

***RETIRED MEN'S ASSOCIATION OF GREENWICH, Inc. (RMA)  
invites you to attend its meeting, on Wednesday, July 17, 2013.  
First Presbyterian Church, Lafayette Pl., Greenwich.***

***DR. ROBERT PODHURST***

***CONTRASTING MODELS: THE AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN  
APPROACHES TO SPORT***



The greatest soccer club in the world, Barcelona, develops its players at its own soccer academy, La Masia, which differs from the standard American model of youth sports development, which is generally based in schools. As its director says of a typical day which includes six hours of academic classes: “They think players are here to play football and not to study. We prepare them for sport, but also to have another future if the sport does not work out.” By contrast, consider the recent case of the New England

Patriots wide receiver Aaron Hernandez, arrested for murder, and trailing suspicion of other criminal activity in his college career. And consider the fact, that since the end of the football season, the police blotter lists 30 arrests of NFL players.

College sports in the United States has become a big business, with the interests of the student secondary. Graduation rates for athletes are dismal (11 percent for men’s basketball at the University of Connecticut), and scandals continue to abound—Penn State, Rutgers, University of North Carolina. Plenty of newsprint testifies to failings in youth sports—abusive coaches, violent spectators, over demanding parents—that need attending to.

Perhaps the United States should look to Europe (and the rest of the world) for a better model for the relationship between sports and societal goals and values.

Dr. Podhurst received his B.A. from Yeshiva University, and his MA and Ph.D. from the New School for Social Research. He has taught the Sociology of Sport at Lehman College (CUNY), Seton Hall University, and currently at Montclair State University. As a professional athlete, he played seven years in the premier Israeli Basketball League (Maccabi Tel Aviv) and for the Israeli National Team. He travelled extensively through Europe playing professionally with many NBA stars (including personally guarding Julius Erving.). For three years, he was the Director of the Israeli National Tennis Center.

**RMA meetings are free and open to the public; no reservations are required. Please plan to arrive around 10:30 for our social break (coffee and cake), followed by our speaker at 10:45. Meetings are held at the First Presbyterian Church in Greenwich. For additional information, call Bernard Schneider, 203-698-2558; bgsesq@gmail.com.**