



RESEARCH HANDBOOK OF
**Employment Relations
in Sport**

Edited by

**Michael Barry • James Skinner
Terry Engelberg**



RESEARCH HANDBOOK OF EMPLOYMENT
RELATIONS IN SPORT

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Edited by

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1. Sidelined: employment relations in professional sports

*Michael Barry, James Skinner and
Terry Engelberg*

INTRODUCTION

This book aims to address an area of research that remains greatly underdeveloped in sport management. There is no scholarly research handbook that we are aware of that examines the interconnection between Employment Relations (ER) and sport. There are books that look at sport and related areas such as human resource management (HRM), behavioural economics, international law and psychology. While some of these volumes incorporate aspects of ER, none of them deal with ER in great depth. Remarkably, some large research volumes do not include any specific treatment of ER issues. As well as providing an in-depth treatment of ER issues in sports, this handbook is broad in its coverage. The book is explicitly international in that it includes issues and concepts relevant to sporting codes in various countries, and it also draws on an international field of scholars and includes case studies from different codes of sport in a number of countries.

The study of ER incorporates aspects of industrial relations (IR), such as labour law, collective bargaining and industrial disputes, and HRM, including recruitment, training and development, and performance and reward management. While years ago these were treated as separate and distinct fields of research, there has been an increasing emphasis on integration. It is important to acknowledge, however, that there are some core differences between these approaches to ER. The traditional IR view sees an inherent divergence between the interests of workers and managers which can create conflict and lead to industrial disputes such as those examined in this volume. While there are many areas of cooperation, there is as one author puts it a 'structured antagonism' in ER (Edwards, 1986). HRM, which was previously known as personnel management, operates from a perspective that views the interests of both parties as being closely aligned around the goals of the firm, and so conflict is more aberrant than inherent. In this handbook we employ the abbreviation ER because we try to capture both approaches, although there will be differences in emphasis

within the topics we cover. For example, a chapter on bargaining or disputes will have more of an IR emphasis compared to a chapter on player or coach career development which will be more aligned with the core principles of HRM.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS AND SPORTS

According to Kahn (2000), the sports industry is the perfect laboratory for labour market research. A wealth of data is available in sports for workers and supervisors over the life of their careers, including exact measures of performance and remuneration. Despite this, the academic field of ER has taken only a mild interest in the sports industry, both historically and in recent years. We find it curious that sport has remained on the backburner for ER scholars, for we argue that the ER aspects of sport have become increasingly relevant and interesting for scholarly research. In the ER literature, interest in sports has remained concentrated on a few particular issues, such as the analysis of the share of total sporting revenue that players receive and how this is distributed among players (e.g. Booth, Brooks & Diamond, 2012; Dabscheck, 2011; Ducking, Groothuis & Hill, 2014), with little attention paid to many other areas, such as governance, institutions and regulation, or indeed the nature of work itself. Equally, sports academics have not drawn extensively on the field of ER despite the growing importance of ER to the way sport is organised, conducted and governed. The sports management literature has looked at some HRM issues, such as the development of volunteers (Engelberg, Skinner & Zakus, 2014), job satisfaction (Taylor, Doherty & McGraw, 2015), gender participation in sports (Hanlon, Morris & Nabbs, 2014), diversity (Adair, Taylor & Darcy, 2010), governance (Yeh & Taylor, 2008; Ordway, 2014) and the working conditions of female coaches (Allen & Shaw, 2013).

Our contention is that sport is both interesting and unusual as an area of ER analysis in that developments in sport run counter to important ER trends in most other industries and sectors. This deserves greater interest than what ER scholars have so far shown. For example, across different codes and countries, there has been marked industrial disputation in professional sports (Ahlburg & Dworkin, 1991) during an era of greatly decreased disputation in most other industries. Professional sport has witnessed major strikes and lockouts and these have delayed and even led to the cancellation of sporting seasons. The public interest in these disputes has been enormous, and employers have sometimes responded (with mixed success) by engaging replacement players. As demonstrated in

this volume, these disputes have had a major impact on some of the most prominent codes, particularly in North America (Staudohar, 1996).

As sport has been professionalised, the conflict of interest over what ER scholars refer to as the 'wage/effort' bargain has increasingly come to the fore. Underlying much of the tension between players, teams and sporting organisations (those bodies that govern sporting codes) are efforts by players to obtain a greater share of the revenue derived from their work (Dabscheck, 2010). The increasing professionalism of sport has also coincided with a push for greater organisation of players' collective interests, which makes sports a fertile ground for ER scholars to examine employee representation.

