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“Because the Hockey Tournament is Important to Bowdoin”:

Managing Stakeholder Expectations Relating to Postseason Play for Men’s

Ice Hockey at Bowdoin College

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This research examines how Bowdoin College administrators responded to stakeholder interests and, in some cases, demands, and sought to manage the implications of their decisions, and relates how these decisions impacted Bowdoin, its peer institutions, and the greater intercollegiate athletic environment. The ability to compete with some measure of success against larger and prestigious regional opponents aided in promoting interest in the program, and through the auspices of the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC), Bowdoin was also able to access competition in emerging regional postseason championships in the mid-1960s. But these postseason opportunities were in direct conflict with stipulations in the Pentagonal Agreement, Bowdoin’s loosely aligned athletic confederation with three other similar New England colleges. The formalized ban evinced substantial disapproval from College stakeholders, who pressured Bowdoin presidents James Coles and Roger Howell Jr. to negotiate with the heads of the other Pentagonal schools to finesse pertinent regulations so that Bowdoin’s hockey team could participate in postseason play. Finally, this work provides implications of managing athletics in response to stakeholder demands as learned from this study.

In the March 1970 edition of the *Alumnus*, the monthly magazine published by Bowdoin College to communicate items of interest to alumni of the small, all-male liberal arts institution located in Brunswick, Maine, readers found an article entitled “True Grit.” The title references the John Wayne film released the previous year, but the article was not a critique of the popular Western film, but rather described a notable run by the school’s hockey team. The author noted that the Bowdoin College Polar Bears were ranked at the top of the standings for Division II of the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC), but unlike the previous year’s top-ranked squad, this team would have the chance to compete in the ECAC’s Division II postseason tournament. Because of Bowdoin’s participation in the Pentagonal Agreement with Amherst College, Wesleyan University and Williams College (Dartmouth College had been the fifth original signatory but left when the Ivy League formally coalesced in 1956), the author noted the Agreement rules had until then barred its teams from postseason competitions. “This year, however,” wrote the author, “the pressure was great (a recent poll showed that 725 of 950 Bowdoin students favored the tournament – only coeducation gets a greater consensus)” (Huntington, 1970, p. 8, 12).

The article further highlighted that the other Pentagonal schools agreed to allow Bowdoin to participate, provided Bowdoin’s Faculty Committee on Athletics also assented. “[Bowdoin] President [Roger] Howell went one better,” wrote the author. “After getting the committee’s approval, [Howell] presented the issue to the entire faculty, who gave near unanimous endorsement.” The next occurrence is the stuff of legend, as the author claimed. While trailing at the University of New Hampshire, 3-1, the team learned mid-game that the faculty approved the opportunity for postseason play, perhaps inspiring three shorthanded goals and a 7-3 win a little “bit of miracle-making” (Huntington, 1970, p. 8, 12).

While a college alumni magazine story touting the successes of a school’s athletic team is certainly not new, what is of interest is that hockey at Bowdoin had risen to a level of institutional importance substantial enough to drive College administrators, who had promoted the success of the program, into lobbying colleagues at other institutions to amend athletic operating guidelines for Bowdoin’s benefit. These desired postseason opportunities were, however in direct conflict with stipulations in the Pentagonal Agreement, Bowdoin’s loose athletic confederation with three other similar New England schools. After Dartmouth left to join the Ivy League in 1956, the four remaining schools reformed their association (but never amended the geometric nature of its moniker), which was modeled closely on the Ivy model. The Ivy model outlined specific protocols for recruiting and admission of prospective athletes, as well as the recognition that athletic staff members were to be viewed as regular faculty members, with “responsibilities and duties ... commensurate with their dignity as members of the faculty and with the dignity of the institution they represent.” The memo announcing this accord warned that “the primary points ... rest not with the specific phrasing thereof, but rather with the underlying spirit and philosophy upon which the agreement is based” (Coles, 1956, p. 1).

In 1961, in part reaction to the emergence of the ECAC’s creation of postseason tournaments in a variety of sports, the four Pentagonal presidents modified the Agreement to prohibit postseason play for any team sport program. Individual athletes such as track participants were still allowed to compete in postseason events, including National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) championships. The ban evinced substantial disapproval from

coaches, student-athletes and students, and the waiver for individual sport athletes was always viewed as an unfair distinction by team sport players and coaches. When coupled with competition from non-Pentagonal rival schools such as nearby Colby College and increased stakeholder interest in a now-strong hockey program, pressure was brought to bear on Bowdoin presidents James Coles, and more directly on his successor, Roger Howell Jr., to negotiate with the heads of the other schools to finesse pertinent regulations in Bowdoin's favor. Howell was unable to head off conflict in 1971-72, however, when the ECAC moved in midseason to expand its Division II tournament and added an additional round of games, which conflicted directly with the limited postseason participation guidelines agreed to by the Pentagonals. As a result, in a season where Bowdoin was the top-ranked program in the division, Howell opted to adhere to the Agreement and not allow his team to play in the tournament, in effect placing a greater value on the maintenance of its affiliation with the three other schools over the chance for his hockey team to win a postseason championship. This research examines how Bowdoin College administrators responded to stakeholder interests and, in some cases, demands, and sought to manage the implications of their decisions, and relates how these decisions impacted Bowdoin, its peer institutions, and the greater intercollegiate athletic environment.

Method

Data for this historical study were collected from reviewing administrative letters and memoranda made available through the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives at Bowdoin College, as well as personal interviews, newspaper reports and other publications from the period. These sources were chosen as they provided first-person accounts of the actions taken by parties, and are the only such documents available that provide the detail and insights required for this research. The author has attempted to alleviate bias by using a range of sources and not just administrative files, but the reliance on such does influence the conclusions reached to some degree.

Analysis of documents occurred in a similar fashion to that found in a content analysis. As noted by Neimark (1983), Krippendorf (1980), and Weber (1990), the purpose of a content analysis study is to illustrate the ways in which an individual organization participates in the processes of social change. The content analysis, utilized here, aligns comments into meaningful categories to summarize the issues and attitudes of a group of respondents (Krippendorf, 1980; Weber, 1990). Following the procedures outlined by Miles and Huberman (1993), a contact summary form was used for recording the main themes (recurrent topics of discussion, action, or both), issues, problems and issues from each data source. This research analysis emerged from an identifiable set of steps adapted in the justification for the model. As patterns, themes, and categories emerged, the implications of which are outlined in the subsequent sections.

Bowdoin Hockey and American Intercollegiate Athletics: 1907-1955

Perceptions of the appropriate role of intercollegiate athletics in the United States vary depending on the interests of stakeholder groups. These collections (student-athletes, the student body at large, faculty, administrators, coaches, parents, boosters, alumni, and the general public) seek a variety of outcomes from these programs, including entertainment, a way to create bonds with the institution, a chance for physical activity, and an opportunity for professional advancement. One particular challenge in the management of intercollegiate athletics programs

is that regardless of the size of the school and the number and success level of programs, it is expected that athletic programs meet the demands of all stakeholders.

