CONCUSSIONS

In 1905, U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt, known as a rugged outdoorsman, convened a group of university presidents to discuss the dangers of college football. That year, several football players died as a result of their football injuries, and there was public outcry against the sport. In an effort to save the sport, Roosevelt met with the presidents to develop safety regulations. Out of those meetings came the creation of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to govern men’s collegiate sport.

Today, football faces a similar crisis with concussions. Former NFL All-Pro and Hall of Famer Junior Seau committed suicide and was found to have chronic traumatic encephalopathy. In 2013, the NFL settled a class action lawsuit, agreeing to pay over $700 million to the plaintiffs; however, the concussio issue remains one for all levels of football players, from Pop Warner to college to the NFL. Should we expect to see President Obama call a meeting of university presidents or NFL owners? Though the NFL is working to change their rules to enhance safety, many players and fans complain the new rules make the game soft. More than 100 years ago, college presidents convened to make college football safer. Today the NCAA seems more concerned with how to profit from the same players they claim to protect.

Defining the Field: 1960-1979

The early years in the development of the field we now call sociology of sport and physical activity was primarily focused on sport and had its intellectual origins in Europe and North America. Throughout this book, we rely on a social science definition of sport as more than an elite, competitive physical game. As noted earlier, the first known texts on sociology of sport were published in the 1920s, but it wasn’t until the 1960s that a subdiscipline in the field of kinesiology began to take shape. Bringing sociology and physical education together in this enterprise, the International Committee for the Sociology of Sport (ICSS) was formed in 1964 and formally founded as a professional organization in 1965. By 1966, the first journal dedicated to sociological analyses of sport was launched, the International Review for the Sociology of Sport (IRSS), and 11 years later a second journal was initiated, the Journal of Sport and Social Issues (JSSI).

A 1974 Commonwealth and International Conference symposium on the sociological study of sport led to the 1978 establishment of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS). NASSS held its first conference in 1980 in Denver, Colorado, and continues to be one of the key international organizations, along