Thus, while a litany of research has demonstrated that there has been a strong trend towards de-unionisation across most industries in almost all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, leaving unions with a difficult task of engaging in organisational renewal to retain their relevance (e.g. Fairbrother & Yates, 2003), in sports there has been something of an opposite trend, with a greater development and influence of player associations, and a concerted push for collective agreement making. In some sports, star players have led campaigns to increase minimum payments in collective agreements for professional players who, considering the short average length of a career, earn fairly modest salaries. Indeed, there can be a marked disparity in sports between the highest paid athletes and other professional players who in the same or other codes earn incomes little better than average wages (Dabscheck, 2011).

Efforts to improve the terms and conditions of lower paid athletes have produced increased collectivism in sport, which makes this industry an important case study for researchers interested in union organising and union revitalisation, and how workers collectively agitate for a larger share of the spoils of competition in the face of employer opposition (Becker & Von Nesson, 1985; Dabscheck, 1996; Korr, 1991; Voight, 1991). According to one study, sporting unions develop behaviours consistent with non-sporting unions as they mature, by seeking to institutionalise in bargaining agreements a component of seniority-based pay while also seeking reductions in productivity-based wage differentials that can otherwise result from competitive bidding for talented players (Hill & Jolly, 2012).

In order to examine the employment relationship in sports we also need to understand the unique power that resides in bodies that regulate sporting competitions. In other industries, regulatory bodies do not ordinarily have the same capacity as they do in sports to sanction individuals or organisations (Healey, 2012). Governing bodies of sport may impose

penalties on players, coaches or on teams themselves. These penalties can be severe, including stripping teams of competition points or indeed sporting titles, as well as imposing bans on individuals for behaviours that are deemed to constitute bringing the game into disrepute (Macdonald & Booth, 2007). For example, Macdonald and Booth note that clubs in Australia's major sporting codes sought to 'illegally' pay players outside the salary cap and suffered the consequences through the imposition of large fines, the loss of draft selections and by being stripped of competition points and even competition titles. An important point to note here is that regulators are able to impose sanctions, not only on teams but also on individuals, that can have career-limiting effects, and yet the regulatory bodies are not themselves parties to the employment relationship.

Another key area of interest for ER scholarship is occupational health and safety (OHS), and in few other industries are concerns around OHS as evident as in sport. The debate over concussion has drawn a great deal of public interest, particularly in the United States where class action litigation between former football players and the National Football League (NFL) resulted in a huge out-of-court settlement (Fainaru-Wada & Fainaru, 2013). The implications of this case have been felt widely across other codes of heavy contact sports. Player associations have been vocal, as have codes themselves in pushing for improved safety standards, including by altering some of the rules around how contact is made and by imposing new rules around recovery from concussion. The changes that are being implemented to protect players reflect a growing awareness in sports, as in other industries, of the general principle that employers have a primary duty of care in OHS. However, surprisingly, just as we have claimed there has been a paucity of ER research on sports, so too has there been little academic and practitioner analysis of the application of OHS to professional sports (Windholz, 2015). OHS law imposes a responsibility on clubs as employers, and codes themselves as regulators, to provide a safe working environment in what are inherently dangerous places of work. While it is absurd to think that risk can be eliminated from contact sports, the principles of OHS demand that risk be managed and minimised as far as it is practicable to do so. OHS risk also arises from issues beyond the contact made between rival players, such as from fan violence (pitch invasions) or from players being injected with substances to enhance performance, perhaps unwittingly, such as has unfolded in a long saga in the Australian Football League (Gowthorp, Greenhow & O'Brien, 2016). While sports are subject to anti-doping regulations, as will be explored in this volume, these cases also raise OHS matters that pertain to the rights of the parties under the contract of employment – where breaches could result in resignation,

termination or legal remedy – and therefore go to the nexus between ER and professional sport.