Nearly a century before the advent of intercollegiate athletics, students formed literary societies, Greek-letter fraternal organizations, and organized on-campus “intramural” athletics. Smith (2011) pointed out that colleges always “had lists of things forbidden . . . refusing a variety of activities thought to be harmful to moral character, learning or safety,” including “card playing, drinking, smoking” and sports (p. 17). But students persisted, for the most part because, as one Amherst College student of the day noted such activities “served to vary the monotony, and relieve the dryness of college duties” (Smith, 1988, p. 15).

Bowdoin College, founded in 1794, was among the grouping of American institutions that first developed intercollegiate athletic programs, initiating these programs in the late 19th century. At that point, Bowdoin’s athletic schedules included many academically respected institutions in the Northeast, including Dartmouth, Brown University, Harvard University and Yale University, as well as more similarly situated institutions located in New England, such as Amherst, Wesleyan, Williams, as well as Bates College, Colby College and Tufts University. Yet, as the American academic and athletic landscape shifted due to various factors, competition against these and others foes proved increasingly difficult. It was, as Thelin (2010) noted, not because the historic Eastern powers had declined in emphasis or ability, but rather because “talent had become distributed nationwide” (p. 209). The number of degree-granting colleges grew from 25 in 1800, to 52 in 1820, and to 241 by 1860 (not including another 40 that had started then ceased operation) (Thelin, 2010, p. 11-12, 34).

Bowdoin students played their first intercollegiate ice hockey game in 1907, defeating the University of Maine 4-1 at home. In his 1927 *History of Bowdoin College*, Louis Hatch (Bowdoin Class of 1894), noted that hockey “only triumphed after marked failure of interest,” since the program was dropped in 1908, with “the students preferring to take their ice exercise by skating on the [nearby Androscoggin] river” (p. 33). Hatch reported that the intercollegiate program was revived in 1915-1916, but College records list no games until 1919-1920 (Hatch, 1927). The program experienced only a few successful seasons of over its first four decades, with teams in 1922-23 and 1949-50 notching records of 7-4 records, and the ‘53-‘54 team going 6-2-1. As noted by Holman, intercollegiate hockey was enjoying steady growth after World War II, with the sport’s first NCAA-sanctioned championship held in 1948. By 1964-65, 56 schools supported programs. While media coverage and fan interest accompanied this growth, so too did the increase in the pressures on athletic directors and coaches to product successful programs (Hatch, 1927; “History of Bowdoin College men’s ice hockey,” 2012; Holman, 2007).

At Bowdoin, the waning importance of football resulting from a particularly bleak stretch from 1954-1958, when Bowdoin squads compiled a record of 2-31-1, primed stakeholder groups to connect with any successful campus sport (Covell, 2014). The opening of a new on-campus arena in 1956 contributed to the program’s development, as did the hiring of Sidney J. “Sid” Watson to lead the program. From ’59 through ’83, Watson’s teams compiled a record of 326-210-11, and won four ECAC Division II championships. Another key factor in the development of the Bowdoin program was the rivalry with Colby. Located an hour’s drive to the northeast in Waterville, Colby was not a party to the Pentagonal Agreement, but was similarly situated as small, liberal arts college, albeit co-ed. Colby hockey would serve as a measuring stick for Watson and the inchoate the Polar Bear program, as according to former Colby athletic director John Winkin, Bowdoin’s program improved to keep pace because Colby had developed strong teams under the leadership of head coach Jack Kelley. While Colby had slightly better teams

than Bowdoin before Kelley's arrival, "Sid and Jack were great rivals," recalled the former Colby AD, "so if Colby was getting better, then Bowdoin had to ramp it up" (Winkin, 2010; "Men's ice hockey," 2013).

As for what the emergence of a successful hockey program meant to various stakeholder groups in and around campus, insights as to the impact of the program are provided by perspectives offered in the *Alumnus* in an article entitled, "Hockey night in Brunswick." The author depicts the environs beyond campus as abuzz with anticipation prior to each home game, and describes the value of the experience to the range of stakeholders.

"The first thing you notice is the feeling of excitement ... shopkeepers will take time to sell you their wares, of course, but with an eye on the clock which is, oh, so close to five. And inevitably they ask 'Are you going?' if they don't happen to know you or simply state 'See you there' if they do ... And in countless homes in Brunswick and vicinity come the plea, 'Hurry, we can't be late' ... Heading up Federal Street brings you past several Faculty homes where, more likely than not, informal gatherings are taking place" (Huntington, 1973, pp. 16-17).

The author concluded by suggesting, "the game is still the unifying force that draws people to the Arena ... Faculty, alumni and townspeople rub elbows in a picnic-like atmosphere ... Yet, most likely because of the essential personal nature of small college athletics, the aura of the College's hockey success affords many the opportunity to share a fun time. And, somehow, those Maine winters don't seem so long anymore" (Huntington, 1973, p. 19). These observations, while potentially hyperbolic, nonetheless depict a wide range of stakeholder interests that arose primarily because of the on-ice success of the program.

A Realistic Opportunity for Postseason Participation: Complicating Athletic Policy 1964-67

While a new arena, the hiring of Watson, and a heated local rivalry contributed to the emergence of Bowdoin hockey and the concomitant rise in stakeholder interest, the tipping point in this scenario was a new opportunity for postseason participation. These new competitions would be operated under the aegis of the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC), which organized regional postseason championships in several sports, including hockey. By the 1964-65 season, in response to the interests of the increasing number of hockey programs in the region, the ECAC created the Division II classification, with a separate grouping of 15 schools – all current NCAA Division I hockey members – classified as Division I.

The new Division II tournament created a challenge for Bowdoin's stated policy on postseason play, since the College, as stipulated in the Pentagonal Agreement in 1961, barred all team sports from any postseason competitions, including NCAA championships. Of all the restrictive measures enacted by the Agreement (such as off-campus recruiting and out-of-season practice), the postseason ban was from the start the most despised by most stakeholder groups. Some stakeholder flak stemmed from the perceived double-standard that individual sport athletes could compete in postseason competitions, while team sport athletes could not. When the ECAC and NCAA began to sponsor "College Division" or "Division II" championships, Bowdoin and other Pentagonal teams now had a realistic shot at postseason qualification.

In 1964, Richard Andrias, representative on Bowdoin's student council, wrote a letter to President Coles "expressing the Council's dissatisfaction with the Post-Season Athletic Ban"

("Honor system," 1964, p.1). Coles replied, "I am not sure that the colleges concerned are persuaded of the desirability of changing the rule. Weighing it in the balance, I do not believe that I am, but I shall raise the question with the other colleges." Coles later responded via letter to Andrias: "I raised the question of post-season games with the Presidents of the Pentagonal colleges at a meeting at Amherst. There was no sentiment among them for any change in the present rule." (Coles, 1964, p. 1). Coles seemed happy to place the blame for the ban at the feet of his colleagues. Other athletic stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with the team ban rule, as evidenced by a June 1964 meeting of the four Pentagonal ADs. The ADs reported that all coaches of each of the four schools wanted the rule reviewed and changed, as did two of the ADs, including Bowdoin's Malcolm "Mal" Morrell (McCurdy, 1964; Thoms, 1964, p. 1).

