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# EVOLUTION OF AMATEURISM IN NEW ZEALAND SPORT

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Amateur sport is often discussed in contrast to more high-profile professional sport (Ryan & Watson, 2017). Definitions usually focus on financial considerations and specifically the notion that those involved in amateur sport are not remunerated. However, a sociological connotation to amateurism has also appeared in the literature (Robinson & France, 2011) relating to community and participation. In New Zealand, the priorities of organisations in the sport sector have recently shifted away from highly competitive elite pathways, so it is worthwhile to develop a better sense how the notion of amateurism is understood and what the managerial implications of that are. The sport club remains the “front line” of the sector and is therefore a sensible backdrop for this exploration.

The New Zealand Sport Club Survey has generated insight into the current state of amateur sport clubs in New Zealand as well as the way that amateurism is perceived by those leading them. In 2018, representatives of 169 sport clubs across New Zealand and 15 sports completed the survey. Both numeric and open-ended questions were posed including an open-ended question about amateurism: *“What does amateurism mean to you in the context of your club and New Zealand sport?”* Thematic analysis of responses to that query followed the process of Braun and Clarke (2006).

Not unexpectedly, sport club representatives indicated that amateurism refers to the pursuit of activity on an unpaid basis. However, club representatives’ further interpretation of unpaid activity in this context ranged from participants being unpaid to all organisational activity associated with participation being voluntary and unpaid. A theme connecting inclusiveness and amateurism also emerged and suggestions made that an amateur organisations should provide opportunities to everyone in the community – not just promising athletes. Further, respondents wondered about the managerial/strategic rigor of so called “amateur” clubs. The collective understanding of amateurism conveyed by survey respondents is broader than just the notion of remuneration and rather captures the essence of grassroots sport in a multi-faceted way. Amateurism seems to have potential to characterise - and perhaps solidify - the ongoing place of clubs in the wider sport sector and how they are managed.

The 2019 survey will further probe important notions of inclusiveness, community and participation alongside amateurism in the context of New Zealand’s sport clubs. The pervasiveness of the perception that amateur sport clubs lack managerial/strategic sophistication is intriguing and will also be explored further. The results of the 2019 survey will be in hand by December and will further inform this conference presentation. It is hoped that a fuller understanding of shared values and beliefs around the notion of amateurism in New Zealand’s sport clubs will be useful for governing bodies to inform their club development activity and ultimate goal of New Zealanders becoming more active sport participants.

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