Sport is also noteworthy in how economic and regulatory considerations intersect with ER, around the mode of recruitment, to produce an idiosyncratic labour market. In some codes, initial employment is governed by an external draft system which restricts the capacity of employers to recruit their preferred players (Dabscheck & Opie, 2003). Drafts determine that players are required to work for a specific employer and might need to relocate across the country to undertake work. Under transfer systems, players can also be sent from one location to another sometimes with very little notice. Drafts are generally designed to equalise competition – that is, they are created for sporting reasons – but nevertheless they also function as a model of recruitment, which makes employment in sport rather unique from an ER perspective. Player salaries can also be impacted by systems that try to equalise competition through the capping of player payments. Caps restrict wealthy clubs from monopolising the most talented players, but also constrain the capacity of employees either individually or collectively to obtain a higher share of the revenue of sports through their agents or through collective bargaining agreements (Booth, Brook & Diamond, 2012). These effects are tempered, to some degree, by rules in some codes that allow experienced players to become ‘free agents’ who can offer their services to other teams; however, if overall salary caps apply then free agency may still not lead to dramatically higher salaries or allow the richer teams to obtain all the premium talent (Sandy, Sloane & Rosentraub, 2004).

Taking these economic considerations into account the labour market for sports players can be characterised as a ‘bilateral monopoly’ whereby the bargaining power for lesser players resides primarily with the clubs while the highest-quality players have some, or perhaps significant, market power (Pedace & Hall, 2012). However, bargaining power is constrained by sporting systems that are themselves predicated on the need to produce ‘competitive balance’. Fundamentally, as Dabscheck (2011:59) points out, ‘the very nature of the way sport is organised is akin to a cartel rather than a competitive market’. This is because there is little imperative in sports for an employer to force other employers (teams) out of competition. Generally speaking, sporting contests should also produce relatively even outcomes if they are to promote the greatest interest among supporters (and, therefore, the highest revenue), and so there is a strong imperative for schemes that bring balance to the contest (Macdonald & Booth, 2007; see also Sanderson & Siegfried, 2003 for a review of different schemes).

Finally, sport as a workplace environment is often questioned for the lack of workplace rights and the masculine practices that shape it (Schull,

Shaw & Kihl, 2013; Shaw, 2012). An emerging challenge for sport organisations is to work within the parameters of modern anti-discrimination and harassment legislation. Practices such as shouting, swearing, bullying, intimidation and public humiliation are still seen by some as the way to discipline athletes in professional sport. Perhaps the most publicised incident of this behaviour occurred when Sir Alex Ferguson allegedly lost his temper and threw a boot that hit England Captain David Beckham. It may have been coincidence that following frenzied media speculation and a level of public dissatisfaction over the incident, Beckham subsequently left Manchester United for Real Madrid. Similarly, the sexual harassment of women in the workplace continues to be an area of specific concern for sports organisations. The unacceptable treatment of women and the unsatisfactory way it is often handled by sport administrators has resulted in considerable publicity, incited community debate and could lead to long and unnecessary legal disputes (Cense & Brackenbridge, 2001).

The above discussion provides a rationale for the need to examine the unique ER environment that surrounds sport. The purpose of this edited research volume is to explore how sport is organised and run, bringing into consideration legal, regulatory and economic considerations, and to understand the implications and outcomes this has for the labour market and for the relationship between players, managers and clubs. Contributions to this volume will demonstrate what the ER field can learn from sport and shed light on what remains an interesting but neglected area of ER analysis. ER issues related to the sports industry, which will be included in chapter contributions to the volume, include:

1. the concepts of competitive advantage and competitive balance, and implications for corporate governance and regulatory structures, leagues, the role of employment and labour law in the employment of athletes, sports officials and coaches, and the implications of labour market controls on performance and job security;
2. the economic and legal aspects of player transfer and salary regulations including player drafts, transfer fees and salary caps;
3. collective bargaining agreements and the key principles of effective negotiation;
4. the development and role of player associations and unions for athletes and sports officials;
5. the role of sports agents, professional development programmes for athletes and sports coaches, and programmes to prepare athletes for their post-playing careers;
6. the management of anti-discrimination/harassment issues and drug testing programmes and policies.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

In exploring these issues the handbook is divided into four parts. Part I explores the regulation of professional sports. It begins by examining this context at a macro level through considering how a major sporting code (European football) is regulated across multiple countries. In Chapter 2, Berndt Keller examines the emerging supranational modes of sports governance given the recent transformation of professional football. Keller notes that at the European Union level, one major instrument for establishing supranational forms of governance is social dialogue (SD), a focal element and core pillar of the European Social Model. SD takes place at the macro and sectoral level. Throughout the 1990s SD at macro level was more prominent whereas sectoral social dialogues (SSDs) have dominated since the early 2000s. SSDs are considered to be more flexible and more appropriate for the regulation of sector-specific issues, in this case, issues relating to sport. It is his analysis of SSD that is central to the chapter. Keller argues that recent developments in the European sports sector fit into the long-term trends of SSD establishment and institutionalisation in the sport sector. He suggests the likelihood of the ongoing 'Europeanization' of the sports sector is dependent on agreed principles of good governance and a continued evolution of a system of co-regulation.