At a meeting two years later, the Pentagonal ADs discussed the fact that a request by Bowdoin and Williams to participate in the ECAC Division II hockey tournament had been denied by school presidents. The meeting noted that the ban "has been a bone of contention with students and coaches since it has been in effect" (McCurdy, 1966, p. 1). Bowdoin's Morrell wanted the ban abandoned so each school could decide about accepting postseason invitations. No doubt Morrell sought to promote and to defend Bowdoin hockey, which emerged as the school's premier athletic program, but the schools that supported the ban likely favored a blanket prohibition as it shifted some of the political burden from them to the membership at large.

The creation of the Division II grouping for ECAC hockey for the 1964-65 season served to reenergize interest in postseason play beyond campus as well. Local media brought attention to the issue in February 1966 in the lead-up to the inaugural ECAC Division II postseason tournament. Since the NCAA would not create its Division III classification until 1973, and would not sponsor a Division III men's ice hockey championship until 1984, this meant the ECAC tourney served as a de facto national championship for its members. Portland's *Press Herald* noted that Bowdoin and Colby were enjoying good seasons, "but the Pentagonal Agreement would prevent the Polar Bears from entering [the tournament] even if they should win all their remaining games." The paper also listed Sid Watson's objections to the ban, quoting that he "hoped the agreement will be abolished when the presidents of the five [sic] colleges meet later this month" ("Bowdoin, Colby," 1966, p. 12).

Later that month, the paper followed up on the story, and fueled the Colby rivalry, with an article titled, "Bowdoin six lead ECAC but barred from tourney," with the sub-headline "Colby probable selection." The article noted that the upcoming selection for the tournament would occur "with a strong likelihood two of the top teams, Bowdoin and Williams, will be unable to take part ... Colby apparently is in a strong position to compete regardless of the decision reached at Bowdoin and Williams ... A spokesman at Colby said the school probably would accept an invitation to play in the tourney" ("Bowdoin six," 1966, p. 12). A few days later, a *Press Herald* headline stated flatly, "Colby in puck event; Leading Bowdoin out," reporting that Colby, American International College, and the University of New Hampshire were picked over the Polar Bears and Ephs. "Bowdoin, leader in the latest ECAC standings, and Williams, which shares second ranking, could not be considered for the tournament because they, plus Amherst and Wesleyan, have an agreement not to play in post-season tourneys" ("Colby in," 1966, p. 13).

In early 1967, responding to these stakeholder complaints, Bowdoin's Coles wrote the other Pentagonal presidents that "we still have complaints from our coaches and undergraduates with respect to post-season championships. One might wonder whether or not the pain this causes is worth the possible gains from this particular rule" (Coles, 1967, p. 1). Williams president John Sawyer outlined his reasons for maintaining the ban:

We feel that the post-season teams issue has come to be accepted and has a great deal in its favor as a general policy of agreement among the four of us, in contrast to the build-up of pressures that comes on any one institution at the time a winning team builds up steam for a post-season trip – a trip that may take students who can ill afford it away from the campus for an extended period beyond their regular schedule. While there is minor grumbling from time to time, we have weathered the major storm on this question and I, for one, am not eager to invite it annually (Sawyer, 1967, p. 1).

The College was also responding to other more traditional institutional impacts resulting from stakeholder interests. Roger Howell Jr., who assumed the office of President in the Fall of 1969, would later note: “It goes without saying that there is some connection between performance on the athletic field and the Capital Campaign” (Howell, 1972a, p. 1). This was borne out by the influence of one specific alumnus, Daniel L. Dayton, Jr., a New York City real estate executive and the former president of the New York Bowdoin Club. Dayton gave money for various facility improvements, established an arena maintenance fund, and was described as “an enthusiastic spectator who frequently made the trip from New York to Brunswick during the hockey season.” College alumni files report that he was “largely responsible for the Bowdoin hockey team’s appearance at the ECAC Hockey Festival” at Madison Square Garden in 1970, and that he was a “generous benefactor of the Bowdoin Arena” (“Bowdoin to,” 1976, p.1). Such a level of interest from a particularly influential stakeholder group could only serve to influence the actions of College administrators.

As for the 1970 MSG appearance, the *Alumnus* began prepping readers in its July issue, trumpeting that the Holiday Festival was “the most prestigious invitational hockey tournament in the East,” and would be played “on that very pond where the New York Rangers mix it up with the Boston Bruins” (“Holiday,” 1970, p. 27). Soon after the announcement, the *Alumnus* noted that the Bowdoin Alumni Association of New York “went to work in drumming up enthusiasm” for the event, and included in the tournament promotion was distribution of hundreds of “Go Polar Bears Go” buttons “which quickly became daily apparel for the well-dressed Bowdoin hockey fan” (“Holiday,” 1970, p. 27). New president Roger Howell, sporting a “Go Polar Bears Go” button, would greet nearly 300 alumni and guests at the “plush” Penn Plaza Club at MSG on the first night of the tourney, while “alumni renewed friendships and speculated on the Polar Bear chances ... over refreshments and handshakes” (“A Broadway,” 1971, p. 1) Bowdoin lost decisively to Clarkson, 6-1, but forged a 4-4 tie with Yale the next night, generating much satisfaction with Polar Bear stakeholders.

A Bowdoin Line Change: 1968-69

In 1968, in a change from its previously stance supporting the Pentagonal party line on postseason play, Bowdoin’s leadership began the process to gain approval for inclusion in the ECAC Division II hockey tournament. Acting president Athern Daggett (Coles resigned effective at the end of 1967) suggested to new athletic director Daniel Stuckey that the tournament be placed on Bowdoin’s schedule as a regular event and not a postseason tournament. Said Daggett (1968): “I am serious in my suggestion all right, but I would not want to put it into operation unilaterally. Since the ECAC Hockey Tournament has not previously been carried on the schedules of the member colleges, I can well understand that it might cause some raised eyebrows if we went ahead on a new interpretation on our own” (p. 1).

Soon thereafter, Stuckey sent a memo to the other Pentagonal ADs asking for permission to make part of the regular hockey schedule the ECAC tournament games because “these two games are on fixed dates. They call for games to be played on the campus of one of the teams competing, and they involve no further travel or subsequent play.” Stuckey defended the move this way: “If we can send swimming relay teams to Georgia or Hawaii weeks after our regular season, does it not seem reasonable to do this?” (Stuckey, 1968, p. 1).

