies to get at complexity at the micro level.</p> <p>How we shape the PE/coach students, curriculum models, beliefs from educational theory, and role conflict.</p>
Group II	Group V
<p>Sport has become a part and is independent, strength and conditioning—besides AT and biomechanics, we are disconnected.</p> <p>Maybe at smaller colleges might have impact, larger university is strength and conditioning linkage to sports?</p> <p>Even if have faculty trained in sport psychology, bring in outsiders.</p>	<p>Training and education, principles of training and specificity. What we know can/will help you win.</p> <p>Scientific knowledge base—we have the data which should go to the administrators or the programs to show numbers and proof that what we know would work.</p>
Group II	Group V
<p>Athletes' performance—train athletes. Responsibility dependent on the culture of the institution.</p> <p>Deliberate separation of sport/athletics and kinesiology.</p> <p>We have a responsibility to youth sport and education.</p> <p>Out of our control and out of control.</p> <p>Almost impossible to infiltrate the big sport cultures.</p>	<p>Kinesiologists are the conduit through which administration can be informed on how to coach properly.</p> <p>All coaches are teachers; coaches need to be properly prepared academically to teach well.</p> <p>Disposition is essential for quality coaching.</p> <p>Coaching disposition—integrity, talent, education, identify good teaching coaches and expose them to traditional students.</p>

(Continued)

Group III	Group VI
<p>Sport in the States is a business, educators need to embrace this to understand the issues. Athletics as a program are revolving around money and finances.</p> <p>Youth need to de-emphasize sport specialties. Learn to play and this will evolve into games and competition. This is a great period for academics to work with coaching education.</p>	<p>Present yourself.</p> <p>Insert yourself, get involved.</p> <p>In order to present expertise, non-threatening approach.</p> <p>Issue with compensation.</p> <p>Willingness to give.</p> <p>We don't have access because we have been reticent in addressing issues in sports.</p> <p>Courage to step up.</p> <p>Level of sport? Fear.</p> <p>Paradoxes, controversies, and conflict.</p> <p>Critical analysis of sport to impact sports.</p>

As I read what the conferees said, I was struck by how difficult this assignment was for the conferees as well. They struggled with the same issues that I had in preparing this. I was able to find four specific themes highlighted by the conferees.

Theme 1. Pandora is out of the box, and kinesiologists need to realize that without power and money there is little that can be done by us for big time sports. Historically, this statement matches what occurred when many then-physical education departments split from athletics some 30 to 40 years ago. Greg Twietmeyer (2012) reviewed “the historical and contemporary state of kinesiology in an attempt to introduce readers to two . . . unexamined philosophic commitments” (p. 4). He did this through first discussing what he called “two cultures” and a “dissonance . . . born of faulty and unexamined philosophic commitments” (p. 1). As a Polanyi advocate, Twietmeyer argued for a metaphysical stance based on Polanyi’s philosophy, and he then reviewed what he thought the history of kinesiology was, depending much on Karl Newell’s *Quest* articles (1990a, 1990b, 1990c).

Sage (2013) did not dismiss Twietmeyer’s Polanyi argument, but he had much to say about the historical journey of then-physical education departments and the current role of research in kinesiology. He argued that Twietmeyer misunderstood Newell’s point and suggested that Twietmeyer completely skipped nearly 30 years—from the 1960s to 1990—of historical insights about kinesiology. Sage then briefly discusses his own personal journal of those 30 years, “a brief resurrection of 30 years of historical insight.” Sage does not give many details of that period of time, but makes a solid argument about why those 30 years should not be neglected.

I agree with Sage because I lived through the same journey that he defines. Here at the University of Idaho, the transition occurred in 1976–1979 when Dr. Dorothy Zakrajsek was appointed as the new department chair, essentially giving all the coaches who taught physical education two choices: stay in the department and teach, or move to athletics. Some stayed and some left (Stoll, 2011a). No longer would coaches teach in physical education, and no longer did we in kinesiology have much of a say in athletics. I was not at the University of Idaho then, but I was the first hire after the transition—and my role was defined in my job description: “To develop research classes that inspire students to publish and present at state, regional, and national conferences” (Zakrajsek, 1980). The dismissing of coaches from our department has had a long term and I believe irreversible effect at my institution. I believe the “dismissal” occurred at most other NCAA Division I institutions at

around the same time, and henceforth, kinesiologists would no longer have a voice or input in the role of training, educating, or coaching athletes and coaches.