In Chapter 3, John Solow and Peter von Allmen begin the discussion on labour-market controls. They outline how labour markets in North American professional team sports are noticeably different from labour markets in other industries and are also different between sports. Solow and von Allmen discuss the idiosyncratic nature of these markets and provide an overview of the long-term employment relationships stemming from employment contracts. The authors outline how these contracts have an impact on players' performance incentives, job security and risk allocation. For example, some players may be bargaining for guaranteed salaries, while in other cases, players may be negotiating for salaries contingent upon measurable performance. This situation makes it hard for scholars to draw overarching conclusions.

In Chapter 4, Matt Nichol reviews the business of professional baseball in the United States. He highlights that for the first time in 2013, Major League Baseball (MLB) revenues were expected to exceed US\$8 billion, representing a growth of 264 per cent since 1994. Noting that the underlying product that creates these revenues is the playing of a professional baseball game by 30 Major League clubs, his chapter focuses on MLB's system of labour regulation. The system raises two interrelated questions that form the basis of his analysis: (1) how is the MLB labour market regulated and (2) how does this regulatory system fit within general

regulatory theory? Through this analysis he concludes that the regulation of MLB provides insight into how internal and external systems of labour regulation interact and, in the context of regulation dominated by internal regulatory actors, provides an understanding of when external regulatory intervention is needed and the circumstances in which external regulatory actors like the state, the courts and the National Labour Relations Board will intervene in the affairs of MLB.

Lisa Pike Masteralexis extends our discussion of regulation to the regulation of player agents in Chapter 5. Masteralexis discusses the regulatory framework of sports agents in the modern sports industry. Historical developments, plus factors that led to the emergence and rapid growth of the sports agent industry are reviewed to better understand challenges that regulators face in the current competitive industry landscape. As is discussed, the sport industry has grown exponentially since the 1970s and so too has the sport agent business. However, despite the emergence of a complex and multi-tiered regulatory system, both public and private, agent misbehaviour and the subordination of the best interests of the athlete have become widespread. In response to the current regulatory framework and the ethical and legal violations of sports agents that persist, Masteralexis provides recommendations for future research to improve the effectiveness of the current regulatory framework.

Part II examines the traditional mechanisms of ER, including collective bargaining, arbitration and industrial action in professional sports. Examining professional sports highlights the continuing relevance and importance of the institutions of ER. The part begins with the chapter by James B. Dworkin on the evolution of collective bargaining in sports (Chapter 6). In this chapter Dworkin examines the history of collective bargaining through a focus on seven individuals who had an enormous impact on the development of collective bargaining in professional baseball. The chapter then examines the state of collective bargaining in the four major sports in the United States: baseball, basketball, football and ice hockey. He concludes by looking into the future and identifies ten trends we are likely to observe.

In Chapter 7, Jack Anderson examines the contractual relations between individual sports participants and their employing club. The chapter opens with an outline of the contractual 'web' of agreements involving parties such as agents, advisers and sponsors as well as national and international sporting federations. Anderson outlines key issues of contract law, namely the sports participant's 'capacity' to contract, which is of particular interest where the participant is of a young age. He then assesses the content of a hypothetical 'standard' sports contract. To illustrate these points, Anderson addresses the standard Football Association of England

Premier League (FAPL) contract. The chapter concludes on issues relating to the termination of contract, and particularly where a player seeks to end a contract prematurely in order to facilitate a transfer to another club. The intriguing debate here is between the desire, on the one hand, to promote contractual stability in a sport and the need, on the other hand, to respect players' legal rights to employment mobility.