While Stuckey sought approval through scheduling minutiae, the ultimate mantle for advocacy would be borne by incoming president Roger Howell Jr. While his predecessor Coles never seemed fully versed or invested in athletic issues, Howell (Bowdoin Class of 1958) was a member of the frosh baseball team and Rhodes Scholar. A glimpse into Howell’s take on the role of athletics is evident in several pieces he wrote for the *Alumnus* during his Rhodes time at Oxford. The articles included photos of Howell playing for the first team of the St. John’s College rugby team and the Oxford City Nomads. “The British,” Howell wrote during his Rhodes time, “have a better understanding of the amateur approach to athletics than do the Americans. This determined and genuine amateurism, which lies at the core of British sport, does not always produce the perfection of performance which the more professionally-minded seek” (“Howell to Oxford,” 1958, p. 4). Howell (1959) continued: “The ability and mental attitude to play to win and at the same time to play for something far wider than a transitory triumph are unfortunately seen only too infrequently in the United States” (p. 2-3).

According to Bowdoin alumnus Stephen Hardy, an eminent hockey historian who also served as hockey co-captain during Howell’s presidency, Howell’s take on intercollegiate sport was no doubt influenced by his time at Oxford. Howell “believed in amateurism just as the Oxbridge types did and do,” and would come to support the cause of Bowdoin hockey because, said Hardy, “we *were* (author’s emphasis) amateurs without athletic grants-in-aid — even if a close analysis would probably suggest that a few players got hefty grants as opposed to loans or work deals” (Hardy, 2013, p. 1).

In January 1969, the *Orient* cited the existence of a petition calling for the hockey team to be allowed to participate in the ECACs. “It seems that every year since the rule of not allowing post-season competition went into effect there have been similar protests,” the paper reported, noting that “there are obstructions to the approval of participation in such a tournament. The foremost one is the college’s membership in the agreement which would not allow the college to blatantly violate [sic] the terms of the policy.” While the paper correctly notes that the Agreement bans postseason play, it alleged that other signatories are violating other stated rules. “The section dealing with recruiting is the one most often questioned, but nothing substantial has yet been uncovered in the way of violations,” alleged the paper (Friedlander, 1969a, p. 8).

The paper then reported that after speaking with athletic director Stuckey, “this writer would have to say the possibility of President Howell approving any breach of the Pentagonal Agreement, which would be prerequisite to entering any such tournament, is a long, long shot indeed.” As in past diatribes, the paper again referenced support for participation based on “six hundred forty student signatures, the approval of the athletic director, and the team’s enthusiasm and talent,” and agitated that:

“Williams and Amherst ... should be contacted and student petitions presented to all the college presidents. Concise formulation of a new policy, accounting for possible difficulties should be presented along with the petitions. Should President Howell elect not to violate the Pentagonal, it will next become the responsibility of the students to

further the issue. If the 640 Bowdoin student signatures expressed something more than just writing style, then the issue should be pressed. We hope it will” (Friedlander, 1969b, p. 8).

An article in the next week’s *Orient*, trotted out the publicity angle again but sought a different track to overturn the ban – stirring up alumni support.

“It’s too bad,” read the paper, that the alumni and college may not be able to enjoy the publicity and possible rewards that come with participating in an ECAC championship tournament ... If the alumni want to see one of their finest hockey teams in years compete for honors they deserve, they should make this known. Alumni pressure, combined with the already professed student support, could serve to help persuade President Howell to seriously consider [sic] participation in the tournament ... We hope those alumni visiting the campus and reading this article still remember what it means to be a champion in anything – and the hockey team needs your support so they can have that opportunity” (Friedlander, 1969c, p. 8).

The concurrent success of the hockey program forced Howell to confront the College’s postseason policy stance. In March 1969, after the Polar Bears beat Norwich University, 5-2, the *Orient* ran the story “Hockey team is tops in ECAC Div. II.” “The 2500 fans were chanting ‘we’re number one,’” wrote the paper, but regretted that “despite student and team-expressed dissatisfaction with the clause, the college would not change the policy on upholding the agreement.” The paper reported that after the Norwich game, President Howell congratulated the team and Watson, “expressing his regrets that the agreement prohibited participation in the tournament. ‘But you’re number one, and you’ve proved it,’ he reassured the team” (“Hockey team is tops,” 1969, p. 4).

In a season wrap-up interview with Watson, the *Orient* asked about the postseason issue. Watson pulled no punches, citing inconsistencies in the policy:

“I am a firm believer that there should be post-season competition. As you know, it is allowed in some sports but not in others ... this is unfair to the boys. For example, swimmers are allowed to compete on relay teams, which is a team competition.” In making his feelings known, Watson also made it clear at whose feet lay the ultimate responsibility for overturning the ban: “I feel that each individual college should have the right to compete or not. I don’t think it is right for some school that doesn’t excel in the team sports to dictate what is right for us. However, I’m not the one to make the decisions ... it’s the president’s job” (Friedlander, 1969d, p. 7).

Pressures Increase and Howell Responds: 1969-70

After the 1968-69 hockey season, Howell and the other Pentagonal presidents were feeling increased pressures to end the postseason ban. In a letter to Colby president Robert Strider, Amherst president Calvin Plimpton responded that Amherst was “at the moment, once more under pressure to allow and encourage post season games. Roger Howell at Bowdoin, I know, would like to take a fresh look at this,” but noted that he, Sawyer of Williams and Edwin Etherington of Wesleyan “feel a little bit that we would like to maintain our current system. Our

Athletic Directors and our students, however, want us to take a new look at the problem” (Plimpton, 1969, p. 1).

Plimpton’s perspective on Bowdoin was accurate, since Stuckey received a letter dated May 7, 1969 (with a copy sent to Howell) from the entire Bowdoin coaching and training staff, noting, “We would appreciate it if you would advise the members of the Pentagonal Agreement that our department would like to have the ban on post-season team competition revised to allow member colleges to participate if the individual school so wishes. We feel the rule is not beneficial to all concerned, and that this change should be made. It is our understanding here that the athletic departments of the other member colleges are in agreement with us” (Bicknell, et al, 1969, p. 1).

By early 1970, in the middle of what was becoming the best-ever season for the hockey Polar Bears, Howell was working hard to lift the postseason ban. Howell wrote his Pentagonal colleagues: “As though there were not complications enough in our athletic relationships, I am writing to complicate matters further.” Howell sought a waiver for Bowdoin to participate, if invited, in the ECAC tournament. “I have, in all conscience,” Howell reasoned, “reviewed the conditions under which this particular event takes place, and they seem designed to assure that the dangers the Pentagonal Agreement is intended to guard against will not occur.” “There may be some inconveniences,” he allowed, but “I see a boost to student morale in this venture of positive value” (Howell, 1970a, p. 1).