Theme 2: Kinesiologists have a duty to youth sport. I agree—we do have a duty to youth sport, but then I think we also have a duty to all sport. As for youth sport, unfortunately, I do not know that we have a window of opportunity there, either. Just this last week at the new SHAPE America conference, a team of soccer players from Columbus, Ohio was in my hotel lobby. They were members of a club team. Beautiful uniforms, coiffed hair, silk hose, nice shoes—the tournament was cancelled due to inclement weather. The team entry fee was \$700, plus added travel expenses to St. Louis, with hotel rooms that started at \$179 a night. These clubs have their own professional coaches who appear to make a handsome wage. Nationally the numbers range from around \$56,000 for the high and low of \$23,000 with an average of \$35,000 (Ask, 2014). I have a number of soccer athletes in my classes, and I interviewed them on the cost of being a member of a U-12, U-14, or U-16 team. They responded that it cost them and their parents upwards of \$15,000 a year to be on an elite team where they hoped to win a scholarship to college. This to me speaks of lunacy—I do not think the science of kinesiology has much of a chance in an environment where families are paying \$15,000 a year for a child to play elite youth sport.

Again the power lies in the professional who has the access to the professional clubs. If we want to connect with youth sport, we will have to figure out a strategy to get to the power base—those professional coaches.

Theme 3. Kinesiologists have an important body of knowledge that should be shared, including the scientific knowledge on strength and conditioning. Amen, I agree. I believe this may be the only one in which we have a chance at continuing an important contribution to the field of athletics. Fortunately for kinesiologists, organizations such as the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA, 2014) or American College of Sport Medicine (ACSM, 2014) are based on knowledge generated from our field.

Theme 4. Kinesiologists should make a difference. One of the small discussions was positive and enthusiastic. The conferees made arguments that kinesiologists should have “the courage to step up,” and need to have a “willingness to give.” They argued also that there should be a “critical analysis of sport to impact sports,” reporting that “We don’t have access because we have been *reticent* (emphasis added) in addressing issues in sports.”

In my sub-discipline, the philosophy of sport, I do not believe any reticent souls exist. The International Association of the Philosophy of Sport has a fine journal, the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, that is published two to three times a year. At least two to four articles in each issue address topics germane to sport ethics: competition, gender equity, abuse, etc. Some of our philosophical scholars have written very important works on the topic of ethics, athletics, coaching, and sport (e.g., Morgan, 2010; Hardman & Jones, 2010; Simon, 2013; Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 2011). The sociologists and historians have not been quiet either (cf. Sage & Eitzen, 2012; Coakley, 2014; Oriad, 2009; Nixon, 2014; Yost, 2009; Smith, 2010; and many more).

It is not that we kinesiologists do not speak up about athletics, it’s that the people in athletics or administration do not hear us. They do not have to hear because there is no reason for them to hear. I wish we could jump in there and make things better, but I fear it will not happen. The Drake Group (Group, 2014) has tried vigorously to make a difference. I asked a few coaches I know in the field if they knew the work of the Drake Group. Nearly all responded that they have not, and many thought it was an insurance agency.

Conclusion

My role at the 2014 NAKHE Congress was to discuss and lead a program strand on the roles and responsibilities of kinesiology regarding sport. Subsequent to that I was invited to collate comments made by the audience in small discussion groups and to write this article for *Quest*. On reflection, my summary response here is tainted toward the negative in that I believe kinesiologists do have a responsibility to athletics but we are not meeting that responsibility. The response of the participants at the conference was not very different from my own remarks. Typically, being negative does not match my personality or my philosophy. I truly do believe in the worth of athletics and sport. I believe, contrary to my own research (Stoll, 2013), that sport can and should strive to develop character in all participants, at all levels. However, history has not been kind to the relationship between athletics and kinesiology. There was a time when writers like Jesse Feiring Williams (Williams, 1922) argued that athletics was the laboratory of physical education and viewed “. . . athletics as a very vital and real educational means.” If athletics was viewed as such, maybe we could meet our responsibility.

I have written in other places that I believe that sport should be an academic major in universities and colleges, contingent on certain important variables: a quality and thorough kinesiology curriculum, qualified and competent faculty, stringent and thorough measurement techniques, and annual program evaluation (Stoll, 2011b). Presently, there are only a few universities with coaching majors in athletics, such as the program at West Virginia University (WVU, 2014). However, I will continue to argue that athletics and sport should be studied for their own sake and that the experience of participating in athletics should be applied to a degree, just as practical application in music, dance, and theater contribute toward those degree programs in higher education.

Maybe this is giving up, considering that academics has kept athletics as the “stepsister” for over 160 years (Stoll, 2011b), but maybe it is time for us to recognize the power of the stepsister and and move toward incorporating academics into the athletic experience. I know of no other way for us kinesiologists to meet our responsibility to sport and athletics.

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