Craig A. Depken II's chapter provides insight into industrial action in professional sport, with a focus on strikes and lockouts (Chapter 8). Identifying that the number of strikes in the United States has been falling over the past several decades he notes that several high-profile work stoppages in North American professional sports provide an opportunity to discuss the history of the mechanics associated with the sports labour market in North America. In doing this he explains why work stoppages in professional sport appear to be more common in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century than in the decades of the late nineteenth and first three-quarters of the twentieth century. Depken suggests that this situation may change as many North American sports franchises in the early twenty-first century have the potential to regularly earn positive profits. He suggests almost all could enjoy increasing value over time amid increasing popularity of their sport and the discovery of more revenue streams in the future. Moreover, the extent to which these new revenue streams could reduce financial disparity across teams within a league might help discourage work stoppages that can arise from stalemate negotiations caused by inter-team disputes. Under these circumstances Depken suggests that if owners and players can avoid lost seasons such as that suffered by the National Hockey League (NHL) in 2004, they will likely be dividing increasing revenues.

This part concludes with a chapter by Peter Bouris and Rafael Gomez (Chapter 9). The authors provide an explanation of why owners and professional athletes would abrogate an entire season and forfeit the most lucrative period of playoff operations if, in the end, they eventually reached a deal. They use a behavioural ER model to describe the two season-ending labour disputes in MBL and the NHL that occurred in 1994 and 2004 respectively. Their argument is that both events were instigated by one party (ownership), and with bargaining positions that were strengthened by strategies of credible pre-commitment such as deliberately negotiating substandard television revenue deals and punishment or retaliation (in the form of playoff/season abrogation) for perceived past wins by the union. Subsequent labour peace and tempered player demands (in baseball) and the acceptance of a salary cap (in hockey) were the long-term payoffs achieved by ownership, this suggesting that ownership's ultimate goals were achieved. The authors argue that most popular observers

failed to recognise these features of the negotiated settlements and instead blamed both parties as needlessly greedy. These observations suggest that ownership achieved a double-sided win: effectively constraining public sympathy towards players while dictating the terms upon which bargaining has been conducted over the past two decades.

Part III explores contemporary issues in the management of professional sports. The part highlights how contemporary issues, such as transitioning from professional sport to life after sport, the management of discrimination, sexual harassment and anti-doping, are issues sporting organisations need to address. Christine Coupland's work in Chapter 10 begins this part.

Coupland provides a discussion of the nature of the careers of sport professionals, that is, the careers of athletes who make a living by playing sport. As such, her discussion centres on the notion of sport as work and the application of work career theories to professional sport careers. This is particularly important as sporting careers can either end abruptly through injury or slowly through deterioration. Coupland contends that sport scholars can learn from vocational career theories and research. An application of this approach is the study of working individuals with fractured or fragmented career paths and difficult career transitions, to the understanding of the inevitable end of the professional sports career.

In Chapter 11, Greg Maynes, Heather Mitchell, Peter Schuwalow and Mark Stewart continue the discussion on sporting careers, and argue that with the increasing demands on professional sports players, they must now devote themselves exclusively to one sport. This suggests that the choice of sport needs to be made at a relatively young age, usually towards the end of high school. This chapter examines this choice of sport from an economic supply and demand perspective using statistical techniques to compare the competitiveness of different sports with the number of opportunities there are to become a professional sportsman or sportswoman. They note that such a comparison between the demand and supply of sportsmen and women can also be used to determine if some sports offer more professional opportunities than others. They argue that although ability and passion are essential in sporting success, when a person has these in near equal measure in more than one sport, economic considerations can help make a more informed decision.

In Chapter 12 Klaus Vieweg and James A.R. Nafziger draw our attention to the issue of discrimination in sport and its relationship to the law. Identifying that discrimination in the sports arena is one of the most serious issues of sports law, they suggest that in recent years measures to combat discrimination in sports have been fundamental as the law has tried to keep pace with new issues and developments. While

acknowledging that anti-discrimination laws govern sports universally, the authors suggest they do so somewhat haphazardly as gaps exist in the applicable laws and regulations, as well as in their enforcement at both international and national levels. They argue that an emerging theme of international sport law involves responses to acts of national, racial and gender discrimination in particular. Their chapter surveys these critical and emerging legal issues involving discrimination against athletes, with an emphasis on the applicable law drawn primarily from examples in the United States, Germany and the European Union.

Terry Engelberg and Stephen Moston's chapter also examines the issue of unacceptable workplace practices, with specific reference to sexual harassment (Chapter 13). They contend that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that affects both men and women in a variety of organisational and educational contexts. They argue that, in the sport context specifically, inappropriate sexualised or sexist attitudes and behaviour are frequently perceived as 'part of sport' and are either condoned or ignored as problematic. Their review of research on sexual harassment and sexual abuse in general in sport organisations and contexts relating to sport (e.g. sport journalism) suggests that women in particular are negatively affected by sexual harassment, but at the same time they appear more accepting of harassing attitudes and behaviour. Sporting organisations may add to the problem by dismissing the issue of sexual harassment as 'not relevant to the business of sport'. This position, as Engelberg and Moston conclude, is damaging to the sport industry and serves to undermine employment relationships.