Sawyer responded to Howell restating his misgivings. “We do not see,” wrote Sawyer in the majestic plural voice he favored, “how this exception can be made for team participation in such a post-season contest without opening up the whole ball game and in effect ending that aspect of the Pentagonal policy.” He continued: “If Bowdoin hockey does it this year, no one else could be asked to resist comparable demands another year; and if it starts in hockey, then our experience is that soccer, basketball and others will follow” (Sawyer, 1970a, p. 1).

Despite these misgivings, Howell’s lobbying efforts paid off, with a waiver allowing Bowdoin to play granted on February 20 after Howell had agreed to the following points – that the participation be approved by the College’s Faculty Committee on Athletics, all games will be played on the home rink of one of the teams involved, that Bowdoin would not be involved in more than two games, and that the tournament would not overlap the beginning of the spring sports season (Sawyer, 1970b). According to reports in the *Alumnus*, the team was informed of the “special dispensation” during the second period of the aforementioned New Hampshire game. “After the announcement the Polar Bears scored six straight goals,” noted the magazine (Huntington, 1970, p. 11), but co-captain Steve Hardy disputed this. “I don’t remember any announcement” (Hardy, 2011, p. 1). In addition, the New Hampshire game was played on February 19, and official word came down to Howell in a letter dated February 20. The *Orient* confirmed that the team would appear in the ECAC Division II tournament, which would be played in Brunswick if the team garnered the top seed. “If the Bears should win the remainder of their matches or the tournament,” crowed the paper, “a school holiday should be declared before it is demanded. Or at least before it is observed” (Dude, 1970, p. 8). The team routed Merrimack College, 9-1, in the semis, but fell to the University of Vermont in the finals, 4-1.

Postseason Play becomes a Semi-formalized Reality: 1970-71

The April following Bowdon’s first-ever ECAC appearance, the Pentagonal membership renewed the process toward expansion. A revised expansion draft was circulated which included

a specific list of schools to be invited: Bates, Colby, Tufts, Hamilton College, Middlebury College, Trinity College and Union College. The draft also specifically referred to the new amalgamation as the “New England Small College Athletic Conference” (NESCAC) (Athletic Conference Agreement, 1970). The previous June, Wesleyan athletic director Don Russell penned a rationale for the new grouping, citing that recent events “have made it quite evident that the control of intercollegiate athletics has passed into the hands of institutions whose philosophies differ ... and that a united effort could aid in protecting the interests of our type of program.” Russell then identified “recruiting and finances” as “major problems in intercollegiate athletics today” and that it was “grossly unfair to the student athlete to put him into competition with recruited scholarship opponents.” Russell also noted that the “diffusion of pressure from alumni and student groups would be greater in a larger conference than in the present Pentagonal” (Russell, 1969, pp. 1-2).

Section V of the draft covered postseason participation, and, in a shift from the 1961 actions, allowed exceptions for postseason participation through a procedure where authorization (for teams or individuals) must be approved in principle and in advance by a three-fourths vote of the Presidents after recommendations by a designated “Committee on Post-Season Competitions.” This committee was charged with recommending each year which tournaments or championships “are judged consistent with the terms and spirit” of the Agreement. The draft stated further that “team participation is expected to be the exception and not the norm,” and that “each institution naturally retains full autonomy with respect to not participating in post-season play if its administration or faculty so decides even when a given competition has been approved.” The draft then outlined the procedure regarding postseason bids: The coach and team members vote on the bid; if the vote is to accept, the coach and team captain(s) present their case to the institution’s Committee on Athletics; the final decision to accept or reject the bid is made by the institution’s Committee on Athletics in consultation with the administration and faculty “as each institution shall determine” (Athletic Conference Agreement, 1970, pp. 3-4).

Sawyer offered to serve as the first chairman of the four-person executive committee, with the proviso that Howell, no doubt in light of his advocacy for postseason play for Bowdoin hockey, “would take charge of whatever is needed on the post-season review for selective authorizations” (Sawyer, 1970c, p. 2). To this, Howell responded to Sawyer: “I will be glad (?) to take on the post-season review. What am I supposed to do and when?” (Howell, 1970b, p. 1) Sawyer responded in a hand-written note that “I’d judge to 1. recommend that the Div. II ECAC hockey, if [author’s emphasis] that is your judgment again, and 2. Ponder any others you’d like the [executive committee] and then the Presidents to consider” (Sawyer, 1970d, p. 1).

That December, the conference athletic directors sent a missive to Howell stating: “We approve the concept of post-season competition when it is well organized and well run. We feel the ECAC and NCAA run such post-season competition. We, therefore, suggest that the Conference Committee authorize the Colleges in the New England Small College Athletic Conference to compete in ECAC and NCAA Tournaments only.” The group wanted also to maintain the current policy that permitted individual sport athletes to compete in such championships, and also asked for the Henley Regatta to be approved (Winkin, 1970, p. 1).

In January 1971, in response to the athletic directors’ communication, Sawyer wrote to the presidents that the report “seriously misunderstood the nature of the commitment their Presidents have entered into with regard to post-season competition.” Sawyer noted the presidents “should accordingly make clear to their Athletic Directors ... that general participation in ... post-season competitions is not [author’s emphasis] authorized under the

agreement.” Sawyer went on to cite extended overlapping seasons, increased travel and other costs as reasons, and they “too often represent the kind of over-emphasis and commercialization of collegiate sports which the Agreement was set up to oppose and which could precipitate a Faculty backlash adversely affecting the whole intercollegiate program” (“New England Small College Athletic Conference Executive Committee memorandum,” 1971, pp. 1-2).

Later that month, in a letter to Howell, Stuckey disputed Sawyer’s claim that the athletic directors “seriously misunderstood” the presidents on this point, and pointed out the flaws in Sawyer’s logic. “I do not misunderstand the commitment,” wrote Stuckey, “but I do disagree with parts of it. I hope when we disagree we will not have to stand accused of failing to understand.” “The only way I can see out of this post-season dilemma,” he reasoned, “is to have the individual colleges apply to your committee annually for permission to participate in specific post-season competition. Why should Bowdoin vote against the soccer championship playoffs and thereby deprive Trinity of an opportunity to do something which has meant a great deal to them, merely because from our local point of view it would be undesirable? Why should Trinity nullify our participation in the ECAC Division II Hockey Championships?” (Stuckey, 1971, p. 1)

Stuckey’s point was a valid one, and also verified that all NESCAC members, not just Bowdoin, had vested interests in postseason play. While the schools sought to align with each other in the new conference, there was a perceived danger in a loss of autonomy in managing athletic policy. The convenience of shifting the political burden of deciding on postseason play by throwing it to the conference on an annual basis, as suggested by Sawyer, indicated that he really seemed to want to limit access while seeming to allow it.

The rationale in Howell’s January 1971 letter to the Executive Committee seemed to stack the deck in favor of his hockey program. Howell did not favor the broad sanctioning of postseason events, arguing instead that the conference “should sanction only those events which coincide closely with the spirit and intention of our agreement.” “I think we could, in good conscience,” he reasoned, “approve competition in the ECAC Division II hockey tournament . . . To my way of understanding, the ECAC Hockey Tournament is the only one that fits the general spirit of our agreement (all games on the home facility of one of the competing teams, limited in length, immediately after the season).” However, Howell was careful not to run counter to Sawyer’s read. “It is my feeling,” he concluded, “that we should not, at this time, approve any of the others” (Howell, 1971a, p. 1). The Executive Committee approved Bowdoin’s participation in the ECAC event for 1971 and Howell’s efforts were not in vain, as the Polar Bears avenged their previous season’s finals loss to Vermont, beating the Catamounts at home, 5-4, in overtime, winning the program’s first-ever ECAC Division II title.

All for Naught: 1971-72

Following the ’70-’71 season, it seemed the issue of postseason play had finally been resolved as the College promoted the defense of its first-ever title, in the *Alumnus* of January 1972 with a photo of Watson applying a black and white sticker that read “ECAC DIV. II CHAMPS / POLAR BEAR POWER / BOWDOIN HOCKEY 1971-2,” on the right rear bumper of a Chrysler. The photo caption read that “cars sporting this message have been sighted throughout Maine recently as Bowdoin’s 1971-72 varsity hockey team prepared for its defense of its ECAC Division II title . . . (The stickers were) donated to the College by the Bowdoin Club of New York to be sold on campus, proceeds of which sales will go to the Alumni Fund” (“The Bowdoin,” 1972a, p. 5). The photo also ran in the sports section of the local *Times Record*, over

a caption noting that “Polar Bear boosters can purchase the bumper stickers at the Moulton Union Book Store on the Bowdoin campus” (“New kind,” 1972, p. 9)

The good feelings proved to be short-lived, however, when the ECAC decided to expand the 1972 Division II tournament to eight teams. In November 1971, after he informed his colleagues of the approval of several postseason requests from other member schools, Howell alerted them “to the problem of the ECAC Division II Hockey Tournament.” While he noted that the conference ground rules were in part designed on the way this tournament had operated (two games in the week after the end of the season, played on the home ice of one of the participants), “it now appears,” the Division II format “will be enlarged to an eight-team tournament, still to be played in the week.” A low-seeded team could be involved in three away games at three different locations during the week, “potentially as far apart as Hamilton and Bowdoin.” “This would mean,” Howell warned, “the possibility of the team’s being away from campus for a full week” (Howell, 1971b, pp. 1-2).

“It seems to me that this represents an extension we cannot approve,” Howell concluded, offering an alternative solution, that NESCAC write to ECAC indicating its reasons for finding the new tournament schedule unacceptable and urging a revision of the schedule. “If such revision is not possible,” he summarized, “I recommend that this tournament not be approved in its present form” (Howell, 1971b, pp. 1-2). The presidents authorized Howell to notify the ECAC that its teams “would be glad to participate in the Division II hockey tournament if we are to return to the basis of last year’s format (4 teams playing no more than 2 games on college campuses within one week of the regular season), but that NESCAC schools would not participate in the new and expanded format (Sawyer 1971, p. 1).

The ECAC was unmoved, for in late December it informed all hockey playing member institutions via letter that the field for the 1972 Division II Championship would be expanded to eight teams, with opening round games scheduled for Saturday, March 4, the semi-finals Wednesday, March 8, and the championship game set for Saturday, March 11. All games were to be played at the higher seeds’ home rink. In the letter, Commissioner Robert “Scotty” Whitelaw stated that “the Tournament Committee is hopeful that those colleges with scheduled games on March 4, interested in participating, will be able to adjust their schedules accordingly” (Whitelaw, 1972, p. 1).

In reality there was little pressure on ECAC to rescind its format change, and the tournament would go on with or without the Polar Bears and its NESCAC peers. Bowdoin stakeholders were still hopeful. The local *Times Record* reported that Bowdoin students and hockey players launched a “three-pronged drive in hopes of keeping the Polar Bears in the Division II playoff picture.” One step was yet another petition, this one to be presented to Howell so that “Bowdoin do everything within its power to guarantee that our varsity hockey will be able to defend its Eastern College Athletic Conference Division II title this year.” The petition was circulated around campus on the night of January 31, with the observation that “people doing the circulating were having no problem in finding signers.” The other steps were letters signed by team members sent to the Bowdoin College Alumni Club and to ECAC Commissioner George Shiebler. The Alumni Club letter read in part: “We would be most grateful for anything you and other Bowdoin alumni can do to help us.” The ECAC letter stated in part: “Isn’t it possible, sir, that the ECAC hockey tournament committee could delay its effective date of the expansion plan until 1973?” Of the possibility of a requested delay in implementation, the paper cited the comments of Dartmouth AD Seaver Peters, chair of the ECAC Hockey Committee. “I

can't say that there is no chance," said Peters, "but I don't think the chances are good that we'd revert back to four teams" (Bourque, 1972a, p. 8).

Two weeks later, a front page headline in the *Orient* announced, "ECAC overrules appeal." "Now, alas," cried the paper, "the horsemen of the athletic apocalypse have galloped across the ice arenas of the Eastern College Athletic Conference," and "despite a brilliant record, various college athletics czars could not compromise in a game of numbers." The paper cited the NESCAC rationale "that it would involve too much travel and too much time away from classes." To this point, the article quoted Polar Bear player Ned Dowd "That's ridiculous. As far as detracting from studies, I can't see that. You've got to have an eight-team tournament because there are more teams in Division II than in Division I." The paper also noted that Howell had travelled to New York to speak with ECAC policy makers. "ECAC has shown itself to be completely inflexible on this point," wrote President Howell. "They were advised of the NESCAC position long before they decided to expand the tournament." The paper went on to say that Howell presented a "compromise proposal" which called for a six-team championship playoff, "but the ECAC Hockey Tournament Committee unanimously rejected it." The paper then surmised correctly that "Bowdoin will probably not withdraw from NESCAC, even if the athletic coaches so desired, because the decision would have to be made by the administration and because the benefits of membership are viewed as being greater than the disadvantages" (Silverstein, 1972, pp. 1, 7).

On the point of the Howell's proposed compromise plan, Whitelaw notified Howell that the eight-team format was re-affirmed by the tournament committee (Whitelaw, 1972). Howell then broke the news to acting athletic director Edmund "Beezer" Coombs that Whitelaw "appears to have removed the last hope that a compromise could be reached." Howell claimed that he "would like very much for Bowdoin to be in the tournament," he claimed, "but I fear that the ECAC's drive for expansion has made this impossible. I feel that the College is honor bound to observe the ruling of NESCAC." He reasoned that the College "simply cannot break an agreement on short notice just because it would seem to suit one's purpose to do so; if the College did that there would be no credibility to any agreement it entered into" (Howell, 1972a, p. 1). While Howell is quick to play the honor card, the ultimate point made was his value of the affiliation with NESCAC over the goals of the hockey program.