In Chapter 14 James Skinner, Terry Engelberg and Stephen Moston describe how drug use in sport, in one form or another, has been a regular part of sporting history. However, in the mid-twentieth century, confronted with a growing recognition that performance enhancing drug use was linked to the deaths of elite athletes, governments and sporting organisations began to develop a coordinated anti-doping policy. This included the creation of an independent agency, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), to lead the anti-doping agenda. Despite strong in-principle support for WADA and its goals, anti-doping policy has been a source of considerable tension, as it seeks to balance the difficulty of detection with the day-to-day lives of athletes. Athletes, it is argued, must accept unique workplace conditions, such as the need to specify their whereabouts even when they are not competing. Furthermore, in a reversal of the burden of proof, athletes falsely accused of doping must effectively prove that the charges against them are false.

Part IV explores how economic considerations impact the regulation of professional sports and what implications this has for sporting codes

and for players, including how the restriction of labour movement may restrict career opportunities. Simon Gardiner and Roger Welch's chapter on player trades, free agents and transfer polices in professional sport begins this part (Chapter 15). They note that for a typical employee, the relationship with the employer, including how and when that relationship can be terminated, is regulated by the contract of employment. Similarly, employment contracts also have an important role to play for professional sportsmen and women, but in some team sports, internal sporting rules operate to act as a player restraint and provide significant control on the part of the employer over the employee player. Highlighting that player restraints can be characterised, first, as those that specifically restrict freedom of movement from one club to another, and that, second, restraints on player movements can occur indirectly, by restraints on wages through mechanisms such as salary caps in North America and in Europe, to a lesser extent, through Financial Fair Play rules, they posit it is necessary to understand how employment contractual relationships interrelate with transfer systems and the requirement for a player to be registered with a specific club. To explain the relationship they illustrate how transfer systems work and their relationship with European law, in particular the role that has been played by the European Commission and rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union and international sporting bodies such as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). They conclude by discussing how transfer systems may be further regulated in the future.

In Chapter 16 Rodney Paul and Andrew Weinbach explain that the terms 'competitive balance' and 'uncertainty of outcome' are often used interchangeably, but their methods of calculation are distinct. The authors compare the differences and similarities in these measures by using recent data on the National Basketball Association (NBA) and NFL. Paul and Weinbach argue that the two measures are closely related in the NBA, but are quite different in the NFL. While competitive balance was shown to worsen in the NFL, uncertainty of outcome has remained generally unchanged. This illustrates the importance of understanding which measure sports fans actually use when making decisions. This understanding will also provide the opportunity for leagues and teams to better implement policies to improve their product.

In the final chapter, Chapter 17, we return to the work of Gardiner and Welch. Focusing on the issue of player quotas, the authors chart the response to the Bosman ruling within football and the continuing use of player quotas for non-EU players. The focus of the chapter is on the reintroduction of player quotas within Europe as a result of the Union of European Football Associations' (UEFA's) 'home grown player rule',

which requires a specified number of players in a squad to have been developed by the club, or within the same football association, for a specified number of years as youth players. They discuss why player quotas have been incrementally reintroduced into football and other team sports and evaluate their legality in the context of the Bosman ruling and EU discrimination law.

CONCLUSION

This research handbook fills a gap that exists in the management of sport literature by examining professional sports with a particular emphasis on the employment relationship. In four parts the handbook discusses first the regulatory context of professional sports at cross-national, national and sporting code levels, second the history, evolution and current ER institutions and practices in major sporting codes with an emphasis on how conflict between players, clubs and codes is managed, third a number of important contemporary issues in the management of sports and sporting careers, and fourth how economic imperatives, such as the need to ensure balance in competition, interact with the employment relationship to produce a unique labour market in professional sports. We hope the handbook encourages further publications in this field and acts as a catalyst for greater research in the area of ER and sport. As professional sports continues to grow as an industry, extending its reach into new markets with varying economic, cultural and social environments, it is essential that we continue to critically evaluate the ER practices that accompany this growth.

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