The night he penned his letter to Coombs, Howell informed the team of the ECAC's response before a home game versus Williams. According to a media report, Howell then exhorted, "You're the greatest team in the world. All of us are proud of you. Let's go out there and finish at the top of the standings again" ("Bowdoin sinks Williams," 1972, p. 12). The team then went out and secured a 3-2 win, and finished the year with a record of 17-4-1, with only one Division II loss (5-4 in overtime to Merrimack), as well as a 4-3 win over Princeton, and a 13-4 blowout of Amherst. The University of Massachusetts, which Bowdoin defeated 8-4 in the regular season, won the Division II championship, besting Buffalo 8-1 in the final.

The day before the Massachusetts-Buffalo game, the local Brunswick paper, the *Times Record*, cited a piece in the *Hockey News* that "the revised, eight-team ECAC Division Two playoff tournament will apparently be as representative of the best in the division." The *Times Record* author went on to report that "ever since the fracas was made known this year, there has been talk of the repercussions that affair might have in regard to Bowdoin College hockey. The loss of a number of top-flight schoolboys, a drop in schedule competition and even the loss of hockey mentor Sid Watson are among the items Bowdoin must seriously consider" (Bourque, 1972b, p. 10). The paper wrote this after Bowdoin's final game, a 5-3 home win over Colby:

“Both the Bears and the Mules were left on the outside of playoff competition due to the New England Small College Athletic Conference ruling . . . What will happen between now and the opening of hockey season next fall is open to discussion. Some 3,000 hockey fans were on hand Saturday night and it’s safe to say that at least that many would love to have seen more hockey at the Bowdoin Arena this year” (“Dowd hat trick,” 1972, p. 11). The fact that he might lose his very successful coach because of the ruling, and having to face the subsequent stakeholder fallout, no doubt gave Howell pause as he considered future policy decisions, although no existing archival documents support the fact that Watson was looking to leave.

The March 1972 *Alumnus* sent a subliminal funereal message to its readers by featuring a photograph of hockey players seated on bench with a superimposed black background. From this perspective, the players, starkly shadowed, seem to look up and to the right, into the black void. The white helmets, cut with vents at the top, give the players a skeletal look. While black and white are the school colors, the photo also read as an editorial epitaph of a lost postseason opportunity. The cover was later cited by the American Alumni Council as one of the best alumni magazine covers of the year (“The Bowdoin scene,” 1972b, p. 7).

Howell Works to Get Postseason Play Back: 1972-73

At an awards banquet following the 1972 season, Howell told the team, as reported in the *Times Record*: “You were a great credit to the college. I admire your spirit. You took a terribly tough decision about the tournament.” Co-captains Coley King and Jimmy Burnett thanked Howell for “doing all you could to try and get Bowdoin in the tournament,” while expressing a hope that the team would be able to participate next year (Bourque, 1972c, p. 11). Howell then sought to make postseason viable again for the Polar Bears. That September, NESCAC athletic directors learned from the ECAC that the Division II hockey tournament format would remain an eight-team affair and in response, the athletic directors sought to finesse the issue by suggesting to “substitute the first Saturday of tournament for last schedule contest and then remaining two dates would be within the previously approved guidelines” (Kurth, 1972, p. 1).

Soon thereafter, Coombs wrote Howell of the suggestions, and added his own perspectives. “Because the hockey tournament is important to Bowdoin it would be relatively simple for NESCAC members to adjust their schedules so that the first game of the tournament could coincide with what is now the last playing date of our regular schedule. This might allay the fears of lengthening the season.” Coombs continued: “The arguments about missing classes and expenses do not seem valid to me. Two of the possible three playing dates are on Saturdays and the expenses are paid out of tournament gate receipts.” Coombs’s last point touched on the issue of institutional mission and administrative control. “Although some can make an argument that post-season tournaments may lead to overemphasis,” he stated, “it does not follow that this would, in fact, become the case in Division II hockey. I do not see this as a danger for a school such as Bowdoin. Considering the size of our student body, admissions policies, recruiting restrictions, scholarship policies and the control which our faculty and administration have over athletics, the possibility of any untoward developments at Bowdoin seems remote. Other NESCAC members certainly have comparable controls” (Coombs, 1972, p. 1).

Adopting Coombs’s line of reasoning whole cloth, Howell recommended to the NESCAC presidents approval of the other ECAC tournaments, as they met the stated conference guidelines (i.e., terminal – meaning no winner would advance to another round, four teams, two games, on college campuses, within a week of end of regular season). Using some of Coombs’s

exact language and acknowledging the proposed scheduling tactics of the ADs, Howell wrote his presidential colleagues that the ECAC model “falls within the spirit, conditions, and intent” of the NESCAC agreement. While conceding that it involved eight teams and three playing dates, Howell argued that the first playing date was the last Saturday of the season, and that the final playing date fell within the limit of the week from the end of the regular season. “This means,” he concluded, “there are only two playing dates after [his emphasis] the end of the regular season and that only 4 teams will be involved on those two days.” He also noted that all “matches” (his word choice a likely, if stilted, by-product of his Oxford days) were played on campuses, and that “interference with class work will be minimal.” “It should be noted,” he offered, “that the travel expenses of teams are paid out of tournament gate receipts.” “The format of the hockey tournament is slightly different from that of the others,” he allowed, “but this does not remove it from the spirit of the agreement” (Howell, 1972b, pp. 1-2).

Finally, Howell concluded that the tournaments “reflect a legitimate culmination of the sort of athletic competition NESCAC was created to preserve” and did not “present any genuine danger of overemphasis.” “Given the nature of the schools involved,” he reasoned, “(and I consider here their size, the nature of their admissions policies, the existing and valuable restrictions on recruiting, their scholarship policies, and the control exercised by faculties and administrations over athletics), the possibility of untoward developments seems remote.” In recommending the reinstatement of postseason participation, Howell was rationalizing somewhat, as such a tournament would potentially involve other NESCACs, but also schools such as non-members such as Merrimack, Norwich (which had hoped to join NESCAC but was not invited), Salem State College and Vermont. Howell sent Coombs a copy of his above proposal and wrote: “I am relatively confident they will pass the Executive Committee, since they have President Sawyer’s backing. I do not at this point have much feel about their fate at the hands of the assembled presidents ... but I will keep my fingers crossed” (Howell, 1972c, p. 1).

Howell’s efforts, both political and ritualistic, were successful, at least in the short term, as in mid-November, Sawyer, as chair of the NESCAC Executive Committee, sent a memorandum to the ECAC’s Whitelaw indicating that league members were free to participate in the “recently established limited, regional, terminal ECAC post-season tournaments that have now been initiated for soccer, basketball and baseball and also in lacrosse if constituted in the same format (4-team, 2-game weekend playoffs on a college campus within a week of the close of the regular season)” (Sawyer, 1972, p. 1). In response, ECAC president Ross Smith wrote Sawyer: “It is certainly the intent of the ECAC Council to retain the regional and terminal aspects of the four-team tournaments held over one weekend on the campus of one of the competing institutions ... There is no indication at this time that the hockey format will be changed, but it will be interesting to see how your member institutions will react to the Saturday-Wednesday-Saturday schedule of an eight-team tournament” (Smith, 1972, p. 1).

A year later, Howell continued to seek the continuation of participation in ECAC hockey (as well as the other) tournaments. “The hockey tournament remains somewhat outside the pattern,” he admitted to new Williams President John Chandler, “with three, instead of two, playing dates, but is inside the guidelines in other respects. In view of the fact that negotiations are being pressed by the NESCAC colleges on this point and in view of the fact that the same geographical barriers to a regional tournament exist as they did last year, it is my recommendation that this tournament be approved on a one-year basis” (Howell, 1973, p. 1). Unaware that Howell had already opted to continue with the allowance for hockey, NESCAC AD Executive Committee chair Lloyd Lux of Bates wrote Howell soon thereafter seeking an

extension of the waiver, citing the fact that should NESCAC schools decline to participate in the ECACs, “it is possible that the scheduling of hockey with Colleges who are not members of NESCAC could be jeopardized [sic]” (Lux, 1973, pp. 1-2). But Lux’s warnings were for naught. The waiver would continue to be allowed even though the format would never revert to the desired four-team, two-day model.

The Implications of Managing Athletics in Response to Stakeholder Demands

In his October 1972 letter to his president, Beezer Coombs observed sagely that “the hockey tournament is important to Bowdoin,” providing a neat summary of the motivations behind the actions outlined above. In addition to briefing Howell with his delineation of reasons why the ECAC Division II hockey tournament was within the letter of NESCAC guidelines, Coombs touched on several other issues of import which provide substantial insights into the entire process. “Amherst and Williams,” he recounted, “have had very successful football programs for many, many years. Should this be called overemphasis, or should it be called good management resulting in good programs? Have these programs been detrimental to the best interests of these colleges?” Coombs went on to state that “Bowdoin has a similar program in hockey. The question of post-season play is not an issue and does not affect football programs at our level. Such is not the case in hockey.” While Bowdoin had chosen its level of football play and the concomitant lack of postseason opportunity, Coombs then identified the institutional control issues and stakeholder demands colored the hockey postseason conflict. “I think,” he summarized, “the ECAC has tried to accommodate the NESCAC colleges by planning regional tournaments. Unfortunately their plan for hockey differs from NESCAC’s wishes. (Can we expect to have our way all the time?) [author’s parenthesis] If NESCAC agrees to the principle of tournaments in soccer, basketball, and baseball and refuses participation in Division II hockey, I shudder to think of the reaction” (Coombs, 1972, pp. 1-2).

In this case, Coombs notes that other NESCAC schools had, for whatever reasons, developed and maintained strong programs in various sports. For Bowdoin, that sport, became hockey, and stakeholder interest in the program became strong enough so that College administrators needed to be mindful of them. Other NESCAC programs had been affected by the creation of ECAC tournaments, with many member schools lobbying successfully to participate, but expanded structure of the hockey tournament in 1972 meant that Bowdoin, through the efforts of Howell, labored in response to stakeholder demands to keep the tournament opportunity alive for his school’s preeminent team sport program. Other NESCAC presidents and athletic directors did not push as hard for the hockey issue possibly because Howell and Bowdoin did their work for them, or because the sport did not have the same degree of stakeholder demands, but athletic administrators and other stakeholder groups did support ECAC participation, even if their school presidents did not share their enthusiasm.

Hockey continues to be the preeminent stakeholder sport at Bowdoin. In early 2014, the alumni magazine, now published under the title *Bowdoin*, ran an article commenting on the rivalry with Colby. The piece, complete with 11 pictures of fans and game action, noted that the games roused “school spirit ... in ways extending well beyond the teams and hockey” on campus, “in town, and for alumni around the world.” “Everyone comes out for the games,” the article continued, and the atmosphere is “fun and spirited, but the games were taken with great seriousness.” The games, the article concludes, “will surely bring the crowds again next year, as if has for generations” (“A rivalry,” 2014, pp. 14-15).

But while hockey is the vehicle through which the above issues emerged, the crux of this case is less about a specific sport, and more about how a specific school sought to deal with a range of athletic stakeholder groups in relation to hockey. In the period reviewed in this study, Bowdoin and its administrators sought to find a managerial balance point for its hockey program that permitted the team to achieve at a level deemed reasonable for the small, all-male liberal arts college. To find this point, administrators were forced to weigh carefully the demands of stakeholders both internal (coaches, student-athletes, athletic administrators, faculty) and external (alumni, prospective students, Pentagonal and NESCAC members, governing bodies like the ECAC). For Bowdoin, because of the specific environmental factors outlined above, stakeholder issues came to a head through and because of hockey.

One key issues for contemporary sport managers to note from this study include the importance of communication amongst stakeholder groups. Covell and Walker (2013) cite that “effective leadership requires effective communication,” and that “every leadership task ... can be accomplished only through effective communication” (2015, p. 292). Through the efforts of Roger Howell, Bowdoin found a balance point for hockey, albeit with certain problems relating to communication. In terms of communicating with his presidential peers, Howell showed that he valued Bowdoin’s association with NESCAC and was unwilling to break with the group over the issue. As a result, he was forced to finesse conference guidelines to satisfy Bowdoin’s hockey stakeholders, who had expressed a strong predilection for keeping the postseason option alive.

However, Howell’s efforts in attaining postseason play opportunities for hockey meant, as Coombs foreshadowed, that other teams would want the same chance. Because of this expectation, Howell could have identified what might be called gatekeepers or translators to serve as communication intermediaries to bridge gaps between stakeholder priorities and interests. However, he could not rely on his athletic directors, Sid Watson, any other coach, student-athletes, the general student body or alumni, because all felt that the postseason ban were unfair not just to hockey, but to all sport programs. In addition, these same stakeholder groups on other campuses also opposed the bans, so Howell’s colleagues were similarly discomfited. As a result, the existence of a cadre of translators was likely not to be found, and the issue of team sport postseason equity would dog Bowdoin and NESCAC presidents until the late 1990s, as the creation of NCAA Division III postseason play meant a more realistic chance to win national championships, eventually leaving ECAC tournaments superfluous. The developments at Bowdoin occurred sooner and were therefore seemed more pronounced than at other schools of its ilk, but they nonetheless foreshadowed the coming of an era where the pursuit of national championships would become a potentially attainable goal for athletic programs at nearly every American college. As such, Bowdoin’s travails provide an instructive primer in illustrating the influence of stakeholder demands on institutional and athletic administrators.

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